

A smooth transition to Microsoft 365 sets Gravesham Borough Council up for cloud

Civica helps Gravesham migrate seamlessly to the cloud, embed strong SAM cost governance, and keep users supported

The right way to adopt cloud

Gravesham Borough Council is a local authority serving 109,000 people in Kent. Despite the pandemic, the council is pursuing its Microsoft 365-led Cloud First strategy, while managing the budgetary pressures faced by all local authorities.

Understanding that successful cloud adoption depends on a diverse range of skills and tightly focused planning and execution, Gravesham decided to take advantage of Civica's experience of providing services to over 900 UK local authorities. Civica is already a longstanding partner for Gravesham, providing services including licensing and Managed Software Asset Management (SAM) services built on Snow's industry leading technology.

Based on conversations with other local authorities, and Civica's best-practice advice and support, the council identified three primary outcomes for its Microsoft 365 deployment:

- A seamless migration from on-prem Microsoft applications to Microsoft 365 with minimal user disruption

- Extension of its mature approach to SAM into the cloud, including licensing, security and software governance to ensure cost optimisation for SaaS applications.
- Technical support for ongoing issues while the council builds its internal skills.
- Ongoing support through issue resolution to Civica's support centre, with a simplified escalation route to Microsoft if required.

Key outcomes

- Successful migration to Microsoft 365 to support Gravesham's Cloud First policy
- Visibility of SaaS services in use by remote workers to reduce risk and increase confidence in SaaS and cloud platform adoption
- Extension of mature approach to SAM with optimised Microsoft 365 spend with greater insights into software usage and consumption, by adding Snow's SaaS management technology
- Compliance with Microsoft licensing and subscription rules

Key outcomes:

- 1 | Seamless migration of 400 Microsoft users
- 2 | 30% savings from new cloud.

"Having Civica as our single partner for Microsoft 365 deployment, governance and support gives us peace of mind now, and boosts our confidence in a cloud-enabled future."

Darren Everden, Assistant Director for IT and Transformation, Gravesham Borough Council

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Supporting a successful migration

Migrating to Microsoft 365 demands specialist skills to set up and optimise the operating environment and bring users on board. Darren Everden, Gravesham's Assistant Director for IT and Transformation, knew that training his own IT staff to carry out this one-off project wouldn't be the best use of time and resources, given the challenging environment.

"Civica's experience of working with local authorities, combined with their breadth of capability in cloud deployment, governance and support, made them the go-to partner for our first steps into cloud."

Darren Everden, Assistant Director for IT and Transformation, Gravesham Borough Council

"It made sense to work with a third party like Civica that already had those skills — they would be able to do a better job, and our own IT staff could remain focused on the council's day-to-day needs," he says. "We felt confident choosing Civica to set up and secure our cloud operating environment because of their wealth of local authority expertise and their strong SAM track record with us."

A key advantage of the Civica migration support service was its customer-centric flexibility compared with other options that only offered a fixed scope of work.

"We wanted to be able to address anything unexpected as part of the same engagement, and the Civica service allowed that," says Darren. Gravesham also benefited from Civica's Microsoft partnership status, which made it easy to escalate a thorny issue to Microsoft for resolution.

Getting control of cloud software

Gravesham has rolled out Microsoft Exchange Online, Teams and the Office suite to its 400 users. Scalability is built in to add other components, such as SharePoint Online, at a later date.

Transitioning from on-prem deployments to SaaS services like Microsoft 365 changes the licensing risks that have to be managed, which is where Civica's SaaS Optimisation service comes in.

"With SaaS, the on-prem risk of under-licensing diminishes: you're more likely to find that you're paying for more subscriptions than you have users, or that users have been assigned a higher subscription than they need," says Darren. "To avoid that and keep software costs optimised, you need a good handle on usage and consumption, which Civica's SaaS Optimisation service provides."

The Civica service gives Darren full visibility of all the SaaS applications being used. "While our users have been working remotely during the pandemic, adoption of SaaS applications has inevitably gone up," he says. "We need visibility and control to avoid the use of shadow IT and the associated security risks. For example, we want to standardise on Teams as our collaboration tool, and the service is set to help us achieve this."

Issue resolution made easy

As well as making the migration to Microsoft 365 as seamless as possible, Darren wanted to ensure that Gravesham's users were well supported once they started using the cloud-based software.

Users can report any issues with their Microsoft 365 software to a first-line help desk run by the council's IT team. If they can't resolve an issue themselves, they simply contact the Civica service desk for second- and third-line support, who can escalate to Microsoft if required.

On track to the cloud

Gravesham continues to roll out SaaS solutions and cloud platforms. Next up is migration of IT infrastructure to Microsoft Azure, working with Civica in a similar way to the Microsoft 365 deployment project.

"There's no doubt in my mind that cloud is the way forward for local authorities that want flexible, cost-effective IT infrastructure and services," says Darren. He points out, however, that it's important to understand what a council can do for itself, and when to bring in third-party experts like Civica.



"Working with Civica on our Microsoft 365 migration has gone really well, and we've benefited from their local authority experience and their professional approach at every stage," he says. "Having Civica as our single partner for Microsoft 365 deployment, governance and support gives us peace of mind now, and boosts our confidence in a cloud-enabled future."

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