

Mansfield District Council



Like many other Local Authorities and Government Agencies across the UK, Mansfield District Council is having to work hard to make significant cost savings while maintaining high levels of service. It is a region where the political landscape changes regularly, which creates its own challenges. To help meet and overcome these challenges, the Council has implemented a new enterprise-wide IT system from Capita IB Solutions that, according to Eve Szubert, Mansfield District Council's Financial Services Manager, is "...far superior to the capabilities of our previous system."

Independent Financial Systems Review

The district of Mansfield is a largely urban area, situated in the north west of Nottinghamshire and populated by around 100,000 residents. It is the only local authority area in the county to have a directly elected Mayor, who gives Mansfield strong democratic leadership and who has direct engagement with the local people.

From an IT perspective, the Council had been running a UNIX-based system since the 1980s. The Ingres Database became unsupported, and by 2010 the system was less fit for purpose and becoming heavily reliant on spreadsheets and other databases.

Linda Miller, Mansfield District Council's Financial Information Systems Manager, explains, "In 2009, we carried out a detailed independent financial systems review, which included interviews with lots of people throughout the Council to determine how they use the systems and what improvements they wanted.

This review produced an extensive document, detailing everything we needed in order to optimise our financial systems."

Flexible Working Environment

She continues, "Amongst many other requirements, the report identified that the Council wanted to have a much more flexible working environment, with more hot-desking and remote/home working.

Our previous system was very terminal-based and simply could not provide the solution we wanted moving forward. There were too many weaknesses in the system, particularly around procurement, a lack of workflow and cumbersome, inflexible reporting.

As we were heavily reliant on spreadsheets, this meant that we had very little integration across the Council and we also needed to phase out the hardware platforms."

The organisation that produced the financial systems review also identified some software suppliers that could deliver the solution that Mansfield District Council required. The detailed document provided a comprehensive checklist that the suppliers had to meet and was the basis of an extensive procurement exercise, which was won by Capita IB Solutions with its Integra Open Enterprise and eSeries integrated financial management systems.

"We looked at each potential supplier in great detail, including stake holders from across the Council. We set up a scoring system, which covered our key criteria, including functionality, training, implementation plan and price, and Capita IB Solutions came out the clear winner. Their project team showed a genuine understanding for what we were trying to achieve and they were able to show how successful the system was in other similar Councils across the country. They also did a great job of demonstrating how easy it was to use the software, and this was a major consideration for many of the people looking at the system," says Linda.

She continues, "There was so much about the Integra solution that we liked. Organisational views can be built, which give a different and much more flexible way of looking at and navigating the system. This enables a smooth, yet detailed workflow that helps to increase efficiency and productivity throughout the operation. The system also has exceptional reporting tools and advanced applications to support forecasting and budgeting."

Implementation

"Another key reason for selecting Capita IB Solutions was the detailed and structured methodology they use for implementation," says Linda, adding, "The project management looked very thorough and gave us a lot of confidence that it would be a successful installation. We had excellent consultants who brought a calmness and competence to the project that was instrumental in its success."

The system was initially scheduled to be live in November 2011, but because of work that the Council needed to do, Capita IB Solutions was able to accommodate a revised date of 1st April 2012. This was achieved with minimal disruption, and allowed everyone to be trained and ready to get up and running as soon as the system went live.

Eve Szubert adds, "As a result of the time and effort put in by Linda and her team, as well as the support from Capita IB Solutions, the system we have in place is far superior to the capabilities of our previous system. In particular, we would like to thank the Capita IB Solutions Professional Services team, who have been invaluable in their support and assistance throughout their time spent at Mansfield District Council and also in their ongoing support when not on site."

Benefits

Although only live for a few months, users within Mansfield District Council have already expressed their approval for the new system. "Our financial officers have taken to the software really quickly and are very happy with it," says Linda Miller. "The biggest change has been the workflow and automated authorisation procedures. We had been using a cumbersome paper-based system before, and now we are able to have much more control and flexibility in the way we process invoices and manage purchase orders."

Senior management is also very impressed. Linda says, "The visibility that Integra enables has had a massive impact on our operation. Managers are particularly delighted with the ease with which we can now produce monthly management reports at the click of a button. We can also provide real-time snapshots of the financial operation of the Council, giving us much better control and enabling faster and more accurate decision making."

It is early days for the installation, but some tangible benefits are already being achieved. "As we get more used to the system, we are now meeting many of our operational targets, such as paying most suppliers within ten days," says Linda. "My team have even been nominated for an internal performance award, based on the success of the implementation project."

Linda concludes, "The Council has put a lot of emphasis on business re-engineering, looking at every element of every job to determine why we do it and whether we need to do it and, if so, how to do it better. The implementation of Integra Open Enterprise has fulfilled many of these requirements, and we are now looking forward to developing further functionality, such as budget modelling and business intelligence. Overall, we are delighted with the amazing support we have enjoyed from Capita IB Solutions. The implementation was excellent and the product itself should generate significant cost savings by streamlining processes and driving efficiency throughout the Council."