

A smooth transition to the cloud form Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Pursuing a 'cloud by default' strategy, the council completed its migration to Civica's cloud financial software in just nine weeks

Stay on premises or move to the cloud?

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council serves around 148,000 people in East Lancashire.

Several years ago the council replaced its previous financial management information system with Civica Financials, a solution designed specifically for the public sector.

"We experienced benefits from day one," recalls Alistair Ray, Finance Manager at the council. "For example, we used to process every supplier invoice individually, but the Creditor module's intelligent scanning means we now only process by exception. That's been a huge time-saver."

9 weeks

to complete the smooth,
collaborative migration

Having successfully used Civica Financials for the best part of five years, Alistair discussed renewal options for a further five years with his Civica account manager. Rather than continue running on the council's own IT infrastructure, he decided to migrate to the cloud version of the software.

A strategic vision

Running critical services like financial management in house involved the council's IT team in server maintenance and management; management of backups, business continuity and disaster recovery; and help desk provision. This put pressure on a fairly small team, and took their attention away from higher-value tasks.

With a 'digital and cloud by default' strategy, the council is pursuing a program to migrate services to the cloud. "Our digital and cloud strategy frees up the IT team to make better use of their time, and helps us reduce our IT operating costs," says Alistair.

Key outcomes

- 1 Enhanced system availability with round-the-clock monitoring
- 2 Streamlined processes that reduce admin burden on finance team
- 3 In-house IT operating costs reduced, freeing up time to focus on core activities

"Migration was an intensive nine-week project, but everything went remarkably smoothly. We went live on time and did our first month-end close without any noticeable hiccups."

Alistair Ray,
Finance Manager,
Blackburn with Darwen
Borough Council

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www.civica.com/financials

Contact email:

financials@civica.co.uk





It was a natural step for Blackburn to choose Civica Financials at contract renewal. "The renewal process made migrating to Civica's cloud-enabled financial management software attractive from a cost perspective. We were also confident that our data would be securely stored in the UK," says Alistair.

"On top of that, switching to Civica Financials in the cloud will let us benefit from a new user interface and Digital Gateway that we didn't have access to before," he adds.

" Since we moved to the cloud, there's no longer any question about who's responsible for what. If there's ever an issue with the system, I simply contact the Civica service desk and know they'll get it sorted."

Alistair Ray,
Finance Manager,
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Improved usability, assured availability

The new user interface makes navigation, search panels and enquiry screens easy to use — advantages that the council's users were quick to identify. It also vastly simplifies the onboarding process for new users.

The digital gateway will streamline processes like new customer and supplier setup. Instead of entering details on a spreadsheet for the Finance team to rekey, requestors simply complete a form on the council's intranet that adds the data straight into the system. "New customers and suppliers get added every day, so this will save us a lot of time," says Alistair.

Because Civica Financials is cloud enabled and managed by Civica, it's available round the clock. Staff who work overnight or at weekends — in the council's residential care service, for example — can do their finance-related admin whenever it suits them.

Collaboration for a smooth transition

The migration took just nine weeks and was a collaborative effort between the council's finance and IT teams and Civica. "It was an intensive project that involved a lot of commitment from all parties, but communication was excellent throughout, and everything went remarkably smoothly," says Alistair.

Key council users — including creditor and debtor team leaders, management accountants, purchasing team members and system administrators — tested the solution, and Civica quickly resolved any reported issues. "We went live on time and did our first month-end close without any noticeable hiccups," says Alistair.

Around 50 people in the council's Finance team use the system full time, and up to 400 other staff use specific functions to do things like raise purchase orders and monitor budgets.

Previously, the Finance team used the rich client version of the system, while other staff used the web version. "Now it's simpler, as everyone uses the same instance of the software," says Alistair, pointing out that the council also upgraded to the latest version as part of the migration.

Adopting Civica Financials has also simplified the process for Alistair should any issues arise. In the past, it wasn't always clear whether an issue needed reporting to Civica or to the council's IT help desk.



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