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A great success story during a period of intense financial challenge. Investment in our new budget management system highlights the belief among members that technological improvements can support better financial management for the Council. Through the efforts of our staff, who have embraced the new system, we are able to support our current programme of cost reduction while maintaining quality service provision.”

Councillor Ray Theodoulou
Deputy leader of
Gloucestershire County Council



Gloucestershire County Council wins International award for its ‘Capgemini developed and supported’ SAP budget management solution, further improving its value for money initiatives to benefit the people of Gloucestershire.

Utilising a tailored, template-based solution from Capgemini, Gloucestershire County Council has started to realise financial and non-financial benefits supporting its goals of ensuring that public money is used as effectively as possible. The highly automated solution is integrated within the council’s SAP platform. The new process enhances the transparency of financial information, providing a basis for improved decision-making that ensures that services are delivered to Gloucestershire communities in the most cost-effective way.

The council’s senior leaders are strongly committed to self-service enablement and empowerment of budget holders which is supported by the new solution. Recent budget savings have made it necessary to reduce back-office finance costs in an effort to maintain the front-line services on which the people of Gloucestershire rely: the solution has helped to enable these back-office cost reductions. Budget managers and budget holders have embraced it, recognising the opportunity to move to a simplified process with less reliance on finance support.

Overview

Customer Name:
Gloucestershire County Council

Industry: Local government

Location: Gloucestershire, UK

Client Challenges/Business Need:
Gloucestershire County Council identified a need to simplify its forecasting and reporting process in an effort to make savings to its finance budget.

Solution-at-a-glance:
Gloucestershire County Council’s solution is a tailored version of Capgemini’s SAP Planning Solution template.

Results (Benefits):
The new solution supports Gloucestershire County Council in its efforts to ensure that it spends its funds on the areas with the greatest public benefit, because it can match resources to needs based on accurate and up-to-date information.

The template solution designed by Capgemini, supported a technical implementation which was completed in just a few months. The solution is delivering payback on investment in a very short time period. In SAP's 2014 Quality Awards (United Kingdom & Ireland), Gloucestershire County Council won a Gold award for Rapid Delivery in recognition of this project's success. This was followed by the accolade of achieving an SAP Silver quality award (Europe, Middle East & Africa).

The challenge

Local authorities have to be both creative and rigorous in responding to today's pressure to do more with less, in line with the UK government's drive to reduce the public deficit. Not only do they need to drive down costs, but they also need to manage their budgets carefully each year to contain any potential overspend situations, while focusing on the key objectives of delivering quality services to their communities in the most cost-effective way.

Gloucestershire County Council identified a need to simplify its forecasting and reporting process in an effort to make savings to their finance budget. Council leaders decided to take action by deploying a new process and solution, based on an approved business case.

The solution: automated planning and monitoring using SAP

Capgemini, one of Gloucestershire County Council's strategic partners, had developed an SAP Planning (Budget Monitoring) Solution template for local authorities drawing on experience from earlier projects. The council selected this from a range of possible approaches to automating financial planning and monitoring. It then commissioned Capgemini to support the implementation of the template and tailor it to Gloucestershire's specific needs.

The extra financial transparency that the solution provides further improves the management information available through the council's core SAP system.



Absolutely excellent: will save me hours of work, as I will be able to eliminate Excel spreadsheets. Much better than current forecasting, and drill-down to detailed information, if required, is much easier."

Budget holder

Gloucestershire County Council

SAP Quality Awards
Gold Winner 2014
United Kingdom & Ireland

Some technical details of the solution

Gloucestershire County Council's solution is a tailored version of Capgemini's SAP Planning Solution template. This comprises a range of planning input schedules, automated planning functions, and supporting reports that allow drill-down for root cause analysis.

The solution simplifies the budget monitoring process by presenting budget holders with data in a structure that they can readily plan against: for example, to support in-post headcount planning, information is organised by employee rather than by account code. The process is further simplified through the inclusion in the user interface of automated links to related process areas such as leaver/joiner notifications which have already been developed by the council.

As well as supporting key planning processes, the solution has introduced SAP Business Warehouse (BW) into Gloucestershire County Council's SAP landscape. This enables near real-time data integration with core master and transaction data, and real-time assessment of forecasts versus actual. A mechanism to monitor process compliance has also been developed.

The easy-to-use solution provides intuitive, automated links to reports, forms and documents, enhancing the user experience. The automation and simplification enables budget holders to complete their monthly forecasting more speedily and effectively, reducing pressure on month-end timelines.

Evaluating the options

Before selecting this option, Gloucestershire County Council's senior finance managers visited other organisations that were using similar SAP solutions. This was an opportunity to identify the solution that was most applicable to Gloucestershire County Council, and also to research the organisational challenges and the way to tackle them for maximum benefit.

Capgemini's solution emerged as the most relevant. Capgemini consultants supported the development of a business case by helping to analyse existing processes and their costs alongside the cost of the new solution, in order to help determine the cashable and non-cashable savings. This exercise supported the calculation of a very short payback period on the original investment.

Gloucestershire County Council decided to go ahead, and work started in late 2013. The solution went live from a technical perspective early in 2014, and from a business perspective was then rolled out on a phased basis to all 350 users. The work completed on time and within original budget. The enhancements insisted upon by the Council required the solution to be customised to a greater extent than originally planned; a flexible approach on the part of Capgemini avoided any additional costs to the council.

Demonstrating commitment to business change

Gloucestershire project staff and Capgemini implementation consultants (both local and offshore) worked closely together to meet Gloucestershire's vision for the solution. Capgemini led on the technical aspects, while the council managed the cultural change and project management aspects; Capgemini supported this work stream with advice and insights into what had succeeded elsewhere.

The council's leaders stayed closely involved throughout, with directors taking part in key meetings and workshops to communicate their input and commitment. The Strategic Finance Director made a video to emphasise the importance of the change to colleagues.

About 350 users received formal training to enable them to get the best out of the new system. Feedback from this training confirmed how well the new systems and processes were being viewed by end-users.



Our main aims were to improve the budget holder/manager experience by making the forecasting process simpler and less time-consuming for them, and to enable savings for the finance team who support the process. The solution has exceeded our expectations in terms of quality and scope, yet was still delivered within budget – this is a testament to all those involved from Gloucestershire County Council and Capgemini.

Jo Walker

Director of Strategic Finance, Gloucestershire County Council



Finance has undertaken many projects, but it's hard to remember one that has been viewed as positively by end-users as this budget monitoring solution."

Mark Spilsbury Head of Finance



The system is really good and gives me much more transparency. With the information available from within the templates and reports, the process of budget management and forecasting should be much simpler."

Budget holder Gloucestershire County Council



Spending public money where it does most good for Gloucestershire's communities

This solution frees up some of Gloucestershire County Council's strategic finance specialists to focus on managing and supporting the more complex budget areas. It also enables budget holders to become more self-sufficient in their budget management and reduces the need for manipulating offline spreadsheets. There is a level of automation and simplification that allows planning activities to be processed faster and with minimal support.

This solution leverages more management information from the council's SAP asset and demonstrates how further business benefits can be achieved. Decision-makers now have a better insight into the latest financial figures.

The new solution supports Gloucestershire County Council in its efforts to ensure that it spends its funds on the areas with the greatest public benefit, because it can match resources to needs based on accurate and up-to-date information.

In recognition of this project, GCC won a Gold award for Rapid Delivery from SAP. The citation said, "Working with partner Capgemini, and its local government template solution, GCC was able to effectively and efficiently deliver monthly forecasts and reports and the project not only resulted in clear business benefits, but even delivered additional ones." Success in the United Kingdom & Ireland quality awards was followed by the accolade of achieving an SAP Silver quality award (Europe, Middle East & Africa).



The solution improves our budget monitoring process, enabling us to drive out the cashable and non-cashable benefits defined in our business case. I am proud of what has been achieved in such a short space of time and very happy with the positive feedback received by end-users – a truly excellent solution.



Andy Hammerton

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About Capgemini

Now with 180,000 people in over 40 countries, Capgemini is one of the world's foremost providers of consulting, technology and outsourcing services. The Group reported 2014 global revenues of EUR 10.573 billion. Together with its clients, Capgemini creates and delivers business, technology and digital solutions that fit their needs, enabling them to achieve innovation and competitiveness. A deeply multicultural organization, Capgemini has developed its own way of working, the Collaborative Business Experience™, and draws on Rightshore®, its worldwide delivery model.

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About Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire has a population of approximately 600,000 and Gloucestershire County Council has an annual gross revenue expenditure budget in excess of £760 million.

Our vision is to use the resources available to us to improve quality of life for Gloucestershire people. Our plans are built on 3 clear values: living within our means, providing the basics, and helping communities help themselves. Our values underpin our direction, decision-making, and will make sure that the Council remains flexible and responsive to local people's needs and expectations.

For more information, please visit:
www.gloucestershire.gov.uk