

CASE STUDY

The City of Edinburgh Council: transforming HR into strategic function - how to add maximum value

The City of Edinburgh Council is the second largest Council in Scotland and the eighth largest in the UK. The Council provides a wide range of services to Edinburgh citizens which includes schools, social services, refuse collection, street cleansing, culture and leisure facilities, housing, planning and road services. The organisation has a complex structure with many varied job types, complicated conditions of service, and is going through constant change.

The Council's HR and payroll functions provide services to 20,000 employees and 32,000 customers and pensioners. Having become a MidlandHR customer in 1988, the Council migrated its payroll to the Trent solution, but continued to operate with a separate HR system until 2007 when they implemented the single Trent solution.





The vision

In 2005 the Council reviewed its HR strategy. Its vision was to transform HR from a largely transactional and administrative service into a more strategic function. This was to be achieved by centralising the administrative and transactional activities in an HR shared service centre, streamlining business processes, and reducing the amount of administration by allowing employees and managers to carry out tasks online. This approach would enable vital focus on the Council's corporate strategic agenda and departmental objectives.

David Richardson, Trent Systems Manager at the Council explains: "Fundamental to transforming the HR service and the way we interacted with payroll was the implementation of an e-HR system, which was fully integrated with payroll and provided employee and manager self service. Following a detailed business case which was developed alongside BT, the Council's ICT partners, MidlandHR's Trent solution was selected as the best fit for achieving the Council's vision.

"At a very early stage, our aim was to maximise the use of Trent's Employee and Manager Self-Service in order to remove repetitive administrative tasks and drive efficiencies. This approach was also consistent with the Council's SMART City agenda which aims to make services more efficient and customer focused."

The business case for HR change

The business case set out details of the existing HR service provision which comprised of a predominantly paper-based input, multiple hands-off of tasks and a general lack of standardised processes. It detailed the future vision with the focus upon a centralised web deployed system, enabling devolvement to the line and a focus upon strategy. The main features of the business case were to:

- Transform HR into a strategic business unit

- Provide enhanced customer focus
- Improve HR accessibility via Self-Service, e-mail and telephone
- Automate paper processes to reduce handling
- Standardise processes to ensure a more efficient resolution of day-to-day HR queries
- Equip managers with the tools and support required to become self-sufficient people managers
- Combine and centralise HR and payroll processes
- Provide efficiency and cost savings.

Managing change through partnership

The project team was created in partnership with the Council, MidlandHR and BT.

The project was rolled out to the Council's departments in three phases over a period of seven months. This allowed the Council to pilot Trent Self-Service in concentrated areas before introducing it in the larger departments. The plan was ambitious because each phase involved full implementation of Self-Service within the chosen departments. At the same time, HR team members transferred to their new roles in the HR Service Centre and other parts of the HR division. The delivery of a new system involved a complete cultural change which required significant support through change management, communications, learning and development.

"Branding of the new Self-Service provision was an important aspect of the transformation. Employee Self-Service was named *myHR* and Manager Self-Service was named *myPeople*.

"There was intense activity around reviewing and standardising business processes and setting up workflows," continues Richardson. "Business readiness workshops were held with key stakeholder groups. Customers were also involved in testing the system and comprehensive Stop / Start / Continue guides

were developed to inform departmental managers and employees of the changes to HR business processes.

"Departments nominated change champions to act as a communications route to and from the project team, and to assist with promoting departmental buy-in. Roadshows were also held for managers to enable the project vision and benefits of the reorganised HR function and online service to cascade down to the people that were to be affected."

Training and Support

This was the first major SMART City project within the Council, assisted largely through e-learning initiatives to aid the development of employees and managers. Given the very large numbers of people involved, face-to-face training was not an option due to time and resource constraints. Consequently, an online learning package was developed in partnership with MidlandHR and e-learning solutions provider, Brightwave, at a fraction of the cost of training each staff member in person. This enabled employees and managers to follow learning programmes at their own pace and convenience, with staged tests enabling progression to the next level. The learning programmes remain available for existing users and new employees.

Ongoing support is provided to Trent Self-Service users through the HR Service Centre Helpdesk which deals with *myHR* and *myPeople* queries. Over a period of time, mini guides and FAQs have been developed to supplement the e-learning programmes, all of which are available on the Council's intranet. Managers and employees are directed to this online resource wherever possible to encourage them to find information for themselves. Compliance with the online processes is monitored and reminders of 'do's and don'ts' are issued in the monthly HR briefing for managers.

“For me as a manager, the major benefits of myPeople are being able to access information online about individual employees as well as having an overview of the team’s absences on the calendar. I find the system easy to use and the reports accessible.” **Finance manager**

“myHR is quick, easy to use and always available – overall a great online system! My holidays get approved at a click of a button with no paperwork involved.” **Communications officer**

“I enjoy having all my details and information like holiday balances and payslips so easily accessible, and in my control through myHR.” **Policy officer**

More recently, the Council has also held roadshows to promote *myHR* and *myPeople*.

Real tangible business benefits and change
Manager and Employee Self-Service have made a significant contribution to major business transformation within the Council.

Employee Self-Service - *myHR*

There are 14,000 active users with access to *myHR*, equivalent to 70% of the total workforce. Employees use *myHR* to:

- Input overtime, car mileage & expenses claims
- Change personal details
- View online payslips
- Book holidays & other types of absence
- Book training courses
- Access a range of links to web pages for advice, forms & information.

“The availability of online payslips has helped to promote the use of *myHR* and there are almost 8,000 users who have chosen to no longer receive paper payslips. In areas where employees, such as manual workers, do not have access to PCs and therefore cannot use Self-Service, line managers can enter leave and book training courses on the employee’s behalf using *myPeople*. These tasks are sometimes devolved to local administrators,” adds Richardson.

Manager Self-Service - *myPeople*

Around 3,500 managers have access to *myPeople* across the Council enabling them to:

- record absence
- authorise overtime, expenses, leave, and training course requests
- run management information reports
- record outcomes of performance appraisals
- link to web pages for policy advice and information

Managers can now carry out many transactions using *myPeople*, reducing the end to end processing time and avoiding mistakes that can arise from several hand-offs.

“From a single point on the desktop, line managers can access a real-time calendar informing them which team members are off sick, on holiday, or are off for some other reason. The calendar is versatile and can show historical or future information at the click of a button. The same data screen can be used to authorise actions, create online reports and link to other sources of information. The manager can also access conditions of service and data for employees. As a result of the efficiencies realised through Trent Self-Service, the Council has delivered impressive annual savings of £720,000,” concludes Richardson.

Council Objectives

- Transform HR into a strategic business unit
- Provide efficiency & cost savings across the organisation
- Provide a more customer focused service

HR Objectives

- Integrate HR & payroll into one central online system and service centre
- Improve the quality and visibility of people information across the organisation
- Devolve everyday HR responsibilities to line managers
- Make HR more accessible and visible to employees
- Streamline business processes & reduce reliance on paper-based processes
- Eliminate double data entry through one single HR and payroll solution
- Automate transactional HR and payroll processes

Solution

Implementation of MidlandHR’s Trent, providing a single solution for HR, payroll, talent management and workforce planning. This case study focuses on:

- Employee Self-Service (*myHR*)
- Manager Self-Service (*myPeople*)

Results

- £720,000 annual savings from increased efficiencies and centralised HR & payroll processes
- 7 month successful Trent implementation supporting 14,000 employees
- 8,000 Council staff receive e-payslips, equating to estimated annual savings of £26,000 whilst reducing environmental impact of printing & distributing paper payslips
- Trent has successfully processed 87,000 holiday requests, 46,200 special leave requests and 40,000 time & expense claims within the past year, vastly increasing process efficiency
- Proactive absence management through *myPeople* enabling reduced absence levels.

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