

Easier access to budgets at Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Results & ROI

- A improved process resulting in a 50% reduction in budget monitoring cycle time
- A 44% reduction in the number of budgets monitored across the year

The client

Folkestone and Hythe District Council in Kent serves a population of around 100,200 across the towns of Folkestone, Hythe and Romney Marsh. It has an annual budget of £16.6 million. One of Folkestone and Hythe's strategic objectives is to "perform effectively" as a council in order to support economic growth within the district.

The challenge

Folkestone and Hythe face the same budgetary pressures as most public sector organisations across the UK. Having visibility and control of in-year budgets is an essential component of sound financial management, enabling operational managers to manage existing resources, providing the Corporate Management Team with information to forecast and make strategic decisions, and reassuring Council Members of appropriate financial management and governance. The Financial Services Team continually seeks ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the services they deliver and have applied continuous improvement to a number of projects. Budget monitoring was identified as being the highest priority for a Rapid Improvement Workshop, for which we were engaged to provide support.

The approach

The project was delivered as three interlinked elements.

Rapid improvement workshop (RIW)

RIWs focus on eliminating waste in a targeted process, or problem area, to deliver breakthrough improvements in a shorter period of time than a service review. A cross-functional team participated in workshops to analyse the current, redesign and implement the majority of the new process by the end of the RIW.

Lean thinking training

The entire Finance Department was introduced to Lean Thinking. In addition they were shown practical examples from the current state analysis, how the project team arrived at the future state, and they were

given an opportunity to contribute suggestions and concerns.

Information centres

The team developed an Information Centre, covering project planning, performance measures and problem solving.

The benefits

As well as a simpler and quicker process, the new process will see a significant reduction in time spent by Finance Officers on budget monitoring, time that will be applied to other projects and finance tasks. Also, more defined roles and responsibilities will aid achieving greater budget accuracy and reduce annual underspend. In addition, a variance report was built for the Corporate Management Team and the software package modified to simplify budget information for budget holders.

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The Rapid Improvement Workshop enabled us to fully engage our customers and to involve them in redesigning the budget monitoring process. It also helped us change from a complex and time-consuming process to a simplified one which reduced the amount of time spent by all on budget monitoring. The focus on an action plan and continuous improvement meant we have a clear idea of what we needed to do, and the improvements these would bring, to get closer to the ideal process.”

Leigh Hall, Group Accountant