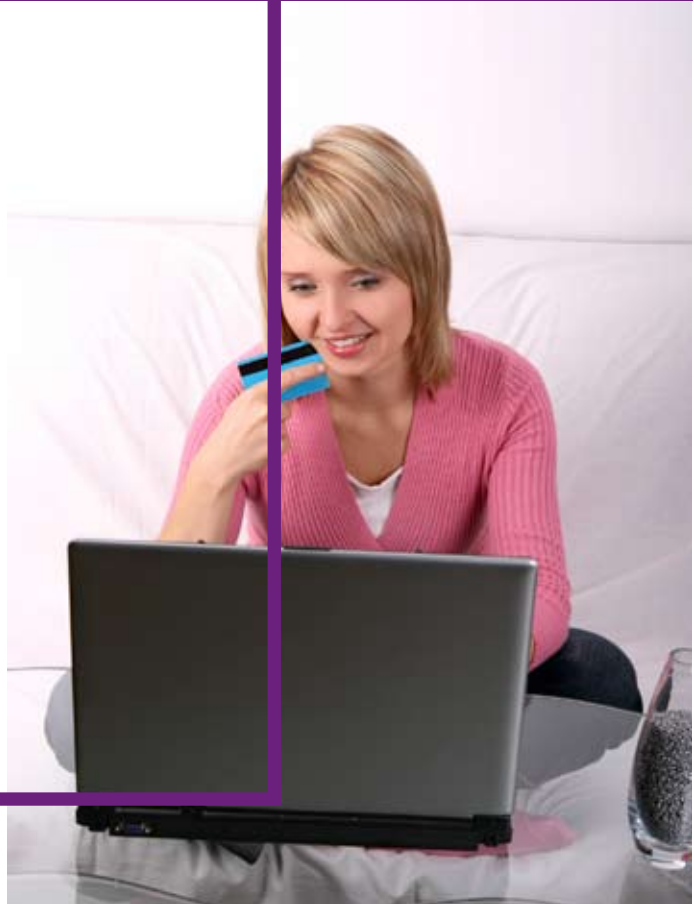


Case Study

Efficiency gains and citizen choice
at East Riding of Yorkshire Council



Self-service for citizens

Since 2002, East Riding of Yorkshire Council has consistently been at the forefront when it comes to offering citizens an increased choice of payment channel. By using Capita payment solutions, the Authority has identified tangible year-on-year efficiency savings.



The background

East Riding of Yorkshire Council has a population of 330,000 and covers an area of 930 square miles, and although largely rural, it includes the towns of Beverley, Bridlington and Goole. This unitary authority has over 146,000 domestic properties, around 11,000 of which are council owned and is home to 9,948 businesses. The Council employs over 14,000 people and has a gross annual expenditure of £500 million.

The challenge

For John Buttle, Billing and Collections Manager at the Council, replacing the existing cash receipting system became a priority in 2002. He commented, "The product had reached the end of its useful life, giving us an opportunity to review current payment facilities. Apart from counter services, we also offered internet payments through Girobank - a process that took up to four days – as well as telephone payments, but both these methods depended heavily upon manual processing".

The solution

In late 2002, the Council embarked upon a programme of updating the existing over-the-counter payment solution (replacing an earlier Capita product) and extending citizen choice via self-service payment channels such as internet and touch-tone telephone.

The first phase of these implementations began in early 2003 and comprised Capita's Counter Receipting and Income Management solutions. This was closely followed by Internet Payments and Touch Tone payments.

In early 2004, East Riding Council became one of the first councils to implement Paye.net. A browser-based solution, this allows staff to take Mail Order Telephone Order (MOTO) credit and debit card payments whilst on the telephone to customers.

The benefits

It is widely accepted within the Local Authority sector that the cost of taking self-service payments via methods such as internet or touch-tone, or even via a call handled by a member of staff, is considerably less than taking a face-to-face payment over the counter on an authority's site. It is estimated that the cost to the Council of a self-service payment is around a sixth of the cost of taking that same payment in a cash office.

Since launching Paye.net in 2004, the Council has taken around 43,000 payments valued at £6.4 million in what can be considered 'opportunistic payments'; those taken whilst the citizen is on the phone discussing general non-payment matters. Around 400 members of staff are able to take payments in this way, not just for core services such as Council Tax, business rates and housing rents, but also for diverse services within departments such as registrars, pest control, libraries, leisure and adult education.

Another notable benefit delivered by Capita's Payment Portal facility allows the Council to process card payments whilst integrating seamlessly with a wide range of bespoke front-end forms across various departments, for services such as bulky item collection, car parking fines and planning applications. The ease with which East Riding can introduce new services, coupled with the reassurance that all payments are carried out using Capita's secure managed service, is such that the number of departments using this service continues to grow far beyond all initial expectations.

The citizens of East Riding have also been quick to take-up the self-service payment options, available around the clock - all day, every day. In terms of Council Tax alone, around five percent of payments are now made via the Internet with nearly seven percent using the Touch Tone solution.

On the original implementation, John commented, "The system was easy to install, learn and use, for example two members of staff carried out all the implementation and training necessary to have around 100 library staff up and running within a week".



The next steps

As well as using Capita's Managed Service to process card payments made by both Internet and Touch Tone, the Council also accepts card payments within both Counter Receipting and Paye.net, although in these instances it currently uses an on-site APACS solution.

With the ever-increasing security requirements around card processing and the need for compliance with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS), the Council has taken the decision to move to Capita's Managed APACS solution. This allows for extensions to the service to include cardholder present and MOTO payments, and passes the major elements of responsibility around security of card data to Capita.

Moving to Capita's Managed Service will free-up the Authority's internal IT team from the overhead of managing, monitoring and supporting the specialist on-site APACS software and hardware and allow them to focus on supporting the Council's staff in providing citizens with a professional service.

The Council has recently signed-up for Capita's SMS Plus. This is a text messaging solution allowing contact with citizens via text and giving them the option to make payments via this service. This is expected to deliver a range of benefits including offering the citizens a further choice of 'self-service' payment methods which should help reduce the number of cash payments taken and a reduction in arrears through sending text message reminders in advance of 'overdue letters'.

This development is contributing to the Council's 'green' agenda with any communication by text saving on use of paper and the resulting carbon footprint of the delivery. It also recognises the growing trend in the number of organisations using SMS messaging as a powerful, cheap and convenient communication medium.

About Capita's Managed Service

Capita's highly secure and established Managed Service portfolio includes a range of products to process card payments via the Internet, touch-tone, SMS text, speech recognition and on-site Chip & PIN. Managed by a dedicated team, this solution is used by over 150 public sector organisations, each month processing around 475,000 payments with a total value in excess of £60 million.

The solution incorporates the latest measures to help combat card fraud, including Card Security Code (CSC) validation for MOTO, Touch Tone and Speech Recognition payments and card password validation (Verified by Visa and MasterCard SecureCode – collectively termed 3D Secure) for payments made via the Internet.

Capita's Managed Service products are certified to PCI DSS Level 1 and Capita is proud to have become the first major supplier to the local authority marketplace to achieve this standard.

Media Court,
70-76 Brunswick Street,
Oldham,
OL1 1BT,
t: 08701 627800
f: 08701 627801

cssenquiries@capita.co.uk
www.capita-software.co.uk

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