


Review and reset after false start for new cloud-based system's implementation programme

 **Customer:** Sandwell Council

 **Department:** Finance, Payroll, Procurement, HR and supporting services

In 2019, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council embarked on an ERP programme by procuring Oracle Fusion to replace their current Oracle EBS system. The Council's original implementation took the flawed approach of a technical 'lift and shift' of existing processes and their re-creation in the new system.

In 2021, the Council's new leadership team took the decision to pause the programme. They could see the implementation was failing, due to being poorly managed and resourced, poor stakeholder engagement and organisation-wide low confidence in delivering the right outcomes.







In 2022, Socitm Advisory was appointed to review and reset the implementation programme and project manage its successful delivery.

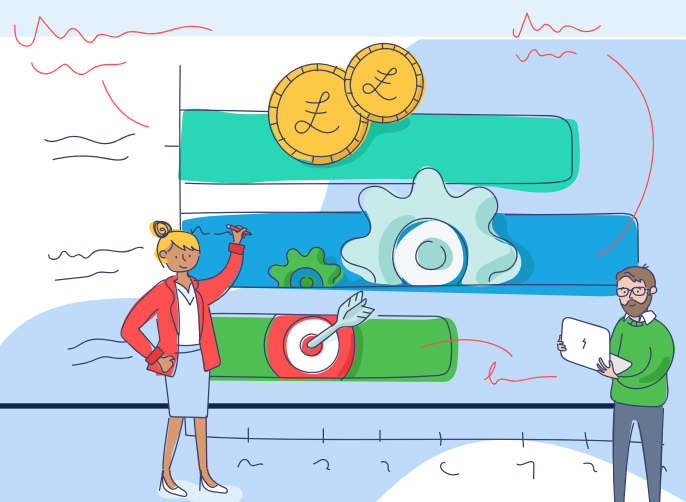
Biggest challenge

By the time Socitm Advisory was appointed in 2022, SMEs (Subject Matter Experts) within the Council had lived and breathed Oracle Fusion since 2019, so while still motivated and focused on a successful outcome, they had project fatigue and the scars from the previous provider's failed implementation. This is a challenge we have overcome by spending more time explaining our strategy and plans to reassure and bring them on our new journey.

Our brief and project goals

To ensure the successful delivery of the new system through the provision of:

-  The selection of a new Systems Integrator (SI)
-  Project management
-  Business change management
-  Solution architecture
-  Target operating model advice
-  Testing services





Our approach

- After selecting a new SI, we began with our Programme Health Check. Issues identified included:
 - Inadequate communication and engagement for the programme
 - No clear vision of deliverable outcomes and design principles
 - Insufficient resources
 - The need for a full refresh of governance with programme milestones
 - Minimal visibility and confidence in the new system
 - Lack of focus on change management
- We created a clearly articulated vision, highlighting design principles and outcomes
- We agreed a resource model and recruited where required
- We ran 'lessons learned' sessions to re-engage and re-motivate the SMEs
- We put in place a reporting structure
- We set milestone 'gateways' with entry and exit criteria for each programme phase
- We devised communication strategies for programme-wide and organisation-wide engagement



Notable learnings

'Adopt don't adapt' should be a mantra for any organisation moving systems to the cloud. To maximise the benefits of a cloud-based system's cost and time efficiencies and flexibility, organisations should change the way they work (adopt). Not change the system to continue working the way they did before (adapt).

Establishing a clear vision, clear plans, good communication, and a governance structure is vital for stakeholder engagement and buy-in, and project momentum and success.

"I'd also say Socitm Advisory have given us resilience when we needed it, and huge amounts of reassurance, confidence and focus with their project discipline and governance - all of which has got our project back on track."

Simone Hines
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council



"Socitm Advisory integrate with us unbelievably well and share our motivation, which has earned them an enormous amount of trust and respect from the Council's SMEs. They bring experience of ERP implementations with other authorities and with that a network of experts, contacts and references we've found very useful."

Simone Hines
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council



Outcomes so far

We've successfully promoted the 'one team' environment across multiple organisations, including Sandwell Council, Socitm Advisory, the new SI, and external consultants by encouraging collaboration and integration wherever possible.

The visible and vocal support, and hands-on commitment of the Sandwell Council's SRO and Programme Board has been vital for this success and for realising the benefits of project momentum and achieving the programme's goals to date.

While we're still some way off the April 2024 'go-live' date, we have successfully completed two of the four milestone gateways for the programme, achieving all the pre-set objectives for each phase.

In March 2023, a year after Sandwell Council was placed into 'special measures' by the Government, for governance and financial management failures, outside auditors commended the Council and recognised their significant progress in addressing the issues. The auditors also gave specific praise to this ERP programme, and the governance and structure we've put in place around it.

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