South Gloucestershire Council uses **Microsoft Project Online** to deliver more projects with greater efficiency

Microsoft

Industry
Local government

Location
South Gloucestershire, United Kingdom

Challenge
To provide total visibility of the Council's project portfolio and improve team collaboration

Solution
A centralised, cloud-based information hub for portfolio-level project management

Products & Services
Microsoft Project Online

Results
Single point of visibility, streamlined issue resolution, better strategic decision-making, increased project capacity

South Gloucestershire Council wanted to increase the capacity of its Environment & Community Services project managers by eliminating manual processes and giving its teams more time to play to their strengths. Switching to Microsoft Project Online, the council has achieved total visibility of its project portfolio, resulting in better strategic decision-making and faster issue resolution.

South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) is one of four councils in the West of England. The Environment & Community Services (ECS) Department is one of three directorates and is responsible for delivering Transport & Strategic Projects, Strategic Planning & Housing, StreetCare Transport & Waste Services, Safer & Stronger Communities, and Resources & Support Services. Projects within ECS range from community initiatives and heritage restoration to major transport schemes such as metrobus.

Achieving portfolio-level project management

Despite having up to 50 active projects at any given time, the council lacked a standardised project management system, relying instead on productivity apps like Microsoft Excel and Word for scheduling and reporting purposes, as well as general knowledge of APM best practice. While project management skills within the team were strong, the lack of standardisation meant project managers had to spend time completing manual reporting processes which meant less time resolving project issues. Having successfully secured funding to deliver additional projects, the council decided it needed to gather all of its project information in a single location to encourage more efficient information sharing, and to empower strategic decision-making across the entire portfolio, as well as individual projects.

> *"One project manager previously had to produce multiple reports for each workstream in their project which was very time consuming. Now, it can be reported on as if it were a programme, requiring just one report and saving a lot of time and effort."*
>
> Megan Wakely, Project Manager, South Gloucestershire Council

Key benefit

Project managers see the system as a way to promote their work at a strategic level and that's been a real push for them to migrate their project information onto the system, and to see the value in making regular updates.

"Due to the increasing volume of projects being delivered, it was difficult for our Executive Board to have an up-to-date, clear vision of all the projects across the portfolio. Now we have all that information in the one system, so that at a higher strategic level, decisions can be made in confidence and we can really see where the key issues are."

Emma Blackham, Head of Transport & Strategic Projects, South Gloucestershire Council

"On the whole, everyone is finding the system easy to use and project managers are keeping their information up to date. This has been really useful for team meetings and involving workstream leads to capture the hard work happening on the ground that make our projects successful."

Megan Wakely, Project Manager, South Gloucestershire Council

Achieving visibility that empowers decisions

Using Microsoft's cloud application, Project Online, the council was able to form the basis of an end-to-end Project and Portfolio Management (PPM) solution using familiar Office 365 tools.

Using Project and SharePoint, project managers can complete all their weekly highlight reporting and issue/risk escalation in a single space, providing a joined-up view of work across the directorate. The council is also able to store data in Datastore for use in highlight reports, helping to streamline processes and giving users the benefit of familiar tools, reducing training time.

Using Project Centre views at the Executive Board level, strategic decision-makers can highlight which project reports they want to look at. This enhanced visibility has helped provide reassurance that all major issues are being escalated and addressed at the relevant governance level, making it easier and quicker to move more projects towards completion.

> *"The system has really driven efficiency and helped us to look at our processes and see where we can make them better."*
>
> Megan Wakely, Project Manager, South Gloucestershire Council

Business benefits

Enhanced project visibility
The council's Executive Board now has greater visibility of the projects being delivered across the portfolio as a whole, making it easier to resolve issues.

Efficiency through automation
Automated processes and the ability to access documents anywhere using SharePoint mean that project managers spend less time on reporting – and more time resolving issues, helping to speed up project delivery.

Improved decision-making
The Executive Board now has total visibility of projects, with access to real time information and aggregate reporting for faster strategic decision making.

Enhanced collaboration
Now that all project information can be accessed from a single location, teams can work together more collaboratively. South Gloucestershire Council has seen high user adoption and a reinvigorated project management culture.

Improved service delivery
South Gloucestershire Council can now confidently grow its project portfolio and support its goal to deliver both existing and future projects to timescales and budget.

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