



Torbay Council

Contingency Service safeguards Bacs payments during coronavirus outbreak



Initially using a different vendor to make and collect Bacs payments, Torbay Council moved to SmarterPay after a product end-of-life decision meant their software needed to be upgraded. Recalling the transition to SmarterPay, John Norris, Operations Support Leader at Torbay Council said:

“We looked at several other vendors at the time but thought SmarterPay On Premise was definitely the best fit for us under the circumstances. With a well-designed product and clear development cycle, we knew we wouldn’t face another end-of-life scenario which was a key consideration. We also took a lot of confidence from our interactions with

the team about their support services and when combined with the fantastic pricing, it became a very straightforward decision.”

Enjoying a stable and reliable platform for sending Bacs files within the organisation, Torbay Council used SmarterPay On Premise for 4 years without issue. This continued to be the case until a period of severe weather conditions meant physical access to the Council site became restricted and the timely submission of Bacs files was jeopardised. Torbay Council sends approximately £35 million via Bacs payments each month in Direct Debits such as council tax, creditor files and other collections.

36
councillors

1973
first founded
on April 1st

10
council
committees

“Smarterpay Cloud was probably the best decision I have made in the last 10 years. I have just sent all the Bacs files from home, something that simply wasn’t possible before.”

John Norris, Torbay Council





“Smarterpay Cloud is a pleasure to use, whilst offering complete reassurance in terms of contingency as recent events have shown.”

John Norris, Torbay Council

The SmarterPay Cloud solution

The monthly payroll stands at £2.5 million alone. Underscoring the importance of the monthly Bacs submission, John revealed “if we weren’t able to send Bacs files, we’d run into major problems very quickly because we’d have no other facility to pay, so it’s taken very seriously.”

The incident led to the decision to look for a solution with an added contingency option so files could be sent remotely, off-site. As part of those contingency plans, Torbay Council undertook an options appraisal of various solutions for its existing Bacs provision and decided on Smarterpay Cloud to meet the requirement.

In addition to the previous functionality offered by their On Premise solution, SmarterPay Cloud would also enable Torbay Council administrators to login from any location with a secure browser to pay staff and suppliers as well as collect other Bacs payments.

Working in conjunction with other contingency measures, including a backup client machine and a VPN connection, the off-site contingency receives a duplicate copy of the monthly file submission which is then archived in case of deletion. It is then securely stored and can be accessed and sent remotely if circumstances arise where administrators are unable to gain physical access to the Council site.

The scope for the transition from an On Premise to Cloud implementation was drawn up by Smarterpay and the process of transition was extremely efficient. Project challenges were dealt with promptly and a regular point of contact was assigned for the project. With the transition fully complete, John remarked that “we were particularly impressed with the professionalism shown by Smarterpay team to achieve the goal, and their efforts to ensure we were completely satisfied with all aspects of the work undertaken.”

1650

employees
on payroll

£35m

Bacs payments
per month

£410m

a year in Bacs
payments

“If we weren’t able to send Bacs files, we’d run into major problems very quickly because we’d have no other facility to pay.”

John Norris, Torbay Council



“We would have no hesitation in recommending Smarterpay as a service provider or their products for Bacs requirements.”

John Norris, Torbay Council

Coronavirus & Bacs contingency

A month after Torbay Council had transitioned to SmarterPay Cloud, they found themselves using the contingency service in a real-life emergency, as coronavirus swept across the United Kingdom and the world. With all administrators in self-isolation or quarantine to prevent further spread of the virus, there was no-one who was able to physically access the Council site to send the monthly Bacs file submission. Had they not have implemented a contingency, approximately £35 million in crucial Bacs payments would not have been submitted.

Similarly, with the coronavirus showing

little sign of slowing down and without a back-up submission method, it may have only been the first of many monthly non-submissions leading to what John defines as “unthinkable consequences.” Explaining further he continued:

“The key was to put measures in place beforehand. The contingency wasn’t purposed for the coronavirus outbreak, but it was designed for that kind of situation. We have never faced these kind of circumstances before but we are preparing ourselves to submit our monthly Bacs payments remotely for an extended period of time and thankfully, because of SmarterPay Cloud, we can.”



Customer Profile

Created by the Local Government Act 1972, Torbay Council is the local authority of Torbay in Devon, England. The council provides a full range of local government services including education, social services, processing planning applications, waste collection and disposal and Council Tax billing.

About SmarterPay Cloud

From simple Bacs file submissions to Direct Debit Management and card payment processing, SmarterPay Cloud enables you to login from any location with a secure web browser to pay your staff and suppliers and discover the following benefits:

- ✓ Full remote contingency submission service
- ✓ Secure payments
- ✓ Direct Debit Management Solution
- ✓ Recurring card payments
- ✓ Open API for CRM integration
- ✓ Fully Cloud-based



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