



## Working with Herefordshire Council to expand self-service functions on Agresso Business World

### **Background**

Agresso Business World is an agile, fully integrated ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) solution that enables organisations to replace multiple, disparate systems with a single platform. Designed from 'the ground up', users can easily adapt to the system, in line with ongoing business or operational change.

Agresso was adopted by Hoople when the company was first established in 2011. Herefordshire Council is both the major shareholder and customer of Hoople and buys a number of 'back office' services, such as HR, financial management procurement, revenues and benefits from Hoople, many of which are supported by Agresso.

As time has progressed, effort has been made progressively to take full advantage of the functions available via the system and to increase the capacity for managers to 'self-serve'. This culminated in April 2015 when a full upgrade to Agresso took place, enabling greater functionality and less reliance on old fashioned paper-based systems.

The upgrade was instigated and rolled out by the Hoople

Upgrade Project team, driven by the fact that the system being used by the Council was going out of support. There was also a desire to offer more self-service functions to Council managers, many of which were not available via the older version of Agresso. The new upgrade would also fit with the overall drive by the Council – and Hoople – to move towards a paperless office, as it offered more opportunities for business process automation.

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### **Implementing the upgrade**

From January to April 2015, it was 'all systems go' for the Upgrade Project team. The core team of five, together with the project manager and specialist end-to-end testers were employed to plan the upgrade and make sure all was functioning well before the 'go live' date. All training materials were renewed and released via the Herefordshire Council SharePoint. Internal communications were

undertaken to ensure all staff were aware of what was happening.

In some specific areas, notably HR and Finance, additional face-to-face training was provided to give managers greater understanding and confidence in using the new functions. Hoople organised a number of training sessions that were attended by approximately 50 Herefordshire Council managers over a four week period.

Further follow-up refresher sessions were organised for those managers who still lacked the confidence to use the system effectively or had not had the opportunity to use it since the initial training. Additional support was then provided by Hoople on a one-to-one coaching basis, as required.

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### Results

The project was delivered on time and under budget. Inevitably, a few minor glitches were identified on day one but these were resolved quickly and the upgrade has generally been well received by Council staff.



### Human Resources

The Agresso upgrade has enabled cumbersome, paper-based, recruitment processes to be turned into an efficient, paperless self-service function.

For example, when recruiting new members to the team, managers no longer have to download a form from the Herefordshire Council intranet, complete and sign it before submitting to HR for action. Instead they now log

and progress all vacancies via Agresso. The recruitment process is thus made more efficient, enabling a smooth workflow from posting of initial vacancy through to final offer of employment. Other HR processes, such as contract extensions, creating, extending or deleting posts are also now possible via Agresso, thanks to the upgrade.

The new self-service recruitment facility is now fully embedded and Herefordshire Council managers are using the system effectively. The recruitment process is much more efficient with paper-based systems having been replaced by the on-line service. As well as the obvious benefits to the environment, the new system enables the Hoople team to better manage Herefordshire Council vacancies, keeping managers engaged and up-to-date at all stages of the recruitment process.

### Finance

Herefordshire Council managers have also benefited from the Agresso upgrade by being able to access a wider range of self-service financial reports. This has enabled managers to budget more effectively and has reduced the number of day-to-day requests for help received by the Agresso support team.

The Hoople team is involved in an on-going dialogue with Council managers, continually looking at ways for them to be able to self-serve the financial reports they require in a format that they can understand. A new 'Analyser' tool will soon be introduced which will enable managers to 'pick and mix' the variables they want and to choose from a number of different options in terms of how the information is displayed - for example pie chart, graph, numerical columns, etc. All of these initiatives are designed to help managers carry out their day-to-day responsibilities more effectively and efficiently and to remove some of the anxiety surrounding financial management.

An additional knock on effect from rolling out the self-service recruitment function (see above) has been that managers have become increasingly familiar with Agresso and hence less fearful of using the system as a whole, including for financial management tasks which they had previously found daunting.

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### The future

The self-service functions are part of a number of developments which are yet to be finalised and fully tested before roll-out. Further self-service functions will become available as time goes on, enabling Herefordshire Council managers to undertake key processes in a more efficient and effective way, reducing the amount of paperwork and duplication of tasks and hence speeding up approval processes.

Owen Jones, ICT Senior Architect, Agresso at Hoople says:  
“The developments to date have started to change the way

that end-users view the Agresso system into a key enabler to support business process. There are major plans to continue to automate business processes and to create an ongoing ‘road map’ of developments.

“For example, in 2016, Herefordshire Council users will start to benefit from the booking and approval of annual leave within Agresso. There will be major steps in training delivery with a new eLearning platform being created. Finally, there will be a real drive to move towards a SMAC (Social, Mobile, Analytics and Cloud) focus – this will allow users to engage with Agresso in a flexible manner.”

### Testimonial

Audrey Harris, Head of Management Accounting at Herefordshire Council, comments: “The Agresso support team have provided insight and support on the system’s capabilities. This has enabled us to work closely with budget managers on understanding the financial position and to focus on addressing the issues. The future planned developments will make finance and reporting clearer and easy to access for all managers.”

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