



LONDON BOROUGH OF
HARROW

A payroll partnership: Working with Zellis to deliver on time.

Ensuring a smooth
implementation with
time to spare



The London Borough of Harrow has a resident population of 260,000 and is committed to serving people's needs, including those of its 2,500 employees and 6,000 pensioners. Towards the end of 2023, the organisation learned that its existing payroll provider would be exiting UK operations. The Borough Council needed to find a new payroll partner and the team had just over a year to engage and implement the right system.

The search was on. And the clock was already ticking.

To support the procurement process, Harrow created an internal project team made up of HR, Finance, and IT teams, with a third-party consulting firm to help assess the market.



The selection criteria

So, what was Harrow looking for in a new payroll partner?

Ben Goward, Director of IT at London Borough of Harrow, who led the internal procurement team explains: **"We needed a tried and tested system that had a good track record of delivery in UK local government; a payroll partner that was established in our space. That was very important because we had this cliff-edge deadline of December 2024. If we didn't get our payroll migrated by then, we wouldn't be able to pay our 2,500 staff and 6,000 pensioners."**

Harrow was also looking for a payroll system that would complement the Borough Council's existing technology infrastructure. We also wanted a solution which could expand into HCM if we chose to do that in future.

"We implemented Microsoft Dynamics Finance and HR system in 2021 so it was important that any payroll system would be able to integrate with that in addition to meeting our deadline," explains Ben. **"Beyond that, we wanted a partner that would provide a good cultural fit. We really care about our delivery culture and how we work together with our internal and external partners so identifying a payroll provider that would become part of the team, rather than it being a transactional agreement, was a key part of the criteria."**

Automation: moving beyond manual

The Borough Council was also keen to engage a payroll system that would reduce administrative burden and drive organisational efficiencies.

Yvette Salthouse, Head of Payroll at Harrow, explains: **"We have a number of frontline workers, so we tend to get a lot of late notifications from those employees and their managers because it's not as easy for them to submit forms online. Over time, that was increasingly creating manual data entry, which was laborious and time-consuming. When looking for a new payroll system, we therefore wanted something that could automate a lot of that manual effort - and in a joined-up way."**

- ✓ Referenceable in local government
- ✓ Integrates with Microsoft Dynamics
- ✓ Good cultural fit
- ✓ Collaborative, ongoing partnership
- ✓ Automation to drive efficiencies

"Zellis met our key criteria on all aspects"

The Harrow team went out to tender using the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework, providing a structured set of requirements. Zellis, which is a pre-approved CCS supplier, was invited to bid along with two other providers.

"Once we'd received proposals from all bidders, our designated procurement team worked together to evaluate each one in a very transparent way. Zellis scored the highest for functional, non-functional, and commercial evaluation - and actually met our key criteria on all aspects."

Ben Goward, IT Director, London Borough of Harrow





Implementation: working towards a common goal

The verdict was in, and Zellis was chosen as Harrow's payroll system of choice. The project, though, was just beginning and there was no time for delay because people's pay - and their financial wellbeing - literally depended on it.

Attention turned immediately to implementation - a process that was highly collaborative from the outset. Zellis and Harrow worked together as one team to beat the clock, ensuring a successful delivery, with time to spare. The complex near-realtime integration between Dynamics HR and Zellis was a top priority for the technical teams, the first time this had been attempted anywhere in the world.

Yvette says **"The implementation began at pace in April 2024 given the looming deadline. We did the main build, which involved getting everything set up in line with all necessary rules and regulations, terms and conditions and pay elements and then moved to SRT (System Requirements Testing) and UAT (User Acceptance Testing) testing across June and July. We then did two parallel runs, one in September and one in October, before going live in November - one month before our absolute deadline.**

"Going live in November was always our aim and the whole implementation project was geared towards that. We knew we couldn't go past our hard deadline of December, for obvious reasons, so we were intentional in giving ourselves that one month contingency."

Talking about the importance of Zellis' collaborative approach and commitment to the common goal, Yvette adds: **"One of the things that made this project such a success is that it was truly collaborative. Everyone at Harrow and Zellis worked together with the end goal in sight. That doesn't always happen and the fact it did, was so important."**

It's a sentiment echoed by Harrow's Cllr **Kuha Kumaran**, an experienced IT professional who was also part of the procurement team: **"I would absolutely agree with that. There was a really strong sense of this being a team effort and there's no doubt that was crucial in enabling us to go live on-time and to budget."**

Benefits: the story so far...

Six months on from that successful go live, has the team seen any tangible benefits yet?

Despite it still being early days, the short answer is, yes.

50% reduction in payroll processing time

The Harrow team reports a substantial 50% reduction in payroll processing time. A task that used to take Yvette and her team four full days each month has been reduced to just two days, creating significant efficiency gains.

The knock-on effect, explains Yvette, is that “we can now open the next month’s payroll earlier. That’s really helpful because we can start processing the next cycle and get ahead of ourselves, which reduces the pressure on us as a team. That’s a very noticeable benefit that we’re seeing already.”

Fewer manual interventions

Another significant win is a reduction in the number of manual interventions. Yvette explains that manager reports of leavers and all absence data is now integrated directly from Microsoft Dynamics HR into Zellis. “This works really well, ensuring the payroll team are notified and cutting out a lot of the manual interventions we used to have to do.”

Customer experience that counts

The Harrow team also highlights Zellis’ continued support as an ongoing benefit: “Both our Customer Success Manager, Yvonne Charlton and our lead project consultant Laura Harvey, are just brilliant and so responsive. This is something we really appreciate,” says Yvette. “We can always get a quick response and likewise, the Zellis team knows they can expect the same from us. That’s been great.”



What’s next for Harrow and the future of payroll?

“Over the next few months, we’re going to focus on a period of BAU (Business As Usual). That’s the priority right now but we’re very excited about adding more functionality in the future. Zellis’ Realtime Payroll and anomaly detection features are of particular interest to us and the plan is to migrate over to those in due course.”

Yvette Salthouse, Head of Payroll, London Borough of Harrow



Thank you for reading.

**If you're ready to transform your
payroll and HR processes, get in
touch with the Zellis team.**

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