



Aquila Heywood

Delivering Automation Efficiencies

Case Study

Aberdeen City Council implemented a **multi-technology approach** to increase operational efficiency

Multi-solutions approach for automation

An Overview

Aberdeen City Council is the administering authority for the Local Government Pension Scheme through the North East Scotland Pension Fund (NESPF).

The Fund has around 24,000 active members, 16,000 deferred members and pays benefits to over 18,000 pensioners and dependants each month.

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Background

Following a review of administration procedures prior to the introduction of a Pensions Administration Strategy, NESPF embarked on a drive to improve operational efficiency by increasing automation and reducing the volume of enquiries to the administration team.

Employers also had to meet their Pension Reform obligations and find an efficient way to transfer data between payroll and the Fund. Improvements also had to be made for both employer and member communication.

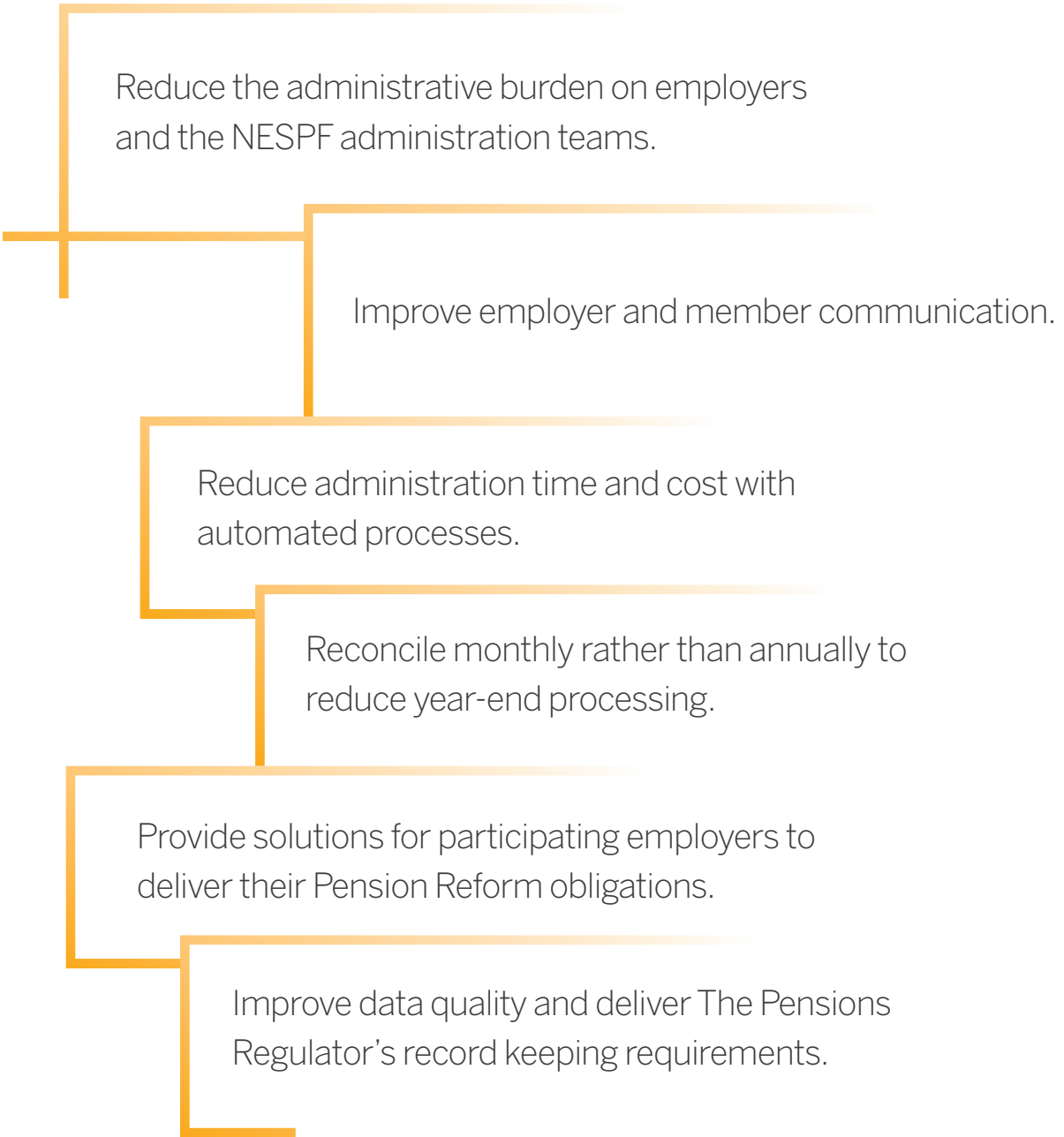
The Council already administered the NESPF with the Aquila Heywood administration solution, Altair™. With the knowledge that Aquila Heywood has an outstanding pedigree in providing market-leading technology solutions to the public sector, the Council worked closely with Aquila Heywood consultants to implement a multi-technology approach.

Using a single supplier to provide solutions connecting seamlessly into the existing Altair platform, as well as harnessing Aquila Heywood's industry-leading expertise, would prove to be a low-risk, high-benefit approach.

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Business Objectives

NESPF's business objectives were to:



Reduce the administrative burden on employers and the NESPF administration teams.

Improve employer and member communication.

Reduce administration time and cost with automated processes.

Reconcile monthly rather than annually to reduce year-end processing.

Provide solutions for participating employers to deliver their Pension Reform obligations.

Improve data quality and deliver The Pensions Regulator's record keeping requirements.

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Key Challenges

Information received from employers would often be inaccurate and missing detail.

1

There was a reliance on paper communication, which meant information would not be received in a timely manner.

2

The current methods were not secure and risked compromising the security of personal data.

3

The lack of resources and consistent processes in place for the many participating employers could also cause further issues as they prepared to meet their Pension Reform obligations.

Similar challenges would need to be addressed for NESPF member engagement. With disparate processes, a paper-based system, expensive postage costs and the added burden of high volumes of member queries generated as a result, meant a solution would need to be implemented that addressed the current issues as well as being future-proof.

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The Requirements

NESPF required a system that allowed employers to:

- View, update and submit information for members online
- Ensure personal data was secure
- Provide estimates for early and ill-health retirements
- Generate documents for scheme members
- Interact with the pensions team online
- Provide an automated means with which to fulfil Pension Reform obligations

Member engagement required the solution to deliver:

- An enhanced service to members
- A reduction in queries received by post and telephone
- Reduced postage costs (bulk letters, statements and so on)
- Increased security and reduced risk
- Improved communication and engagement

Both employer and member systems would need to deliver increased data accuracy and quality. All information exchanged between systems would need to be secure and auditable. Monitoring tools would be essential to assess and publish regularly the quantity of electronic data received to ensure the Pensions Administration Strategy service levels were met.

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The Aquila Heywood solution

The technology implemented by Aquila Heywood was not a 'big bang' approach. The solutions were carefully planned as part of a strategy developed through the strong working relationship between Aquila Heywood and NESPF. They benefited from industry, technical and subject-matter experts from both organisations.

The success of the existing Altair system gave NESPF confidence that the proposed new solutions from Aquila Heywood would achieve the business objectives.

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MSS and Employer Services

Member Self-Service

The implementation of the Altair Member Self-Service (MSS) provided Internet and intranet facilities to enable all employees past, present and retired to access their own information, update data, view their documents, review their benefits and carry out 'What if?' modelling.

MSS functionality included the ability for member requests to generate tasks within the Altair workflow system. This significantly lowered the administration time and costs for administrators, as well as improving the engagement experience of the members.

Employer Services

The Altair Employer Services feature provides all employers and departments, whether large or small, with access to the system remotely and securely over the Internet.

Once connected, employers are able to:

- View, create and amend member data
- Perform benefit calculations
- Produce and view documents
- Run, create and print reports online

Altair Employer Services makes use of standard Altair security management controls to provide appropriate levels of access. These controls allow individual users to update and create member data directly, or to submit data via an interface file for verification and later updating by NESPF. All access is ultimately defined and controlled by the pensions departments and can be restricted to view-only.

Multi-solutions approach for automation **i-Connect**

i-Connect

To meet the Pension Reform obligations of the employers, i-Connect was the ideal solution.

Purpose-built for the public sector, i-Connect is a data exchange solution that enables the uploading of bulk payroll data to NESPF's administration system, Altair. i-Connect validates the payroll data and manages the events generated by the payroll extract file through to Altair.

In 2014/15 more than 250,000 events were successfully processed and this will rise to more than 750,000 in 2015/16 as employers implement the solution to deliver the new CARE scheme requirements.

i-Connect gave NESPF and employers the functionality to meet requirements for Pension Reform, as well as providing reporting tools for both administrative and compliance purposes.

“ *Aquila Heywood has delivered secure self-service and data exchange solutions that deliver our business objectives for members and employers as well as reducing our administration costs.* **”**

Laura Colliss,

Pensions Manager

Multi-solutions approach for automation

Benefits delivered

The multi-technology approach from a single supplier delivered all business objectives required by Aberdeen City Council for the NESPF.

From a largely paper-based, unreliable and unsecure set of processes, NESPF now operates with:

- Reduced administrative costs
- Improved employer and member engagement
- Automated processes
- An award-winning data exchange solution, delivering straight through processing and high levels of security

Performance reports are generated and published quarterly that measure the quality as well as the quantity of electronic data received from employers as they move across to electronic submissions to deliver our Pension Administration Strategy requirements.

In 2014/15 there was a large increase in electronic data submitted by employers, who had begun to use i-Connect, with over 90% of the data being classified as high-quality. This meant that no file amendments were required and that the business objective of improved data quality for automated processing had been met. There were no submissions received during 2014/15 that were classified as low-quality.

For more information, contact us on enquiries@aquilaheywood.co.uk or visit our website: <https://www.aquilaheywood.co.uk>