



Walsall Council

Case study

Walsall Council's digital records strategy realises cost, efficiency and property savings sooner

Digital commercial drivers

Based in the thriving industrial heart of the West Midlands, Walsall Council supports around 280,000 residents with daily issues ranging from education, social care and benefits to housing, waste management, and planning services. Like many organisations, the Council is transitioning from paper-based manual processes to electronic records supporting agile digital workflows.

"Our main drivers for digitisation were speeding information access and employee efficiency, simplifying compliance by not over-retaining records, and reducing overall budget and resource pressure," said Paul Withers, Data Protection Manager at Walsall Council.

A clear case for outsourcing

The first step on that journey was consolidating internal archiving operations, offsite document storage, and shredding contracts placed with numerous providers. With varying retention requirements, the dispersed records management estate contained paper documents servicing all departmental activities, including social care, planning, highways, land registry, legal, bereavement, and more.

"The cost of doing nothing would have been around £6 million over ten years, so launching a document scanning programme was a no-brainer," added Withers. "We spoke with other councils. Some had tried to manage digital scanning internally and quickly canned the idea due to equipment and resource limitations with one saying it would have taken seven years to complete. That would have been a lot of savings to miss out on."

Achieving scanning objectives quicker

As a long-standing contracted storage partner, Iron Mountain® was invited to submit a proposal for a fully managed scanning service. The solution ensures secure compliance throughout all stages - collection, transportation, imaging, and destruction of paper and microfilm files.

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Industry

Government

Challenge

Accelerate the transition to digital records while ensuring secure compliance throughout the collection, transportation, imaging, and destruction of paper and microfilm files.

Solution

Iron Mountain® fully managed end-to-end secure collection and scanning service enhanced with InSight AI and ML capabilities.

Value

- > Avoided £6 million expense and major scanning resource burden
- > £60,000 saved within first six months; £120,000 within 24 months
- > Faster turnaround of FOI and SAR legal commitments
- > Two buildings were relinquished, lowering real estate costs
- > At-risk legacy records preserved in perpetuity

Once digitised, the files are uploaded to the Iron Mountain InSight™ platform, which provides actionable insights and predictive analytics through Machine Learning (ML). Crucially, improving information governance by adding structure, context, and metadata makes digital and physical records more usable and easier to search and track.

Quick wins with demonstrable ROI

Like most councils Walsall is increasingly being asked to do more with less. Following a seamless implementation it didn't have to wait long before the Iron Mountain scanning service started to pay back.

"We saved around £60,000 in the first six months in productivity gains and storage costs alone," noted Withers. "That figure doubled after two years, releasing money for re-investment into accelerating our digitisation efforts."

To date, Iron Mountain specialists have produced and uploaded 28 million scanned images. Previously, if the Council received a 20-day freedom of information (FOI) order or a 30-day subject access request (SAR), staff would have to locate, retrieve, scan, and return a document to archive – a process that could take several days and cost between £160 and £180 in labour. Now, digital files can be accessed in seconds with a few simple mouse clicks.

On-top benefits

Document scanning has also enabled the Council to optimise its real estate strategy, once again delivering better value for taxpayers' funding. "By rationalising storage rooms and filing cabinets, we've managed to repurpose space and clear two buildings, one of which was handed over to a school," added Withers.

In addition, ageing paper documentation, such as child adoption records with a minimum retention period of 100 years, has been preserved in perpetuity, eliminating the

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risk that it could be lost, mishandled, or damaged.

Withers sums up: "Our best decision was engaging early and collaborating right across the Council with regular workshops and reps invited from each directorate. The second was appointing Iron Mountain, a responsive partner that really understood our operational restraints."

Looking ahead, Walsall Council plans to leverage its investment in Iron Mountain InSight, for example, by using AI to assist with document redaction and integrating the platform with Microsoft Azure and migrating files from SharePoint to InSight where they can be stored more cost-effectively.

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About Iron Mountain

Iron Mountain Incorporated (NYSE:IRM), founded in 1951, is the global leader for storage and information management services. Trusted by more than 220,000 organizations around the world, and with a real estate network of more than 85 million square feet across more than 1,400 facilities in over 50 countries, Iron Mountain stores and protects billions of information assets, including critical business information, highly sensitive data, and cultural and historical artifacts. Providing solutions that include secure storage, information management, digital transformation, secure destruction, as well as data centers, art storage and logistics, and cloud services, Iron Mountain helps organizations to lower cost and risk, comply with regulations, recover from disaster, and enable a more digital way of working. Visit www.ironmountain.com for more information.

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