

Havant Borough Council Direct Services Transformation Case Study



Executive Summary

Despite Havant Borough Council operating one of the most cost efficient waste collection services in Hampshire through its DSO, it was still determined to make savings and improve services for residents. During 2009 Havant reviewed its future strategic options as part of its decision-making process in assessing the benefits of a larger joint-working project with 6 other Hampshire authorities. To assist with this strategic review the Council employed WasteConsulting LLP - a specialist waste management firm of consultants. The project brief included a review of the waste strategy, all refuse, recycling and garden waste collection activities, street cleansing, Parks and Open Spaces and enforcement activities. It also included a management restructure to streamline resources into a single team.

Working with Council officers and Members, WasteConsulting developed a range of efficiency improvement options. When the joint working project was disbanded Havant was determined to implement the efficiency savings identified within the strategic review.

The Council recognised it would require external support

to work alongside its management team to deliver this and again sought assistance from WasteConsulting LLP. The Strategic Review was converted into a timetabled action plan. WasteConsulting supported officers throughout the process providing guidance to managers and facilitating workshops with staff to progress the implementation of the efficiency improvements.

For the 2011/12 budget, the project delivered savings of £400K (c12% of current service spend) and identified further significant annual efficiencies that could be realised over the medium-term.

Key to the success of the project was the involvement of all Council officers, and the full support of the Director, Portfolio Holder and union.

Detail

The improved recycling rates achieved in recent years, along with very 'service-orientated' staff allowed the team to work with crews to remove one complete residual collection round. Critical to achieving this was the involvement of union representation in the working group,

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along with other crew, supervisors and consultants. Detailed communication plans, Member briefings, press and radio advertising were all put in place before new rounds were rolled out across the Borough.

To improve garden waste collections, targeted advertising and offers of wheelie-bins rather than sacks along with a rerouting exercise maximised service efficiency.

Parks and Open Spaces operations were critically reviewed by the team which resulted in a significant re-basing of tasks along with a move to annualised hours. Working with a small group of staff the team was able to address individual concerns and deliver acceptable new working patterns that optimised day-light hours, removing the need for overtime or seasonal staff.

Enforcement activities across the range of services reviewed were also subject to analysis through the process. Communication and liaison with operational teams was improved through jointly reviewing policies, priorities and procedures to ensure they fully supported the 'front-line' as a key element in delivering the transformation.

A number of areas were identified as offering considerable

potential for future efficiency. Details of these are shown below:

- Street cleansing operations have operated in a similar manner for a number of years. While the NI195 scores have been good and there are very few complaints, Havant was aware that changes to working practices, better use of mechanical sweepers and a more structured approach to area based working would yield benefits. WasteConsulting was able to share its recent first-hand experience of delivering similar changes elsewhere and by demonstrating to operatives how this works in practise, achieved the necessary buy-in. The method was successfully piloted in one area with close support from consultants and managers. This 'blue print' will now enable further roll-out across the Borough, in time.
- Parks and Open Spaces have already benefitted from significantly improved efficiencies through the transformation project. However, staff are keen to consider further operational changes such as extending annualised hours further and moving to a shift system of 4 day working in the winter.

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- The introduction of electronic data transfer from the WDA will allow 'real-time' analysis of operational performance leading to service improvement.
- Opportunities for partnership working will be explored as the Council develops greater integration following the shared Chief Executive and management team with East Hampshire District Council.

Comments on the project

The transformation project was well received by Members, Senior Officers and staff within the Council.

The immediate and on-going saving of £400K per annum was welcomed at a time when total Council funding is coming under increasing pressure.

The identification of further significant efficiencies that could be realised in the future is likely to form part of Havant's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Janet Rees, Executive Director, Havant Borough Council and East Hampshire District Council:

I am grateful for all your assistance in delivering the efficiency plan at Havant. Your team provided the right mixture of challenge and support. It is also very helpful to have a route map for future work and, as the financial settlement bites, I'm sure that we will return to that. The managers and employees at the depot enjoyed working with you and I thank you very much for it all.

Peter Vince, Operations Manager, Havant Borough Council:

I am extremely grateful for the advice and support offered by you and your team and would like to convey my personal thanks to you all.

Terry Leahy, Project Manager, WasteConsulting LLP:

This is an excellent example of what can be achieved by Councils when Members, Directors, managers and staff work together to challenge the status-quo. We are pleased to have been able to support Havant deliver this project.

If you would like to know more about the project or have any specific questions, please contact: terry.leahy@wasteconsulting.co.uk