

Hertfordshire County Council - The Way We Work Programme

Executive Summary

Hertfordshire County Council, with its Beacon asset management status, has long recognised the fact that the property it owns and occupies is there solely to support services to the public. Our approach is therefore to ensure that these important assets are put to maximum use to benefit the community – otherwise known as sweating our assets.

At the same time, we want the premises we use to be of good quality and fit for purpose. This requires us to exercise imagination and creativity in our utilisation and in managing the associated costs and risks .

In a nutshell, cheaper property leads to more opportunity for capital and revenue to be directed to frontline services. In turn this makes a significant contribution to meeting one of the Council’s strategic “Challenges”

- Maximising Efficiency Savings.

A major programme commenced in March 2005, known as The Way We Work (TW3) programme to help achieve these objectives. The programme includes a move of 4300 staff from 51 office bases to 3 (County Hall, Apsley and Stevenage). Currently over 1000 staff have relocated to Apsley and the Stevenage site will open in April 2008 with 1500 staff. In the first phase staff from Adult Care Services (ACS) and Children Schools and Families (CSF) have been co-located to Apsley to maximize the efficient working between social work teams. Already there have been significant financial and other benefits for the Council, staff and its customers from this co-location e.g. quicker decision making as key players at one location.

Risk management has played a key part in identifying the barriers to success, prioritising the risks and setting out mitigation actions to ensure a successful programme and illustrates how risk management is being embedded into large scale corporate projects.

As a direct result of the contribution that risk management has made (and continues to make) to the programme, additional staff are now being recruited to provide risk management support to other projects and programmes e.g. Building Schools for the Future (BSF).

Clear need

The programme involves:

- Embarking on an ambitious programme to rationalise our office base and transform the way we work, which incorporates:
 - Team working principles - e.g. work places allocated on the basis of function and need rather than hierarchy or status/team desking
 - Shared meeting spaces - e.g. formal meeting spaces complemented by informal meeting areas
 - Full concierge service – e.g. management of room bookings/meet and greet and document storage
 - Technology upgrade – enhanced ICT, use of Call Director phone system, wireless laptop network access and electronic document management
 - Flexible working – e.g. offices open from 0630hrs- 2130hrs, Touchdown areas and remote ICT access allow home working
- 4,300 office-based staff moving from old, cramped offices in diverse locations to strategically located modern accommodation (reduction from 51 to 3 office bases (County Hall, Apsley and Stevenage)
- A requirement to reduce the operational costs by £3.8m over 7 years and to release some £35m from the sale of other assets to pay for the programme.

This is the largest single capital programme that the County Council has operated. There are significant strategic and operational risks inherent in the programme:

- Financial - e.g. not making the sales of properties, insufficient funding
- Legal – e.g. complications over planning permission
- People – e.g. the new ways of working not meeting service needs/staff unhappy with new locations, insufficient room for the filing etc.

Description of approach taken

A programme team was established under the leadership of a senior manager, David Robinson (Programme Director). The team comprises of work stream leaders (senior and middle managers) representing the services (the users) as well as specialists in ICT/HR/Change Management/Transport /H&S/Property/Communications/Contractors and Risk Management. A rigorous programme management process was established including the production of a programme plan with regular reporting systems inbuilt. The Programme Director regularly reports to the Strategic Management Board, led by the Chief Executive who also reviews the risk register and uses the register as a tool for oversight of the programme.

At the outset the Programme Director was keen to identify and have a common understanding of the key risks to affect the programme. An initial risk workshop was held in June 2005 which established an initial risk register (using HCC risk methodology) broken down into work streams e.g. ICT, property etc. The workshop was also used to explain the risk management process and how this would be embedded into the overall programme management so that all workstream leaders understood their role and responsibility in managing risk.

From that risk register the list of red risks was built, which has been examined at each programme meeting where changes are made as necessary

The risk register is updated, by workstream leaders, on a monthly basis. A few days before each programme meeting the Programme Director receives a briefing by the Risk Manager on changes and agrees which risks will be discussed at the meeting (always red but some amber and green on occasions). At each programme meeting all the red risks are highlighted and progress on actions are scrutinised carefully.

Further workshops (dovetailing on change management workshops) have been held to review and refresh the register as the programme has moved on.

Innovation

The TW3 programme has several innovative features, including:

- Designing a change programme to achieve a complete overhaul of how we work and where we work from,

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Strategic Risk Category

- Relocating 1000 staff, of 4300 in total, into newly acquired, high tech offices
- Making a 20% saving on space requirement
- reducing cost of office moves from £1500 to £400 per head
- Introduction of a full concierge service, reducing replication of administration within departments.
- The deployment of a major change management process aimed at preparing staff to work in a new environment and to make best use of the technology.

In addition Apsley now houses an occupational health suite (enabling consultations closer to where staff are located), a training suite and a child protection suite designed with all appropriate security measures in liaison with Herts Police. The training suite has also been designed to double as a command centre for County Council business continuity purposes. A generator has also been installed to supply power to the training suite and other essential areas of the campus.

Partnership Working

There has been significant involvement of both external and internal partners. Externally the MACE (Project, design and construction consultants), LSH (the council's estate agents) as well as Mouchel Parkman (repairs/maintenance/capital projects consultants) have played key roles in the location and fitting out of the buildings used, TW3 project management (Mace) and in the sales of the assets (LSH). Internally those services affected, plus key staff in corporate and other service departments have been involved in the programme team each with their own risk responsibilities.

Staff are also our "partners" in this new venture and significant consultation and communication continues to take place at various levels to ensure that there is a smooth transition of staff to the new ways of working. Innovative staff consultation techniques and processes were used to ensure that staff were kept fully informed but also their individual special needs were accounted for (e.g. design changes to toilets/furniture and desk layouts etc)

We also were successful in attracting the NHS district nurse team to co-locate to the new Apsley facility.

Impact

From the risk management perspective, in an Audit Committee Report on TW3 risk management (Sept 06), the Programme Director stated;

“As Programme Director I have given full support to the Risk Management approach undertaken, have found the focus of attention on the key programme elements of risk really helpful in ensuring that practical delivery is achieved within required timescales and within budget parameters. The more detailed Way We Work Risk Register has given the members of my project team the opportunity of not only recording possible risks within their areas of responsibility but more importantly the opportunity of sharing the information which has led to greater problem solving and more of a whole team approach to the tasks/challenges we have had to overcome. The learning element of the programme has been enhanced through the recording of risks and their resolution which has been taken into account as we move from one base to the next, facing similar problems that have already been tested/ resolved satisfactorily”

Strategic outputs achieved:

Reduction in office space per head - 20% reduction in net internal area of office space, reduced ratio of work stations to staff from 1:1 to 3:2, 54% reduction in paper stored, equating to over one kilometre of paper records, achieved by electronic document storage

Reduction in operational costs - Reducing revenue cost of offices by up to £3.8 million over 7 years, by dramatically reducing the maintenance backlog on an ageing stock of buildings

New approach to integrated facilities management -TWWW enabled development of a fully integrated approach to facilities management, developing a bespoke service that supports staff adapting to new ways of working

Risk Management – A key component of helping to achieve the County Council’s strategic TW3 objective in moving to a new way of working, and helping to achieve its Challenge of “**Maximising Efficiency**”. The model is now being used in other programmes such as Building Schools for the Future.