



CORPORATE AND
TRANSACTIONAL

Delivery of Joint Projects and Shared Services



Project background

The Derbyshire Transformational Partnership was established in 2002 following the award of Local Government On-Line (LGOL) funding. The funding led to the creation of several shared service projects. To support the development of these projects a dedicated partnership team was established comprising of external consultants and secondees from partners.

The first tranche of projects and systems were successfully implemented in 2004 in compliance with the LGOL grant criteria. At this point the partners decided to continue with the partnership, to develop the projects further and to explore new areas of partnership working. Funding for the partnership and its projects is now achieved via partner authority contributions.

The partnership continues to thrive in 2006. The Programme Manager for the partnership has recently been appointed to a permanent position; this highlights the ongoing commitment to partnership working in Derbyshire. The partnership team is made up of secondments from partner authorities who retain their existing employment status and rights. The team is supported by external consultancy when required.

Improvement through efficiency



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Partnership Forum projects

The following projects have been delivered as a shared service:

A-Z of Services

The A-Z is a single system shared by 13 partners. It is a hosted system which provides a single view of services in Derbyshire regardless of which partner provides the service. For example, a customer using the A-Z on the Amber Valley website can access information on any of the services provided by Amber Valley or any of the 12 partner authorities. Post code searches help to ensure that, where appropriate, the information presented is tailored to a particular area.

In 2006, the “Better Connected” survey undertaken by the Society of Information Technology Managers (SOCITM) made specific reference to the A-Z as a good joint initiative that works better than the separate county portals that have been set up elsewhere.

Geographic Information System (GIS)

All 13 partners participate in the Derbyshire GIS project. A central GIS team manages the project and co-ordinates data collection from other management information systems for its presentation on the web. A data warehouse, which is the primary partnership storage facility for geo-spatial data sits on the GIS infrastructure which was purchased with LGOL grant funding. The project supports the Intranet and Web Mapping portals as well as other major initiatives such as GPS vehicle tracking, remote working and the Local Land and Property Gazetteer.

Contact Centre

The Derbyshire County Council contact centre (Call Derbyshire) is now well established and is the primary number used by customers when contacting the Council. Call Derbyshire is open for ‘normal’ business 8am – 8pm during weekdays and is also available on Saturdays. This out of hour’s facility has been utilised by a number of partners.

e-Tendering

The County, City and District councils have grouped together to use a common e-tendering service within their organisations. The system is a hosted solution which is administered on behalf of all partners. The solution enables the tendering process to be totally electronic, including the submission of tenders and short listing suppliers, thus reducing the overall time and cost of the tendering process.

e-Procurement

A common approach to e-procurement has been in operation across the partnership since late 2005. The IDeA Marketplace is the solution used and this allows individual and group contracts to be made available via the Derbyshire electronic marketplace. A dedicated e-procurement team has been established and this is funded by partners. The team helps with supplier adoption, undertakes catalogue management and provides training and first line user support. The joint approach to e-procurement has realised cashable savings on many contracts through greater partnership discounts.

e-Recruitment

The e-recruitment system successfully implemented by the County Council has recently been extended to other partners. The system is remotely hosted, but administration and user support is provided centrally. The partnership has paid for development work which allows multiple local authorities to operate together. The outcome is that potential job applicants can view jobs and receive email alerts from several partners without the need to register multiple times. The initial implementation has shown that e-recruitment can result in an increase in job applications whilst at the same time reducing costs on paper based and time consuming recruitment processes.

Drivers

There is no denying that a key driver for forming the partnership was the opportunity to receive additional money to support partners e-Government objectives. However, the partnership quickly grew into something more than this offering a network of groups where members provide mutual support to each other. It acts as a focal point for contact between the partners and the other bodies such as the East Midlands Centre for Excellence (EMCE) and the East Midlands Improvement Partnership (EMIP) in respect of collaborative IT/resource projects.

The partnership continues to lead on a wide range of initiatives funded either by partners or contributions from external resources.

Objectives

There are many reasons why partners participate in the Derbyshire Transformational Partnership and sign up for many of the projects. The vision in Derbyshire is to provide services for our customers that are accessible regardless of the access channel and the initial point of contact. The projects that have been implemented to date provide an infrastructure that removes confusion relating to structure in the county and presents a single view of services.

Partnership model and governance structure

Although the partnership itself is not a legal entity there is a legal agreement covering partnership activities. The agreement was instrumental in ensuring that all partners knew the extent of their responsibility and liability and provides the governance structure to enable it to operate.

Decisions are made by the Transformational Management Board. The board is chaired by an elected member and each partner is invited to send a senior elected member and an officer to attend; each organisation has one vote. In addition to the management board there are a number of other project and user groups. The Derbyshire Transformational Partnership Programme Structure is detailed in the flow chart below.

Proposals for new projects are considered by the management board. Only projects that involve at least five partners are considered for partnership funding. Partners are required to sign a participation form for each project they are involved in.

Quote

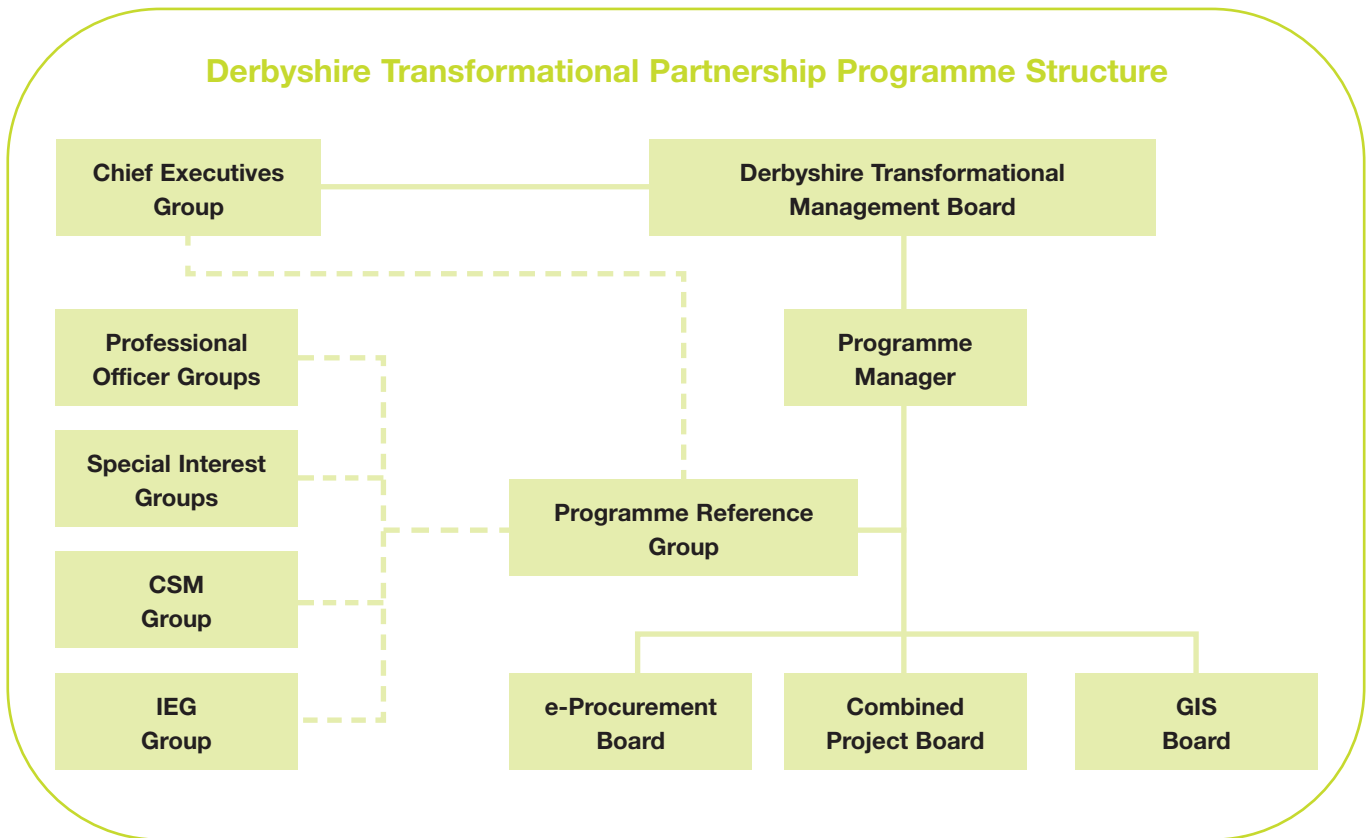
“The partnership does not owe its success to a legal agreement; it is the trust and respect that has built up between the partners which bonds the partnership together.”

Mark Whelan,
Programme Manager

Description of the partnership

The programme team is funded by partner contributions and has the responsibility for implementing the work programme which is agreed each year by the Transformational Management Board. Partners contributions are based on the projects that they are involved in and the content of the programme which varies from year to year.

The team reports progress against the work programme to the Transformational Management Board, IEG Group and other project groups on a regular basis. The Derbyshire Chief Executives group are also consulted on a regular basis relating to the partnership.



Cost savings

Significant cost savings have arisen from many activities undertaken as part of the partnership programme, savings are derived from the use of shared resources, the removal of duplication and provision of co-ordinated programme management.

Staff

A programme team is funded by partners to administer the partnership work programme. The team provides a single focal point for partners and project managers and co-ordinates the implementation of the projects. The team facilitates shared learning across all partners and is able to call upon expert advice as requested.

ICT

Many of the projects that have been implemented are delivered on a shared ICT infrastructure. For example, the A-Z, e-Tendering, e-Recruitment and GIS are delivered via a single ICT infrastructure hosted either remotely or at the County Council. Substantial discounts have been achieved through economies of scale and suppliers only having to deal with a single point of contact.

Accommodation

There have been no significant accommodation issues for any of the projects as the programme team is based solely at County Council provided offices.

Support costs

All the projects that have been implemented have made use of procurement and legal resources provided by the County Council. This has maintained continuity for the whole of the program and alleviates pressures on individual partner resources.

Other

Savings have been made on a number of projects. For example, on e-Procurement, partners can benefit from discounts negotiated on behalf of the partnership. On e-Recruitment, partners have made substantial savings in excess of £35,000 per annum by switching to the partnership solution.

Sharing the savings

Costs and benefits are equally distributed amongst contributing partners. However, the County Council and the City Council make larger contributions to the projects they are involved in due to their size. Smaller partners such as the Peak District National Park and the Fire and Rescue Service, likewise make a smaller contribution.

Where financial benefits are solely attributable to a particular partners implementation project (such as reduced costs for e-Recruitment by moving to the partnership solution), these are realised by that authority.

Service quality impact

Improvements in quality of service are an important aspect of all partnership projects. This is most apparent in systems that directly affect the delivery of customer facing services such as the A-Z, Customer Relationship Management and Content Management systems. Implementation of these systems by partners has formed part of their overall e-Government and customer services programmes and thus it is difficult to directly attribute service quality improvements to the implementation of individual systems.

In order to measure the overall impact on customer service delivery, the partnership, with funding from the EMCE, has undertaken mystery shopping exercises. These exercises provide independent feedback on the quality of services received by customers accessing our services, benchmarked against other local authorities.

The first two exercises have shown a higher than average score for customer service when compared to a national local authority database, with significant improvements being made between exercise 1 and 2. A further exercise is planned during 2007.

Measuring efficiency

Recent projects have used the RSE Brent ROI model to forecast the potential cashable and non cashable benefits of each project. The return on investment model highlights potential non cashable benefits such as savings on officer time in the back office, increased capacity to deal with more transactions etc.

The partnership team provide an annual statement for partners detailing the cashable efficiency gains realised from the procurement and operation of systems. These include ongoing savings related to support and maintenance costs. Operational efficiency gains achieved are left to each individual authority to assess and identify.

Key risks and risk management

The partnership team maintains a programme risk register for all projects, the register is regularly reviewed at partnership board meetings.

Client function

No formal client arrangement exists for the partnership. However, the Derbyshire Chief Executives play a pivotal role in overseeing the functions of the partnership and the partnership team.

Chief Executives take an active role in establishing the annual work programme for the partnership and determining the funding. Regular updates on the progress of the work programme are presented at a quarterly Chief Executives meeting.

Gateway reviews

The Gateway Review Process has not been seen as appropriate for any of the partnership projects. However, other rigorous control mechanisms are in place to ensure projects are viable from inception through to completion.

A business case must be produced, agreed by the partners and presented to the Transformational Management Board before any project can commence. Business cases which do not show resulting service improvements or financial savings are not taken forward as projects.

Following the approval of a business case and the move to project implementation, a project board, sponsored by a senior officer is appointed. Regular progress reports are submitted throughout the life of the project to the Transformational Management Board who monitor the project.

What next

The partnership establishes the work program on an annual basis. As the emphasis on partnership work increases there is increasing interest in undertaking further shared service projects and this has been reflected in the 2007/2008 work programme that has been agreed with partners.

Learning points

The experiences within Derbyshire have shown that it is possible to work together and deliver shared services. The appointment of independent programme management during the early years of the project and the adoption of the legal agreement were both instrumental in ensuring the partnership was built on sound footings.

Two areas where things may have been approached differently are:

Communication

It was difficult to respond to all 13 partners needs simultaneously due to the pressures of delivering the projects. It would have been a significant help to have had a dedicated communications resource to liaise with partners whilst leaving project managers to implement the projects.

Benefits realisation

As the nature of the projects were innovative, it was not possible to benchmark prior to the projects being implemented. It has proven difficult to accurately measure the full benefits of projects (which have been partly addressed by such initiatives as the Mystery Shopping project). This in itself can create a barrier when returning to partners asking for further funding to enhance or extend existing projects.

Transformation Partnership Authorities

The Derbyshire Transformational Partnership comprises the following 13 core authorities:

- Amber Valley BC
- Bolsover DC
- Chesterfield BC
- Derby City
- Derbyshire CC
- Derbyshire Constabulary
- Derbyshire Dales DC
- Derbyshire Fire & Rescue
- Erewash BC
- High Peak BC
- North East Derbyshire DC
- Peak District National Park
- South Derbyshire DC

Derbyshire County Council is the lead partner and provides the procurement and legal expertise for the partnership.

Role of the EMCE

Initial investment for the early projects was provided by a LGOL grant. The work programme for the partnership is now primarily funded by contributions from partner authorities. Recent grant awards from the East Midlands Centre of Excellence have enabled additional projects to be undertaken.

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