



WILTSHIRE & SWINDON SMARTPLACE PROGRAMME LESSONS LEARNED REPORT

Project name Programme Management

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Author:	Philip Knowling
Owner:	Philip Knowling

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Distribution

This document has been distributed to:

Name	Organisation
Mark Baker	Wiltshire County Council
Tony Molland	Kennet District Council
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Glenn Smith	Swindon Borough Council
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Lance Allen	Trowbridge Town Council
Shirley Davis	Westlea Housing Association
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Michael Dunn	BT

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Introduction

1. This report has been written by the Wiltshire and Swindon Smartplace Programme Manager [**Programme Manager**] for the 16th Meeting of the Wiltshire and Swindon Smartplace Programme Board [**the Board**] on the 27th July 2006. It sets out the lessons learned from the Programme Management element of the Wiltshire and Swindon Smartplace Programme [**the Programme**] and is intended for distribution to any recipient who feels the lessons learned may be usefully applied to other projects.

Background

2. The Programme developed from the decision in June 2002 by a group of public sector organisations across Wiltshire and Swindon to work together with BT to secure the benefits of broadband and related technology for the people and organisations of Wiltshire and Swindon. As a result of this decision the Wiltshire & Swindon Smartplace Partnership [**the Partnership**] was formed, with Wiltshire County Council taking on the role of Accountable Body. The Programme was launched on 28th July 2003 with a planned start date of 1st August 2003 and a planned completion date of 31st August 2006.

The Partnership

3. The Partnership initially comprised: the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), Wiltshire County Council (WCC), Swindon Borough Council (SBC), North Wiltshire District Council (NWDC), Salisbury District Council (SDC), Trowbridge Town Council (TTC), Kennett District Council (KDC), the Learning Skills Council (LSC), and BusinessLink Berkshire & Wiltshire (BLBW), BT and Bluewire Solutions Ltd. However, Bluewire Solutions Ltd withdrew from the Partnership in September 2004 and Westlea Housing Association joined the Partnership in June 2005.
4. The Partners nominally contributed £7 million to fund the Programme but, in practice only £2.1 million of this funding was in cash.

Aims and Objectives

5. The Programme's aim was:

To maximise the benefits of broadband and associated ICT to businesses, learners and communities across Wiltshire and Swindon.

6. The Programme's objectives were:

- To increase access to Broadband & ICT technology in Wiltshire & Swindon to 82%.
- To increase take up of Broadband & ICT technologies in Wiltshire & Swindon to 20%.
- To help the businesses, learners and communities of Wiltshire & Swindon to maximise the benefits of broadband and ICT.

Programme Management

7. Having taken the decision in June 2002 to proceed with a Programme, progress was initially slow. Therefore, the decision was taken in May 2003 to recruit an experienced full time Programme Manager to co-ordinate the day to day management of the Programme. The Programme Manager was selected under open competition and joined the Programme on 8th September 2003 on a three year contract; the Job Description and Person Specification for this position is at Annex A.

Lesson 1: An experienced, full time Programme Manager was required to establish and maintain the focus and momentum of this high profile, complex and high risk programme.

Programme Governance

8. One of the first tasks of the Programme Manager was to agree the arrangements for the governance of the Programme. These were set out in the Programme Initiation Document and agreed by the Board at their third meeting on 23rd October 2003. They were as follows.
9. The overall control and direction of the Programme was the responsibility of the Board, which was also responsible for providing the resources necessary to implement the Programme. A representative from each of the Partners sat on the Programme Board. As the Partnership was not a legal entity, Wiltshire County Council undertook the role of accountable body, entering into contracts on behalf of the Partnership and employing the programme management staff. Day to day co-ordination of the Programme was the responsibility of the Programme Manager. He was authorised to take decisions on behalf of the Board that were consistent with the Programme Initiation Document, Project Initiation Documents and any other Programme Management Documents that had been approved by the Board. The Programme was implemented by means of a portfolio of projects which were brigaded into four themes: Business Development, Learning & Skills, Community Capacity Building and Broadband Infrastructure. Each theme was managed by a Theme Champion, who was accountable to the Board for the delivery of the Projects within their theme. In addition to these four themes, there was a Programme Marketing element managed by Glennie McIntosh Communications. This documentation of the Programme's governance arrangements, signed up to by all the partners, proved to be an important reference document as the Programme progressed.

Lesson 2: It is important to document a programme's governance arrangements and ensure that all partners formally signed up to these arrangements.

Programme Board

10. The Board was responsible for the overall control and direction of the Programme. This responsibility was exercised through Programme Board meetings which took place at a frequency dictated by the quantity of business and the pace of development of the Programme, typically every two to three months. In order to ensure that the Programme and Project Managers had clear and unambiguous direction from the Board, the following structured system of decision making was adopted.
11. All decisions taken by the Board were given a unique number and recorded in the minutes of the Board meeting at which the decision was taken. The background to the decision was set out in formal documents that were put before the Board for consideration. These documents took the form of a Project Initiation Document where Board approval was being sought to initiate a Project, or a Board Paper where some other decision was being sought; the template used for Board Papers is at Annex B. If the Board was to make an informed decision and provide clear and unambiguous direction, thought and effort needed to be put into these papers and they needed to be circulated to Board members in good time for them to study them and seek any clarification. The normal practice was to circulate these papers one week before their meeting, but if the Board is to exercise its responsibilities diligently, it is important that it insists on being given sufficient time and information on which to base an informed decision.

Lesson 3: In order to ensure that the Programme and Project Managers were given clear and unambiguous direction by the Board, it was important that a structured system of decision making was adopted.

Lesson 4: If the Board is to make an informed decision and provide clear and unambiguous direction, papers must be circulated to Board member in good time for them to study them and seek any clarification. If the Board is to exercise its responsibilities diligently, it is important that it insists on being given sufficient time and information on which to base an informed decision.

Progress Reporting

12. There were two requirements of the reporting system established by the Programme. Firstly it had to ensure that sufficient data was gathered to enable an informed assessment to be made on whether or not the Programme objectives had been met. Secondly, it had to provide sufficient information to enable the Programme to be managed effectively. Provided these two requirements were met, the aim was to keep reporting requirements to a minimum and, wherever possible, use existing management information. The system that emerged was that of monthly reporting of progress data and quarterly reporting of cashflow forecast. Reports were made against a template provided by the Programme Support Office, who used the information to write monthly progress reports for each theme and the Programme as a whole. These monthly progress reports were given wide circulation to any stakeholder who expressed an interest in receiving them. In common with most projects and programmes, progress reporting was a sensitive issue as several project managers were reluctant to commit to anything but the most superficial reporting regime. However, following protracted consultation, a consensus emerged and, once bedded down, the system has worked very effectively, although it has proved necessary to pursue some areas rigorously in order to ensure quality data was provided in a timely manner. The task of data gathering and report writing is resource intensive and was carried out very effectively by the Programme Manager's Assistant. This is a key role and if under resourced the quality of the data will suffer and the effectiveness of the overall management of the programme will be affected.

Lesson 5: Data gathering and report writing is a key role and if under resourced the quality of the data will suffer and the effectiveness of the overall management of the programme will be affected.

Conclusions/Lessons Learned

13. The following is a summary of the lessons learned from the Programme Management element of the Programme.
 - 13.1. An experienced, full time Programme Manager was required to establish and maintain the focus and momentum of this high profile, complex and high risk programme.
 - 13.2. It is important to document a programme's governance arrangements and ensure that all partners formally signed up to these arrangements.
 - 13.3. In order to ensure that the Programme and Project Managers were given clear and unambiguous direction by the Board, it was important that a structured system of decision making was adopted.
 - 13.4. If the Board is to make an informed decision and provide clear and unambiguous direction, papers must be circulated to Board member in good time for them to study them and seek any clarification. If the Board is to exercise its responsibilities diligently, it is important that it insists on being given sufficient time and information on which to base an informed decision.
 - 13.5. Data gathering and report writing is a key role and if under resourced the quality of the data will suffer and the effectiveness of the overall management of the programme will be affected

Annexes

- A. Smartplace Programme Manager Job Description and Person Specification
- B. Board Paper Template

Annex A: Smartplace Programme Manager Job Description and Person Specification

Job Description

Department: Corporate Services

Job Title: Smartplace Programme Manager

Post No: tba

Grade: Hay Grade 6

Effective Date: 8th September 2003

Job Purpose

1. To ensure the implementation of a multi-agency based programme that will maximise the benefits of ICT and broadband technology for business, learners and communities across Wiltshire and Swindon.
2. This is a novel, high profile, complex and high risk programme that is central to the achievement of the 10 year vision for government in Wiltshire and Swindon. The programme will also make a major contribution to key targets in the Wiltshire and Swindon Economic Strategy, the Lifelong Learning Plans for Wiltshire and Swindon, the Agenda 21 Strategy for Wiltshire and Swindon and the aims of the Wiltshire and Swindon Anti-Poverty Group.
3. This post is a key appointment within the Council, supporting Wiltshire and Swindon's drive towards implementing e-Government.
4. The Director Corporate Services (WCC) will manage the post on behalf of the partnership. The type and volume of work will be of a consistently high level of complexity and pressure throughout the three years of the appointment and the post holder will be required to deliver the Programme under very limited supervision.

Responsible to

5. The Programme Manager is responsible to The Wiltshire and Swindon Smartplace Programme Board for:
 - 5.1. Developing, keeping under review, and regularly updating the agreed Smartplace implementation plan.
 - 5.2. Ensuring regular and structured meetings with programme champions in order to have a clear and comprehensive idea of progress.
 - 5.3. Monitoring and evaluating delivery against targets and recommending action as appropriate to the Board.
 - 5.4. Ensuring the secure and effective management of the programme budget.
 - 5.5. Positively promoting Smartplace locally, regionally and nationally.
 - 5.6. Ensuring open and clear communication channels are maintained with initiatives that are likely to overlap with Smartplace.
6. The Programme Manager is responsible to the Director Corporate Services, Wiltshire County Council for:
 - 6.1. Financial scrutiny and approval of spend against the Wiltshire County Council element of the marketing, communications and general management budget.

6.2. Line management of Programme Support Office staff.

Responsible for

7. Financial scrutiny of expenditure and management of the Programme Budget of £7,000,000.
8. Financial approval of expenditure of the £2,200,000 cash element of the Programme Budget up to a maximum value for each item of £50,000 excluding VAT.

Contacts

9. The Programme Manager will have regular and significant contact with members of the Programme Board, which is chaired by the Leader of Wiltshire County Council and comprises senior representatives (typically Chief Officer or equivalent) from the Learning and Skills Council, Business Link Berkshire and Wiltshire, Local Authorities, BT, Chronos Technology and the South West Regional Development Agency. These contacts are likely to occur on a daily basis.
10. The Programme Manager will work closely with the Theme Champions responsible for delivering the key themes of the Smartplace Programme, each of who are at a senior (typically Assistant Director) level within their respective organisations.
11. The Programme Manager will come into regular contact with senior representatives of national government, and influential members of the local business community and voluntary sector.

Key tasks

12. Prepare and negotiate contracts with on behalf of Wiltshire County Council.
13. Manage contracts on behalf of Wiltshire County Council.
14. Promote the Programme at conferences, and other public and media events, representing Board Members where necessary.
15. Co-ordinate the activities of Theme Champions.
16. Manage the Programme Budget.
17. Scrutinise spend against the Programme Budget.
18. Authorise spend against the marketing, communications and general management budget.
19. Provide policy, advice and guidance to the Programme Board.
20. Manage the Smartplace implementation programme.
21. Manage the Smartplace Programme support activities.
22. Secretary to the Smartplace Programme Board and Executive Group

Special conditions

23. This is a full time post (37 hours/week), which is temporary to 30 Nov 06.

Person Specification

1. The Programme Manager will be required to undertake the day-to-day management of the Programme without supervision, and will be expected to exercise his judgement in deciding when to seek the views or advice of Chief Officers within the County Council or members of the Programme Board.

Qualifications

2. Essential qualifications.
 - 2.1. Post Graduate Qualification in Management (e.g. MBA) or equivalent.
 - 2.2. Degree or equivalent professional qualifications (e.g. Institute of Management based on examination) relevant to the services being provided.
 - 2.3. Project Management Qualification.

Experience

3. Experience required.
 - 3.1. 5 years experience in the development and implementation of co-ordinated activities through cross-organisational partnerships.
 - 3.2. 10 years experience in the delivery of major projects or programmes to budget, outcome and performance targets.

Skills & Competencies

4. Skills and competencies required.
 - 4.1. Excellent project and programme management skills.
 - 4.2. Confident, able communicator orally, able to work with a range of people at all levels.
 - 4.3. Effective people motivator outside of direct line of management structure.
 - 4.4. Able to establish and maintain effective, harmonious working relationships with people from a variety of organisations and structures.
 - 4.5. Able to establish and organise cross-organisational systems (e.g. for information management and sharing) and procedures.
 - 4.6. Good organisational and administrative skills.
 - 4.7. Competent in the use of Microsoft Project 2000, and experience in the development, application and promotion of IT.
 - 4.8. Good knowledge of how ICT and broadband can enhance the lives of individuals and communities as well as economic and educational infrastructures.

Annex B: Board Paper Template

Wiltshire & Swindon Smartplace Programme Board Paper *{insert number provided by the Programme Manager}*

Issue

1. *{This section should comprise a short statement of what you wish the Board to consider.}*

Recommendation

2. *{This section should set out your recommendation to the Board. It should be worded in such a way as to ensure that the Board is able to give clear and unambiguous direction.}*

Timing

3. To be considered by the Programme Board at its meeting on the *{insert date of Board meeting at which paper is to be taken; this should be agreed with the Programme Manager}*.

Background

4. *{The section should explain the background to the issue and make the case for the recommendation proposed at Section 2. Sub-headings should be used to assist the reader and sufficient detail should be included to enable an informed decision to be made by the Board.}*

Attachments

5. *{List any attachments that accompany the paper}*