

# CAPITA

## Capita and Harrow Partnership



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*Michael Lockwood, Chief Executive*

### Overview

The Strategic Incremental Partnership between London Borough of Harrow and Capita is designed to allow the Council to transform the way it delivers its services. The contractual relationship, which has been in place since September 2005, requires Capita to deliver a series of outcomes through a Council wide transformation programme.

A strategic vision was developed by the Council and Capita with the following key objectives:

- Enable the Council to deliver its services efficiently and effectively;
- Change the way in which front line staff deliver services and improve the customer experience;

- Facilitate the sharing of information across the Council, its customers and its partners;
- Allow the Council to make the change from a provisioning authority to a commissioning one.

Since the partnership was formed there have been a number of changes in the Council. A new Chief Executive joined in April 2007, with a mandate for wide-reaching improvements throughout the Council. He has already re-structured the senior staff directorate, improved internal communication and published a set of focussed corporate objectives and priorities. His plans to improve the performance of Council services are ambitious and will require the support of clearly defined and closely managed transformation programmes.

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## Background

Under the terms of this Partnership, which was signed in September 2005, the Council can use Capita's capacity and capability to manage and deliver projects and programmes which help the Council meet these objectives. Amongst the capacity and skills available through the partnership are project management, business process re-engineering, finance support, IT development, procurement, L&D and HR. The Council can also draw on Capita's outsourcing experience across the public and private sectors, including their 20 years in running outsourced services for local government

## What has been done so far?

Under the partnership contract, Capita are required to deliver £45M of savings over 10 years. To date, £37M of those savings have been made. These savings are required to cover the investment made in the first tranche of transformation activity (implementing SAP ERP and MI across the Council). These savings have been achieved through the implementation of new financial systems and processes, through a range of procurement initiatives, and through financial re-structuring.

In addition, access to Council services has been enhanced through the design and delivery of Harrow's contact centre and One-Stop Shop, and the creation of new and enhanced web-based services. These are key parts of the Council's integrated change and transformation programme.

The technology underpinning these service improvements was rolled-out within planned time and cost constraints (11 months from project initiation to 'go live'). This technology provides the building blocks from which the Council's future transformation programmes are being constructed. In addition to the financial systems mentioned above, Capita built a comprehensive management information system, rolled-out Customer Relationship Management software and created the technological capability which allows the Council to have a single view of its customers.

These projects were supported by an integrated training and change management programme (including job re-evaluation) through which Council staff developed the new skills and knowledge necessary to assimilate new working practices.

*'This is a period of particularly significant change, not just for Harrow Council but for the whole of Local Government. By investing in these strategic projects and generating strong commitment across the Council to improve the way we deliver services to the citizens of Harrow, we have built ourselves a strong platform from which to face the challenges of the Place Shaping agenda. Prompted by the work of the Partnership, we have developed a vision of where we want to be as a Council and we know that we have access to the resources necessary to get us there. The unique partnership we have built with Capita brings together the best of the public and private sectors to deliver successful programmes on time and to budget. Working together, we have already truly transformed the way the Council manages its back-office functions; we are currently developing robust solutions that fully exploit the business benefits and cost savings of mobile and flexible working; and, we have plans for further transformations that will make Harrow Council an exemplar of good practice going forward. Some are critical of private sector partnerships. I take the view what matters is what works, and this partnership certainly works for Harrow Council.'*

**Michael Lockwood**, Chief Executive



### How does it work?

The Business Transformation Programme (BTP) is a dedicated department of the Council. Capita and Council staff work closely to identify areas of the Council's business which can be improved. The BTP team offer managers elsewhere in the Council support, guidance and practical help with projects and programmes. They also suggest and design new programmes that help deliver the Council's key objectives. Once a strategic business case has been agreed, the team study current working practises, management processes and work-flow methods, with a view to establishing an Outline Business Case setting out a plan for delivering the envisaged efficiencies and service improvements, the costs and timescales for implementing that plan, and the quantity and timing of benefits. They then work with the relevant Council staff to implement the plan and deliver the benefit.

*'The partnership between Harrow Council and Capita has been four years in the making, one-and-a-half years of planning and two-and-a-half years of doing. This initiative has not been without its challenges, and having lead this from the start it has taken trust, real commitment and a great deal of hard work from both sides. By combining its own resources with the additional capability and capacity offered by Capita, the Council has been able to do some truly remarkable things. We implemented SAP in record time (11 months from project initiation to 'go live'), our residents are already benefitting from having the increased access to the Council and the improved service we offer, we have a huge amount of management information which is allowing us to make informed decisions about service delivery and how we plan for the future. We have, with Capita, taken a look at our operations from a new perspective, which has allowed us to continue to build on our initial investment. We have a comprehensive transformation plan which we are now starting to deliver. This programme of change will truly transform Harrow Council.'*

**Carol Cutler, Director of Business Transformation**

## The Next Phase

As part of the on-going programme of work, in November 2007, the Council agreed a new set of transformational projects covering three key services within the Council – Housing, Revenues and Benefits and Planning.

This programme will allow the Council to change the way in which its front-line staff deliver services, allowing them to spend more time with customers by using mobile and flexible working to reduce their ties to the office and their reliance on paper-based documentation (reducing the Council's carbon footprint and saving paper). It also supports the Council's drive to reduce their overall civic footprint which in turn will realise significant accommodation-related savings.

New information technology systems being developed will allow Council staff to share information across directorates,

providing a richer single view of the customer and their transactions with the Council. These technology initiatives will form the basis for further transformations in other areas within the Council at incremental cost over the coming years.

These systems will enable managers to accurately measure the productivity of individuals and teams and eliminate re-working within departments and across the entire Council, improving efficiency and productivity.

As part of the programme, staff will be encouraged to develop skills in areas such as:

- Managing Change
- Project Management
- New systems and processes
- Performance Management

*'The issues facing Local Government over the next five years are both complex and complicated. Confronting these issues is both an intellectual and leadership challenge. Within the Harrow Partnership there is both a clear vision and strong leadership. The Partnership allows us to corral the intellect and experience across Harrow Council, the Capita Group, and Capita's other Local Government Partnerships to outline and deliver the Council's transformational journey. Harrow Council has demonstrated its willingness and ability to take the first innovative yet daunting steps to on this journey. There is more to come, it is an authority which should not be underestimated. Its commitment to change and the plans we have, and those which we are jointly developing, will allow it to not only to meet the challenges of the next five years, but it will put the Council in a position where it can respond quickly and flexibly to challenges which as yet are unforeseen.'*

*Catherine Cross, Capita Partnership Director*

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