

## Case study: South Hams and West Devon Council

### The challenge

- Merging the back-end services of two councils to save money and provide better service
- Changing the staffing structure and designing a new recruitment process to aid its success

### The Solution

- The creation of a behavioural framework aligned to the new target operating model, allowing the councils to recruit for behaviours rather than necessarily experience
- Newly-designed organisation model showing the new staffing structure and what the savings would be
- Placing a specialist iESE consultant on each interview panel and making an iESE advisor the interim manager of support services while all staff were interviewed

### Why iESE?

- iESE understands local government
- iESE can keep the cost down by sharing knowledge and best practice amongst councils
- iESE's builds capability rather than dependence
- iESE provides an impartial view and can offer post-project support

### Results

- Annual savings of more than £5m across the two authorities
- Successfully changing the culture of the organisation.



## South Hams District and West Devon Borough Council

South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils (SHWD) have made significant savings by successfully integrating their back-end services, while the creation of a new Locality Service has freed up highly-skilled staff and increased its visibility to its communities at a time when many councils are scaling back in-the-field activities.

### Deeper integration

iESE has been working with SHWD since 2014 when the two councils - who have been shared service partners since 2007 - embarked on a transformational change programme. iESE co-designed what the future organisation would look like, helped implement this and assisted putting the right people in place after the two councils realised it was no longer efficient to have separate ICT systems, administration teams and their own management structures, or the best way to serve its customers effectively.

The new model and structure, designed against customer demand, means where a customer would previously interact with several different departments, they now contact one officer who has complete sight of process and can see it in progress on one ICT system integrated with the back office. Managers taking on a new employee, for example, previously had to contact HR, finance, payroll and ICT. Now the manager makes one self-service request, which goes to one officer who carries out all of the tasks.



**Sophie Hosking,**  
**Executive**  
**Director, Service**  
**Delivery and**  
**Commercial**  
**Development**

*"iESE really understands local government. Other advisors could help us restructure, but it takes a different kind of organisation to help change a culture."*

*"iESE provided us with an impartial view which was important to us when carrying out our staff assessments and implementing the transformation programme."*

*'iESE has been working with SHWD since 2014 when the two councils - who have been shared service partners since 2007 - embarked on a transformational change programme'.*

## More staff on the ground

Another fundamental change was the introduction of a new locality model. This involved reviewing the workflow of the entire council and placing locality-facing functions into a discreet team. Maintaining the previous staffing levels was not sustainable and paying specialist officers to undertake ad-hoc tasks was not effective, such as having qualified Planning Officers spending time putting up planning notices.

Under the new model, Locality Officers - who were recruited from across the organisation - were given the training and resources needed to undertake the required tasks, receiving accreditation in areas such as play park inspections, water quality testing, cemetery inspections and much more. The majority of the 30-plus tasks now undertaken by Locality Officers were previously undertaken by specialist officers.

## Changing recruitment methods

The councils recognised that the new model needed fewer managers, people who could work collaboratively, be innovative and were outcome-focussed. iESE helped create a behavioural framework aligned to the new target operating model to allow recruitment for new roles to be based on behaviours rather than necessarily experience.

A senior consultant from iESE became the interim manager of support services while all staff were interviewed and a specialist iESE consultant sat on each interview panel. Interview questions, traditionally designed to test candidates' knowledge, now test the behaviours the council needs – collaboration, ownership of outcomes and adaptability.

With iESE's ethos of building capability, information, skills and knowledge were shared with the councils' staff throughout the process and most of the activity on the programme can now be carried out by them.