



# Securing long-term viability and service improvement through in-sourcing leisure services and public halls

## Overview

London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) had outsourced both leisure and library services to an external contractor since 2010. Following a Council decision, LBH decided to insource their leisure centres and libraries in 2020. They had a target to have the transfer for the leisure centres completed within 6 weeks.

## The Challenge

In mid-September 2020, V4 Services Ltd (V4) were engaged by LBH to provide support and advice for the stages of establishing and deploying a Council-Owned Company, also known as a Local Authority Trading Company (LATCo), and the resources to support the Project Management Office (PMO).

The PMO support was necessary to insource:

- the leisure operations across 6 sites to a LATCo and
- the public halls directly to the Council.

## The Solution

The overall project objectives were to successfully complete the in-sourcing of the leisure operations and the public halls by 1 November 2020.

In order to complete this the project was divided into two phases, focusing on:

- Phase one – in-sourcing of both services and the establishment of the LATCo and
- Phase two – opening of the public halls and leisure centres during November and December 2020.



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The PMO was provided by the V4 team who were able to provide additional specialist knowledge, as necessary. They supported the Council in the following key areas:

- TUPE transfer of approximately 350 staff
- Generation of initial payroll and establishment of pension scheme
- Transfer of information particularly in relation to FM, H&S, contracts
- ICT set-up, migration, and bridging arrangements
- Financial systems, and governance and procurement policies
- Communications using social media, website, and correspondence across clients, residents, and the wider public
- Sales and branding delivered by a third party supplier, TA6
- Customer services including telephony
- Advice and support on the establishment of the LATCo

From the outset of the project, a strict governance regime was established which included weekly board meetings (senior officers from LBH with V4 Project Team) incorporating risk management and provision of highlight reports.

Improving the leisure centres for their community had been a priority for LBH and, from a PMO point of view, this involved additional meetings and working closely with the FM and Corporate Properties departments to restore and improve centres prior to re-opening. The delivery of this element was impacted by the effects of a cold winter and shortages caused by the pandemic and Brexit.

## The Outcomes

**Phase 1:** the transfer was successfully completed by 1 November 2020 with all the necessary legal paperwork being completed on time.

**Phase 2:** This phase was partially completed when 3 of the 6 leisure centres opened in early December 2020. Difficulties with the boilers and heating, mainly the result of the initial lockdown, made it impossible to open the others.



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Unfortunately, with the re-introduction of national Covid-19 related lockdown regulations, the centres and public halls all closed again from late December 2020.

V4 continued to support LBH with project management and, when the project moved to a situation more aligned to 'business as usual' (Phase three), V4 continued their PMO support for LBH's wholly owned trading company Lampton Leisure. Weekly project meetings covering the wider corporate services, as well as specific FM meetings, helped to monitor the considerable investment in the leisure centres.

Work continued to improve the leisure centres' environments, both internally and externally, and finally the 6 leisure centres were able to reopen with the rest of the leisure sector on 12 April 2021.

V4 continued to work with Lampton Leisure and LBH to establish their procedures and SLAs on how they would work effectively together in the future.

## Key Successes

The established trust and confidence amongst the project team: V4, LBH and Lampton Leisure.

The governance adhered to within the project had a significantly positive impact on efficiency and effectiveness of the project.

The effectiveness of the specialist advice provided on LATCos.



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