

## **Taking a Co-ordinated Approach to Project Planning – the Programme Management Office Function**

### **1. Background**

1.1 The Council is currently embarking upon or in the course of delivering an unprecedented range of projects and initiatives emanating from the Five Year Plan, many of which are gaining momentum after a period of laying the groundwork and preparation.

1.2 With this large increase in significant project activity Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have proactively recognised the need to develop a Programme Management Office that provides a central view of all major project delivery activity.

1.3 The development of a Programme Management Office is in line with good practice in the majority of FTSE 100 companies and many Local Authorities where co-ordination of project activity, prioritisation and effective scheduling of financial and human resources is key to the successful delivery of major change programmes.

### **2. What is a Programme Management Office?**

2.1 A definition from Cranbrook School of Management states that that a PMO is:

‘An organisational body or entity assigned various responsibilities related to the centralised and coordinated management of those projects under its domain. The responsibilities of the PMO can range from providing solely project management information to being responsible for the direct review and assessment of programme delivery, quality and likelihood of success – with proposals for rectification submitted to the Governance Board’

2.2 A PMO can be ‘passive’ and provide the following services:

- Producing a route map for all of the programmes, placing projects and programmes onto a timeline and understanding the high-level dependencies between the various work streams
- Coordinating plans between projects and monitoring resource use
- Monitoring and reviewing project performance against delivery targets
- Implementing and operating a programme dashboard / scorecard
- Consolidated view of budgets
- Identifying, documenting and monitoring programme benefits

## 2.3A PMO can also play a more 'active' role in project delivery assurance

All activities within the passive role, plus

- Conducting project health checks and post-project reviews
- Providing estimating, scheduling and risk management advice to PMs
- Proposals for prioritising and scheduling new projects, including involvement in benefits management and business cases, contingencies etc.
- Identifying the Governance Board Risk appetite and presenting back actual Risk profile and proposals to modify if required.
- Quality monitoring and enforcement of standards.

## 3. How does the Programme Management Function in TWBC operate?

3.1 The members of the Management Board meet on a monthly basis under the title of Programme Management Board. The sole focus of this meeting is on the progress and delivery of the Council's key projects.

3.2 The Programme Management Board receives a pack of project information in a standard progress reporting format. The Programme Management Board also receives requests for new projects to be added and a 'watch list' of future project activity is also maintained.

3.3 The Programme Management Board also request interdependency reviews between related projects to ensure effective delivery across multiple work packages.

3.4 The Programme Management Board operates within the following guidelines:

- Review of standard progress and status reports from key delivery projects
- Confirm that new projects can proceed to the initiation stage.
- Prioritise projects where conflicts of personnel or resources create a clash
- Agree project rescheduling if project deliveries clash or resequencing would provide a better outcome for The Authority
- Sign off the delivery Risk profile of the combined project activity
- Request greater visibility of projects where needed
- Suggest actions where greater project clarity could be gained (e.g. Senior Management presentations)
- Request interdependency reviews to ensure a co-ordinated delivery approach

### 3.5 The Board **WILL NOT**:

- Make delivery decisions on behalf of projects (Programme / Steering Board responsibility)
- Make scope changes to individual projects (Programme / Steering Board responsibility)

3.6 The PMO role within TWBC is currently largely passive but the Programme Management Board has given the mandate to develop a more active PMO role.

## **4. Practical example of positive PMO intervention and project co-ordination**

4.1 The Programme Management Board requested that the PMO undertake an interdependency review between Civic Complex, Public Realm 2, Cultural and Learning Hub and Crescent Road Car Park Projects.

4.2 A series of workshops were facilitated by the PMO where a co-ordinated design plan was developed. All design activity will now be co-ordinated across each of the initiatives to ensure a consistent design approach and integrated planning across these key sites within the Borough.

4.3 Also agreed at the workshops were the following joint co-ordinated actions:

- The three projects should coordinate public consultation dates and messages and Member briefing should also be co-ordinated.
- Web site communication should also be co-ordinated and cross-referenced and the communications team should be briefed by all three projects and an integrated communications plan should be developed.
- Additionally a workshop was held in March to co-ordinate the delivery and build aspects of these activities.

4.4 The group discussed the potential issues arising from work on all projects being underway during summer 2018.

4.5 The group will consider the issue further and present to Programme Board for priority and phasing decisions if required.

Ian Hirst, Head of Digital Services and Transformation  
[ian.hirst@tunbridgewells.gov.uk](mailto:ian.hirst@tunbridgewells.gov.uk)