

# Case Study: Westminster City Council



In 2010 Westminster City Council, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea planned to combine specific areas of service delivery in response to financial pressures facing local government.

In 2011 this Tri-Borough partnership issued a report setting out the framework for a ground-breaking programme of change, championing shared services and combining back office and management costs as the way forward to generate savings. Reducing procurement costs through improved processes, systems and increased co-operation was part of the framework. In 2012 the challenge was directly taken up by the Tri-Borough authorities.

## **Challenge – to create one e-procurement platform that could accommodate the widespread outsourcing of combined services for multiple local authorities**

“In Strategic Procurement we were going through a transformation of our commercial foundations to make our organisation more advanced in terms of people, processes and IT. We needed to find an e-sourcing solution that could deliver not just an e-tendering platform, but e-contract, e-supplier relationship management (e-SRM) and e-spend too. We began a procurement exercise to find the right technology. Many providers expressed interest, but we chose BravoSolution as the best-in-class, most economically advantageous solution for the Tri-Borough and on which to base the capitalSourcing platform destined for pan-London use,” explained Andrew Curtois, Head of Category Management at Westminster City Council. It is now 12 months since the BravoSolution system was identified

to fulfil the diverse requirements of three autonomous local authorities, and since going live in January 2014 is now providing them with one place to manage procurements, award contracts and monitor supplier performance. Andrew has already used it to manage the end-to-end procurement of a Tri-Borough ICT services contract, following a uniquely challenging but successful implementation phase.

## **Implementation followed a unique path**

“We were implementing an e-tendering solution for not just one, but three local authorities, each with its own ideas and requirements,” explained Andrew. “It was a major challenge, not just for BravoSolution but for the Tri-Borough. We set up an implementation team with representatives from each borough and BravoSolution worked closely with us to form an efficient working group. We had made several attempts previously to converge on one procurement workflow across the Tri-Borough, but this was our first successful attempt – a major step for the three boroughs.”

Kylie Burke, Project Lead for capitalSourcing and Operations Support Manager - Systems for Westminster City Council, was one of the key team members involved in the implementation. She identified the issue of timescales as the biggest obstacle. “Timescales were aggressive and challenging,” she said.



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“We were attempting to have the whole system implemented in one go, which was always going to be a challenge with the resources we had. We quickly realised a more staged approach was more sensible. BravoSolution helped us prioritise the workload to achieve this. It set up kick-off meetings and gave us an overview of the modules we were working on, explaining how we would implement each module one by one according to a pre-determined timetable to help reach our target.”



“Starting with e-tendering, we standardised all documents to enable all three boroughs to adopt a common workflow. BravoSolution helped us through this process by giving us examples of existing customers of a similar size and equally high numbers of buyers. This was particularly helpful since it works in a similar way to us, with complex and diverse divisions. It was a steep learning curve for us, so basing it on something similar that had already achieved success was a real advantage – and it showed deep commitment on the part of BravoSolution.”

Basing its structure on that of existing best practice outside of local government carried a hidden advantage, said Andrew: “In taking on a truly pioneering business development, the Tri-Borough did not want to give the impression that one council’s workflow would be adopted over another; so using an example from outside of the framework was an ideal scenario.”

## **A Tri-Borough system requires integration of three distinct models**

By its very nature, implementing a system to accommodate the business models of three different operations was going to bring challenges. The three boroughs were accustomed to their own working methods and systems. “Westminster works in a more centralised way from the other boroughs, which are much more devolved,” explained Kylie. “So we had to find a happy medium, even down to which terminology to use in the workflow, so that everyone felt comfortable with it. For example, RBKC and H&F do not use Category Management terminology, so we had to find something mutually acceptable by all. It sounds small, but these things are very important when you are using them on a daily basis to make business decisions.”

“In another example, we had to agree on the questions to be included in the templates and BravoSolution helped us structure these to ensure they would be mutually acceptable. They set up a conference call with the project leads from an existing client team, who talked to us about lessons learned and gave us an insight into their implementation timetable -- this was really helpful. They also gave us access to their supplier and buyer guidance and PQQs to see how their structure worked, which again was incredibly beneficial. BravoSolution excelled at bringing us collaboration that really worked.”



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Integrating the three business structures into one procurement system also meant integrating their data. Gathering the information from each borough was a large enough task, but getting it all into the new system was going to be an even greater one, said Kylie: “BravoSolution undertook a legacy upload for us; it generated the fields and questions we wanted and built them into the site; all contracts were put into the system and once we gave them access to all our supplier details, each one of which needing to be registered on the system, they did a mass upload for us. This involved a great deal of two-way input – it was a mammoth task, but they were able to activate all the contracts we provided.”

BravoSolution’s e-sourcing suite brings wider business benefits. Andrew’s role as Head of Category Management means that he sees first-hand the effect the system is having on daily routines and ultimately the effectiveness of the business.

“We use the system every day to raise prior information notices (PINs), advertise in OJEU, and to raise our contract advertisements. It creates a good workflow and ensures all category managers are working to the same process. They can create a PQQ within the system using one of the templates we have standardised, and do likewise for the ITT. It is highly beneficial that everything is done online and automated, even the evaluation, eliminating a lot of paper work. When suppliers register and respond the evaluation panel can enter their scores in real time. The calculating is done for us, so no separate system is needed. The system has given us the perfect structure: the qualification envelope, technical envelope and commercial envelope mean that category managers are thinking in the right way and structuring in the right way -- as you should in the public sector.”

The system has been used effectively to run some major public procurement projects, like ICT, highways, customer call centre and back office systems and print and fulfilment. It was under Andrew’s auspices that the complex and successful ICT procurement programme was carried out. “Everyone involved in the ICT procurement gave glowing references on the system. For suppliers, it is much easier for them to use and makes them more inclined to bid, requiring no time or money to be spent on couriers taking documents from them to us. For us, we have access to all sectors’ suppliers and therefore can obtain best value



for the local authority. It gives me better spend visibility across the three boroughs, showing early on any conflict of interest and helps identify duplication of effort. Basically, I am better equipped when we go to market.”

## **A single repository for all of procurement makes for improved governance and compliance**

Kylie uses the system daily in an administrative capacity. “What I like about its functionality,” she advised, “is that good governance is built in. Everyone has to follow a procedure, for example, when obtaining approvals, the system prevents them from moving forward in the process until the correct approval has been given – so it enforces governance.”

All documents are housed in the system. Once a project has been created, everything connected to it is linked, which has great benefit for auditability. “All the key components we require are in the system,” said Kylie, “for example, all documents and the names of everyone involved, all correspondence, suppliers, clarifications, and so on. Nothing gets lost and everything is tracked. If someone leaves, someone else can takeover and be able to proceed swiftly. It’s also a great benefit that all procurements have an auditable trail of questions and responses.”



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## capitalEsourcing – A wider vision for the Tri-Borough

The Tri-borough authorities are very proud of what they have achieved: procurements now attract even more interest, ensuring contract award is made to the most economically advantageous supplier. These signs bode well for attracting more Local Authorities to the pan-London e-sourcing platform, capitalEsourcing. “It is early days for capitalEsourcing,” said Andrew, “but it is heading in the right direction. We have basically taken the BravoSolution system and heavily customised it to make it more suitable for Westminster, the Tri-Borough and beyond. Working closely with BravoSolution we have managed to design and brand it with our logos, for example the London landmarks were incorporated to make it look and feel like a solution for the capital. It was a real collaboration – together we made it fit for purpose.”

“Other boroughs are gaining interest,” said Kylie, “many of them use alternative solutions which provide a basic tool set for procurement but not the advanced 360 degree solution that BravoSolution provides. What’s more, all four modules are linked, so buyers can move effortlessly from one stage to another, unaware that they are, in fact, moving along modules. It is also greatly advantageous to suppliers, as information from their supplier profile is used to populate their PQQs.”

“Also, when certain questions are completed, the system saves the entry for future use, so the more they use it, the easier it becomes. The supplier is able to see all opportunities posted on capitalEsourcing from all boroughs, giving us more opportunity to work together and negotiate better pricing, leading to greater cost savings for the public sector.”

Andrew concluded: “The system has allowed us to standardise and consolidate our processes. We have achieved our key goals and it has moved us a long way towards harmonisation across the three boroughs. It has played a significant role in gaining real commercial benefit.”



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