



Transformation change partner for leisure services

Wirral Borough Council's unprecedented financial challenges required budget reductions of at least £109 million over the three financial years 2013/14 - 2015/16. The council identified leisure services as a 'Transformational Change' project to focus on, with the following aims:

- ➔ Leisure services are delivered through an efficient and effective service model in line with corporate priorities.
- ➔ Leisure provision operates within a considerably reduced budget.
- ➔ Facilities and services meet the requirements of the Wirral community, and in particular those who are disadvantaged.

In April 2013, V4 Services were commissioned via the ESPO Pro5 Framework to carry out a Strategic Review of the council's leisure services. Following the initial phase of work we presented a report in August 2013 which cited a range of actions necessary to support the Leisure Transformation Programme, which included some 220 FTEs.

THE CHALLENGE

The immediate challenge was to deliver savings of £429,000 in the year 2013/14, without closures or a detrimental impact on the provision of services or those who are most vulnerable. The savings target for 2014/15 was £1 million, with a further savings target of £1 million for 2015/16. Together these savings amounted to a reduction of around 44% of the net controllable budget of £5.5 million.

THE SOLUTION

The Strategic Review involved a detailed consideration of:

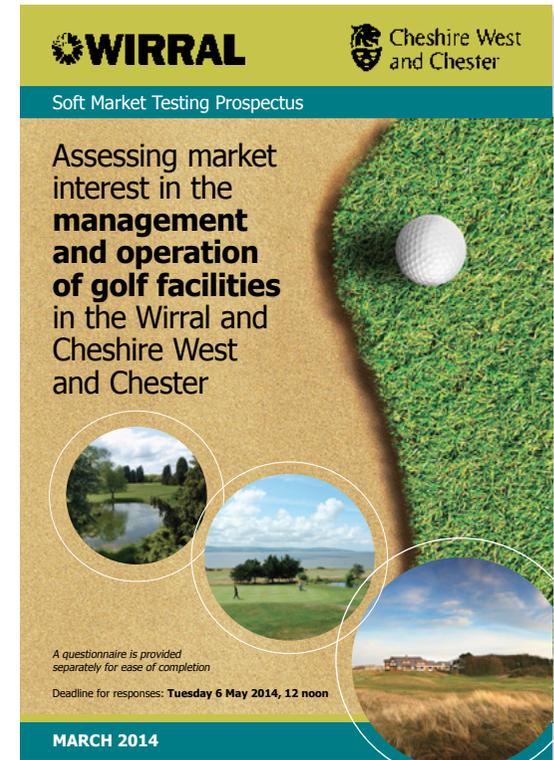
- ➔ Five leisure centres, including Europa Pools Complex and joint use facilities.
- ➔ Swimming pools (6).
- ➔ A tennis and fitness centre.
- ➔ Marine Lake Sailing Centre.
- ➔ Sports development.
- ➔ Beach lifeguarding.
- ➔ Golf courses (5).

We conducted a series of tasks and reviews working closely with colleagues from the council. Following the submission of the Strategic Review which identified cost saving options. V4 Services were further engaged for Phase 2 of the project, which involved practical, hands-on support for the delivery of the outcomes required by the Leisure Transformation Programme.

The V4 Services' team worked as a business partner to the council, working with officers and members to design and deliver the transformation and savings plan.

Following an initial assessment of current performance and programming, eight workstreams were identified and designed for approval by the Project Board. These included investment led savings and changes to opening hours, programme and pricing. The workstreams were:

- ➔ Inter departmental/cross agenda working (primary care, health economy, social care, schools, etc.).
- ➔ Transforming the performance culture and improving marketing and communications both internally and externally.



- ➔ Exploring new ways of working, including more flexible roles and responsibilities.
- ➔ Transforming pricing and programming, including the concessionary pricing policies.
- ➔ Transforming the golf business, and reviewing alternatives to council operation.
- ➔ Looking into partnership working, with shared funding models and opportunities for generating more funding from health and social care commissioners etc.
- ➔ Investing capital to save revenue and capital investment to development new facilities.





About V4 Services Limited

We have worked in partnership with over 120 UK public sector organisations including: councils, NHS, social enterprises and trading bodies providing hands-on delivery support to set up new business structures, improve the efficiency of in-house services, encourage a commercial approach and generate savings and service improvements.

THE BENEFITS

Our work has led to the services delivering more towards the achievement of wider council aims, new ways of working, a greater focus on performance, and service re-design. Specifically it included:

- ➔ A review of pricing policies resulting in a fundamental change in the use of concessions to target those for whom price is a genuine barrier to access.
- ➔ Implementation of new ways of working with more flexible job descriptions and work patterns aligned to the new programme and customers' needs.
- ➔ Introduction of key performance metrics and a reporting system designed to allow better monitoring of KPIs such as membership retention.
- ➔ A service redesign with a revised senior management structure to reflect key performance objectives and to improve accountability.
- ➔ Refocused resource to drive the sales and retention campaign resulting in increased sales and membership.

- ➔ Influenced the design and supported the development of the capital investment programme.
- ➔ A planned transfer of the Beach Patrol Service to the RNLI to take place in summer 2015 with a saving of c. £80,000.
- ➔ Acceleration of the pace of change. Together we have delivered savings in excess of £1 million (2013/14), with further savings of £1 million also identified for 2015/16 and with a plan for delivery.
- ➔ Support to explore broader long term delivery model options and market testing and development of documentation for a potential service concession for the council's golf courses.

The council's investment was recovered from savings equivalent to those generated in less than three months of the financial year 2013/14. Our aim is always to remain "cash positive" with savings delivered that are far in excess of the cost of our fees.

“V4 Services impressed us from the beginning with their very comprehensive strategic review of our sports and leisure services. They used an analytical approach to identifying opportunities for transformational change, providing clear evidence to support their detailed recommendations.

The team demonstrated the highest level of integrity and professional behaviour and were a pleasure to work with. They recognised the need to win the trust and support of managers and elected members at all levels and shared our ambitions for the service to deliver "more for less". Whilst savings delivery was key, they also helped to develop the services to be more targeted to deliver against our wider agenda.

By using their experience of operating similar facilities and services to those within the scope, they were able to speak with knowledge providing confidence to our in-house team. In addition to supporting the agreed workstreams, they shared best practice and worked with our partners on various innovations.

Transformation is never an easy process, and many of the decisions taken were very difficult, but together we made rapid progress. I would have no hesitation in recommending the V4 Services team to other authorities.”

Clare Fish,

Strategic Director for Families and Wellbeing

Communications and engagement

V4 Services were actively involved in the transformation of leisure services with a Lead Service Delivery Manager based on site working alongside the in-house team. The overall programme required strong leadership to win the hearts and minds of stakeholders and staff. Our team:

- ➔ Ran a series of workshops at various stages; these were held at each of the major facilities and all staff, at all levels had an opportunity to attend.
- ➔ Produced regular progress reports which were discussed at the regular Project Board meetings involving elected members and the Executive Director.
- ➔ Facilitated and attended a series of staff engagement

sessions and supported the work of officers in implementing changes to the management and support services structures.

- ➔ Organised sessions with service and facility managers to introduce the new reporting systems which cascaded up from supervisors to the Head of Service.
- ➔ Tailored the programme to work alongside Duty Managers on different shift patterns during the evenings and weekends to demonstrate the new values and approach to team working.
- ➔ Held briefing sessions with the Leader and Cabinet members as well as the Senior Leadership Team.

