



Service improvements and cost savings at the **South Worcestershire Partnership**

Working with Civica the partnership is improving services, savings and business growth, while protecting local jobs.

A shared services partnership expands its horizons

The South Worcestershire Partnership (SWP), a shared services partnership set up in 2007, brought together the revenues and benefits, and fraud services of Worcester City, Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils. Through centralised delivery and adoption of new systems and processes, SWP improved outcomes for customers and saved over £1m a year.

By 2013, changes in the local government operating environment led SWP to look for ways to generate new income as well as make further savings. It decided to increase the capacity of its shared services organisation and trade services with other councils.

To that end, SWP set up an innovative OJEU framework, incorporating Common Procurement Vocabulary codes, that can be used by every council in England and Wales to procure services efficiently from SWP. To scale up service delivery capability and benefit from additional commercial and technology expertise, SWP entered into partnership with Civica.

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Jack Hegarty, Joint Chief Executive/Managing Director, Malvern Hills and Wychavon Councils

Outcomes

- ▶ **40% reduction in call centre volumes by re-routing selected enquiries to online self-service**
- ▶ **Improved service levels across the board, delivered by approximately 25% fewer staff**
- ▶ **Job protection and growth through staff redeployment and local recruitment, with no compulsory redundancies**
- ▶ **Creation of a multi-skilled, flexible team delivering a resilient, consistent standard of service to customers**
- ▶ **Savings already approaching £2.4m, and growing through income sharing.**

£2.4 million

cost savings

£161 million

annual council tax collected

£96.5 million

annual business rates collected

New business wins go beyond the original local government target market, as the partnership enters into contracts with the Standards Testing Agency and the British Council.

Guaranteed savings, local job protection

SWP and Civica set up a centre of excellence in Pershore, Worcestershire (known as the Orchard Centre) to trade services under the OnDemand brand while ensuring the partner councils retained sovereignty over the services delivered. As well as helping to deliver further improvements for SWP customers, Civica guaranteed savings of £600,000.

To help win and deliver new business, SWP redeployed 30% of its people to the Orchard Centre, protecting local jobs. Additionally, Civica moved its digital mail function to the centre, creating 15 new local jobs. In total, more than 130 people are employed at the centre, working onsite or from home.

SWP intends to transfer more staff to the Orchard Centre ahead of the introduction of Universal Credit, to continue benefiting from their skills and experience as well as ensure further jobs are protected.

Services delivered in England, Wales and further afield

In 2014 Worcester City and Malvern Hills councils, together with Worcestershire County Council, used the OJEU framework to move delivery of customer services to the Orchard Centre. Civica transferred 50 staff and moved the councils' call centre from County Hall in Worcester to the Orchard Centre in just six weeks, with no service disruptions.

Each year the Orchard Centre handles:

- ▶ 230,000 customer enquiries (all channels)
- ▶ £161m in Council Tax collected from 136,000 properties
- ▶ £96.5m in Business Rates collected from 10,500 properties
- ▶ 17,000 Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims

It has also taken on delivery of other services, including administration of county council functions (such as Blue Badge) and business improvement districts (BIDs).

Under the OJEU framework, Civica won an outsource partnership with Denbighshire County Council in Wales, as well as other OnDemand business. The partnership also won a central government contract with the Standards Testing Agency and a British Council contract to verify International English Language Exam papers.

Increasing innovation, improving services, growing income

The SWP–Civica partnership operates under a light-touch approach to governance, removing the traditional burden of frequent contract review meetings and large client-side teams. Day-to-day performance is handled by exception: the high standard of service achieved means there's usually little to discuss. Instead, the partners can focus on innovation, service development and planning for growth.

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The partnership has gone from strength to strength, leading SWP to extend the original five-year agreement to 10 years, saving a further £153,000 a year for the partner councils. Overall savings, approaching £2.4m, are supplemented by shared income from trading, additional projects and rental from new business wins.