

News Release

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Councils' Transformation is Complete

A five year transformation programme by South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council is now complete, saving just under £4.5 million combined for both councils each year.

In 2013, South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils recognised that they would together be facing a potential funding gap of £4.7 million over the five year period up to 2018. The councils were adamant that they did not want to cut front line services, so both authorities agreed to start an ambitious and challenging Transformation Programme (T18) to remodel how the councils worked.

The councils boldly challenged the traditional local government model, by being at the forefront of radical change and innovation. In 2007, the two councils began to share a Chief Executive, which started their journey into shared services. The next shake-up followed in 2011, when the Management team was streamlined and shared between both South Hams and West Devon.

In the next pioneering move, the T18 Transformation Programme began. The original Business Plan was approved in 2013 which aimed to continue to deliver quality services for their customers and communities. The Transformation Programme has been total and radical and has left no service untouched.

Since the T18 Programme started five years ago, the total annual savings realised are £2.9 million for the South Hams and £1.5 million for West Devon, with the majority of these savings made through staffing savings. Between 2014 and 2015, the majority of employees at both councils went through a rigorous recruitment

process and the workforce was reduced by 30%. The overall yearly savings were the equivalent of 25% of the councils' budgets.

West Devon Borough Council's Leader, Cllr Philip Sanders, said: "Peoples' lives, along with technology, are constantly changing and we must change with them. We have had a radical transformation in the way that the councils have worked for more than 40 years. Our workforce was reduced significantly and all staff roles changed to become flexible and responsive to the needs of the customer.

"A new agile way of working was introduced, with the creation of a hot desk environment in both the main offices. This new way of working also included the flexibility for staff to work on an agile basis. This way of working is an important factor in retaining key people.

The success of this project is testament to the skill and determination of the staff, and they have the thanks of all of the elected Council Members."

Leader of South Hams District Council, Cllr John Tucker, said: "All of the changes which enable staff to work from any location, meant that during the recent Storm Emma, when other councils were unable to work and had to close, our workforce continued to operate from the safety of their own homes.

So, if you wanted to liaise with officers about Planning, Environmental Health, Benefits or Council Tax, among many of our other services, then you could continue to do so. With the exception of our manual workers who, along with local residents, were advised to stay off the roads, residents would not have noticed any reduction in our services.

"It really was a fantastic response by our team, with over 210 staff dialling in remotely to carry on with their daily work. I know that I speak for all of the Members of the Council, when I say that the staff have worked exceptionally hard to overcome the challenges that the transition has brought and we are thrilled at its success."

The reduction of office-based staff has also meant a reduced need for lots of office accommodation, with many areas of our Council offices now leased to partner agencies.

ENDS

Notes to Editor

Photo attached - snow at Torr Depot during Storm Emma

www.southhams.gov.uk

www.westdevon.gov.uk

Please be aware that telephone calls to and from the Council may be recorded for training and monitoring purposes.

Attachments

- Snow at Torr Depot during Storm Emma [Snow at Torr Depot during Storm Emma](#)

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