

# case study

## London Borough of Havering 'Single Status'

### The Brief

Havering is a London borough with a clear ambition to provide its residents with the highest quality of life in the capital. Havering provides good services and has many achievements to its name.

Since 2006, along with many other local authorities, the Council had been working to develop and implement 'Single Status' - a single pay and grading structure with a modernised and harmonised set of terms and conditions for all staff. This challenge is one faced by all local authorities and incorporates the need to address historical inequalities of pay between male and female manual workers, that date back to the 1960s.

Without a swift and effective resolution to this issue, Havering Council would be subject to equal pay claims both now and in the future. Any significant delays in getting an agreed solution represented a major financial risk to the Council, and the expectations of key stakeholders, including Council Members, trades unions and staff, had been raised to

anticipate a broad range of modernising improvements to terms and conditions of employment as well.

In January 2008, when Havering sought the assistance of E AND H, the project was running significantly behind the council's preferred schedule, and it was not clear that a solution would be implemented within an acceptable timescale. Any further delays were likely to force trades unions into advising members to pursue equal pay claims against the Council.

Havering urgently needed to identify an achievable solution, develop a robust plan to deliver it, and reach agreement with the trades unions by the end of August 2008. Critical for the Council was the need for a solution that removed the financial risk from equal pay claims, and was supported by all the key stakeholders, so avoiding service disruption from any potential industrial action. The brief for E AND H was to identify how to bring the project back on track and align the Council's activities to deliver the successful outcome needed.



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### Approach

Havering accepted that their preferred deadlines and expectations were looking increasingly unachievable. For the Council, E AND H brought an external perspective that enabled them to reassess what needed to be done and how they were going to do it. Initial work concentrated on establishing an effective Project Board and Team, and getting a shared and unequivocal understanding of what needed to be done, rather than what stakeholders might like to have. This was achieved through a combination of one to one discussions and facilitated workshop sessions. From this, a tactical plan demonstrated where to focus energy on working with key stakeholders to manage expectations and meet critical date deadlines, and how to de-scope the project to a realistic set of deliverables.

E AND H's structured approach and professional challenge helped the Project Team and the Board to stay focussed on the agreed objectives – and ensure other issues didn't come in and take over as priorities.

### Benefits

Within a couple of months of creating the tactical plan and agreeing the new approach, the Project Team had begun to feel increasingly confident that a successful outcome was going to happen.

A 'Single Status' design that was acceptable to key stakeholders was completed by a re-negotiated deadline, and the threat of legal action receded, along with the consequential financial risk.

Havering is a high-performing Council, delivering services effectively and efficiently, but the organisation was struggling to deploy project and change management into its operational activities in a way that would get things done and achieve the desired benefits. Bringing project and change management tools, techniques and approaches into this type of project was seen as innovative and has enabled the Council to develop an enhanced capability to deliver operational and organisational changes in the future. Havering are now close to implementing

their solution and have continued to use a project management approach to deliver the successful implementation of this highly complex project.

Cheryl Coppell, Chief Executive of the London Borough of Havering, said:

"The Single Status project presented a significant challenge to Havering. We were looking for a solution that was sufficiently thorough to deal with the complexities of the HR processes, but straightforward enough for us to present it to trades unions and employees in a clear and coherent way.

"E AND H provided invaluable support to the authority. Their groundwork has meant that the single status process has been well-received by our staff and will hopefully be concluded in the near future."



***"The Single Status project presented a significant challenge to Havering.***

***"E AND H provided invaluable support to the authority."***

***Cheryl Coppell, Chief Executive***



***A Clear Way Forward***

