

Lessons learnt

The table below captures the general lessons learnt arising from the Chase Meadow Community Centre Project. These lessons may have wider implications for the management of future Council projects.

Lessons Learnt
<p>1. Ensure that third parties do not make commitments which impact on other areas of the project and maintain on-going and open dialogue with external funders</p> <p>A number of the key timelines for the project were driven by Sport England funding conditions which had been independently agreed by the end-user with the funder. Chase Meadow Community Centre Ltd had secured £50k funding for the project from Sport England and agreed to conditions which obligated the construction programme to start and finish by specified dates. The requirement to complete the project by these dates, rushed the pace of the project, including the completion of the design and the construction. This increased the risk of omissions in the design process and errors in the construction process. Furthermore, an enabling works package needed to be put in place, costing an additional £10k in order to comply with the Sport England timeframes. Improved communication and trust between the Council and the end-users and maintaining a more open dialogue with the funder may have prevented this from happening.</p>
<p>2. Deploying a dedicated project management resource was found to be beneficial</p> <p>The Council made use of resource from the HR and Organisational Development team to project manage the project. The project was one of approximately 2/3 projects assigned to this officer, meaning that the officer was able to devote significant time to the project. Here, the use of a dedicated resource was found to be beneficial to the project as it allowed the project to progress at a faster pace than if the project was an add-on piece of work to the "day-job". The use of a dedicated resource also enabled time for the Council to manage the relationships with key stakeholders in the project, including the end users, the professional services team and the building contractor.</p>
<p>3. An engaged and available project sponsor was beneficial to the pace of progress and quality and accountability of decisions.</p> <p>Throughout the project the Project Sponsor has been accessible and available to input in decision making. This has been an important factor in the success of the project overall and particularly at times when prompt decisions were required to enable the project to progress swiftly.</p>
<p>4. On-going involvement of and input by the Member Portfolio Holder was beneficial to the project</p> <p>The portfolio holder was involved through-out the project, including attending Project Board meetings. This was beneficial to the progress of the project and helped to achieve effective communication between officers and Members particularly at times when key decisions (e.g. on funding) were required.</p>
<p>5. The use of a structured, Prince 2 based approach assisted the Council to</p>

manage this project effectively

In 2012, it was felt that given the complexity of the project, the significant costs and the need to manage the relation with the end-users, a more formal project management approach was needed. It was therefore agreed to adopt an approach based on a Prince 2 method. This involved the creation of a project board including representatives from the end-user groups.

For a project of this scale, including a number of external funding partners, this type of more formal and structured approach to project management was beneficial as it helped to ensure that communication was sufficiently structured and detailed to keep the project on track and manage stakeholder relationships. (It is recognised that smaller Council projects do not necessarily require this type of approach. The approach for managing a project should be designed to meet the requirements of each project on its own merits.)

6. The number of partners involved in a project increases the time required to communicate effectively and make decisions

This project involves two external end-users (CMCC and the PCC) and several external contractors. It needs to be recognised that where several organisations are involved in a project considerable time needs to be allowed to communicate effectively and to reach decisions. The project team found this to be particularly true in relation to agreeing the legal agreements and leases, where it took longer than anticipated to complete this work strands. This is reflected in the legal costs for this aspect of the project. Future projects need to take this into account.