



## Focus on service excellence

Committed to improving services and reducing costs



## Steria partners with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council to provide better services for local citizens and deliver annual savings of £500,000.

Working from a centre of excellence in Welwyn Hatfield, Steria is improving the quality and efficiency of the council's revenues and benefits service delivery. The 13-year contract also sees Welwyn Hatfield's ICT, customer contact centre,

reception and switchboard managed by Steria. It is very much a partnership between the two organisations, with a focus on continual improvement and the potential extension of the service to other councils.





**Steria has fulfilled its promises with the council. Performance has either improved or been maintained in difficult times. Perhaps the best compliment to be paid is that the public does not perceive a discernible difference in the service but the council has made a £500,000 per annum saving.”** **Bob Jewell, Director Finance and Operations.**

### The challenge

When you are already a strong performing council, the challenge is not only to maintain your high standards of citizen service and efficiency, but to find new ways of improving on a successful business model. This was the situation facing Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in 2008, one of ten district councils in Hertfordshire.

Despite a good record of customer satisfaction, Welwyn Hatfield, like all UK local authorities, had to address a number of performance and budgetary issues. How could it meet its commitment to improving services and being more accountable to citizens, while delivering the savings and efficiencies demanded by central government? Could it make better use of technology to meet the growing expectations of its citizens, and in particular the escalating demands being placed on its revenues and benefits administration? And with an ICT contract due to expire and with problems recruiting and retaining its own ICT staff, could Welwyn Hatfield use this situation to rectify an unsustainable ICT budget and make a good council even better?

Welwyn Hatfield sought a partner to help it resolve these issues in three areas of service delivery: revenues and benefits administration, ICT service provision and customer services (contact centre, reception, switchboard). Against stiff opposition, Steria was awarded the 12-year contract. In 2011 this was extended by a further year.

With extensive experience of delivering ICT and customer service solutions for government organisations across the UK, Steria has also embraced the revenues and benefits strand of the contract. This enabled Welwyn Hatfield to achieve its service delivery objectives via a single managed contract under Steria’s remit. Paul Clarkson, Regional Business Manager at Steria, comments: *“More and more councils are looking for a consolidated approach to sourcing multiple services and we are able to offer that.”*

### The solution

A highly consultative approach to solution development quickly established a high level of trust between the council and the Steria team. The commitment and involvement of staff was seen as intrinsic to making the contract work, and has been a major factor in the success of the partnership. A clear structure of governance was established from day one, with Paul Clarkson managing the wider service and individual managers taking responsibility for each service line. Paul continues: *“This gives our client the reassurance that they are dealing with experts in each area.”*

The service went live on 1 January 2009 with 68 council staff transferred to Steria. A commitment to improving services is a crucial component of the partnership. Service performance has continued at a high level.

#### Performance for 2010/11

- 97.86% of Council Tax - an increase of 0.20% on 2009/10 and 99.11% of Business Rates collected
- 11% improvement in the average time process new benefits claims - 16.5 days against a target of 17 days 29% improvement in the average time process change of circumstances - 5.6 days, against a target of six days
- 91.1% of switchboard calls answered within 14 seconds, higher than the target of 80%
- Of the 329,223 telephone calls to the switchboard and contact centre, only 0.95% were abandoned, against a target of <5%

#### The contract comprises the following elements:

##### ICT Services

Steria is responsible for supporting the council's infrastructure and applications including the provision of core printing, service desk, remote monitoring and consulting. Regular service meetings are focused on service improvement: for example, the service desk team has increased the level of first time fixes from 40 to 150 calls per month. After 9 months, the percentage of satisfied customers on service calls stands at an exceptional 98.2%.

The virtualisation of the server infrastructure has been completed with 90 servers running in a virtualised environment. This is delivering 21% power savings, equating to a reduction of 40 tonnes of Co2. In addition staff are benefitting from the introduction of a Virtual Desktop (VDI) environment. These changes are helping the council in its objective of aligning its ICT service more closely with its strategic business requirements.

#### Customer Services

Steria is managing the council's switchboard, contact centre and reception, taking 247,000 calls a year through the switchboard, 51,000 via the contact centre, and receiving 20,000 visitors at the reception. The contact centre has relocated to new premises providing a new professional environment and room for expansion. Growth of the contact centre is a key area for the council, as it places greater focus on frontline services. Initially, handling calls for waste collection and litter (the Streetscene service), pest control and council tax, the centre is also the main contact point for all revenues and benefits enquiries, as well as for calls relating to parking services.

#### Revenues and Benefits

As the impact of the recession has continued to hit hard, the pressure on contact centre staff to manage more revenues and benefits calls has grown, with a significant increase in case loads. Says Farhad Cantel, Welwyn Hatfield's Revenues and Benefits Client Manager "Since the commencement of the contract with Steria we are pleased to have seen improvements in both Council Tax and Benefits performance. This is despite an increase in Benefits caseload of 14%"

#### Service Transformation

The introduction of new technology, such as automated call distribution software and development of the council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system has played an important part in the improved

service levels. Additionally web enabled services through e-forms and self service have been introduced making it easier for local citizens to submit applications to the council.

New and refreshed technology, however, is just one element of Welwyn Hatfield's service and ICT transformation. The successful transfer of 68 employees is another. A process of change management has included training and career development, with the introduction of an NVQ in customer service, and the streamlining of existing processes and procedures. Change champions have supported the change process enabling employees to adapt to the new technology.

#### Shared Services

The solution developed by Steria for Welwyn Hatfield also includes the potential to use the service as a hub for a future shared service involving other local authorities in Hertfordshire and beyond. We are pleased to welcome South Bucks District Council as our first new partner to share the delivery of their ICT services with Welwyn Hatfield.

#### The benefits

The partnership with Steria is delivering annual cost savings of £500,000 for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. There has been a noticeable improvement in all service areas and Steria has drawn up a technology roadmap that will see further improvements, with solutions for home and mobile working, document output management and further server rationalisation.

The process redesign undertaken by Steria has enabled the council to move more work into the contact centre, freeing up professional staff to focus on more strategic projects.

This is a true business partnership built on a risk-and-reward business model, and ensuring that Welwyn Hatfield maintains and extends its good reputation for service excellence.



As Chief Executive my main concern was that outsourcing such high profile services as Benefits, Council Tax and Customer Services might result in bad publicity for the Council if performance was not maintained. I have been pleased to find that over the last year this has not happened. Indeed we have seen improvements in the service." Michel Saminaden, Chief Executive.



### About Steria

Steria delivers IT enabled business services which help organisations in the public and private sectors operate more efficiently and profitably. By combining in depth understanding of our clients' businesses with expertise in IT and business process outsourcing, we take on our clients' challenges and develop innovative solutions to address them. Through our highly collaborative consulting style, we work with our clients to transform their business, enabling them to focus on what they do best. Our 19,334 people, working across 16 countries, support the systems, services and processes that make today's world turn, touching the lives of millions around the globe each day.

Founded in 1969, Steria has offices in Europe, India, North Africa and SE Asia and a 2010 revenue of €1.69 billion. 20%(\*) of Steria's capital is owned by its employees. Headquartered in Paris, Steria is listed on the Euronext Paris market.

\* including the Employees Shares Trust in the UK

### Steria in Local Government

With over 40 years experience in local government and across the public sector, Steria has a complete understanding of the challenges facing local authorities and provides a range of IT and business process outsourcing services which address their key concerns.

Our team is made up of highly experienced market specialists who have first hand experience in local government. We work in partnership with our clients and have a track record of successfully delivering efficiency savings, strengthening ICT performance, improving customer service and enhancing operational efficiency.



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