



Edinburgh City Council

Length of Assignment: 17 months

Service area: Catering

APSE Associate: John Bedwell

Post: Catering Manager

Under its transformation agenda, Edinburgh City Council's 'Alternative Business Model' (ABM) established three work streams for its Service Improvement and spending reduction options, one of which was 'Integrated Facilities Management' (IFM). A process of Competitive Dialogue leading to proposals from prospective private sector partners was established alongside the development of a 'Public Sector Comparator' (PSC) by the in-house service provider teams, to drive strategic and commercial decisions about the future shape and delivery of Council services.

APSEs engagement in this process developed from initial support to the council's building cleaning and then catering teams, where, following a series of diagnostic workshops, the need for an interim catering management support role was identified to complement and feed into a wider consultancy team resource then established to support PSC development within the IFM work stream.

Objectives

- To provide a strategic focus on Alternative Business Model priorities and objectives within the catering team and review performance against programme objectives, advise and decide on any remedial action and set new targets for service improvement.
- To undertake and support consultation and engagement with principal clients and stakeholders.
- To assess and engage with cross cutting initiatives arising from the development of the in-house PSC.

Outputs

- An outline business case and financial projections for the catering service which supported interim consideration of the PSC for transition to 'Stage 2' - detailed proposals submission.
- Extensions of the initial interim role to align with key milestones in the wider ABM timetable.
- Development of a detailed Service Improvement Plan (SIP) as a basis for PSC development under ABM.
- A business case for necessary investment to underpin a successful PSC submission and outcome for Edinburgh's in-house FM service providers.

Benefits

- Staff confidence and enthusiasm to improve performance and outcomes for customers, particularly school pupils.

- Planned investment of £1.3 million in Edinburgh's schools and other catering environments as an integral part of budget and service improvement.
- A net financial benefit to the Council of circa £1.7m (or 15%) over 7 years.
- A realistic projection of significant improvement in meal uptakes in Edinburgh with the potential to contribute to longer term child health outcomes.

Business as usual

- An average of 6% improvement service uptakes and a projected **saving of circa £180,000** in the year to March 2012.
- Approval for the first of a three year programme of investment in School Catering environments.
- Detailed implementation of the Catering Service Improvement Plan is now on-going.

Project Summary

During the initial stage the APSE interim project undertook a Financial Performance Review to establish baseline and prepare budget modelling tools to aid in future projections and targeting. Shared objectives were developed with clients and Process Reviews carried out to ensure there was clarity in reporting formats and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) appropriate to each level.

Process reviews including training needs assessment, planning and delivery arrangements were carried out against future needs and an ICT review was conducted including the use of handheld computers for quality assurance and inspection processes, updating / developing cashless and pre-order systems as well as improving internal communication systems.

A PSC Stage 1 (High Level) Service Improvement Plan (SIP) was then prepared for the Primary, Secondary and Other Catering sector.

The next stage built on the Stage 1 plan and included:

- Developing structure and content into the SIP by area, activity and task allocation including methodologies, time lines, KPIs and target outcomes.
- Developing a seven year business plan and budget incorporating annual growth projections and investment timetable.
- Commencing the focus on growth and removal of waste through early implementation of the SIP and Stage 1 process mapping outcomes (lean review).

The APSE interim manager ensured that the catering service team were involved in every part of the service improvement planning and budgeting process, and helped them build confidence in their ability to achieve the initially daunting objectives set by the ABM programme. This included guidance of and support to operational and support staff in the delivery of Catering Services to the standards required and within budgets agreed with Corporate Finance and the optimum allocation and coordination of management/supervisory and manual staffing resources.

The penultimate stage involved maintaining focus on the operational support role and providing service specific clarification at and for ABM evaluation meetings. This included the preparation and delivery of presentations to support the financial and child health outcomes projected by the catering PSC submission.

Following the Council's decision in January 2012 to pursue the in-house development of Facilities Management services, the final stage of the assignment concentrated on team preparation for the implementation of the SIP and the effective handover of its methodology to the management and board set up to deliver project objectives derived from the ABM process.

Work undertaken by the catering team during the development of the PSC including plans for growth and the removal of waste from systems and processes, delivered an average of 6% improvement service uptakes and a projected saving of circa £180,000 in the year to March 2012.

Subsequently, the plan for a three year programme of investment in School Catering environments has been approved and detailed implementation of the wider service improvement plan is now on-going.

Feedback received from the Authority

The APSE contribution to interim management of the Catering Service and its response to the ABM and PSC processes was a key factor in a successful outcome for the service and its customers. The APSE staff provided detailed knowledge of catering services, systems and structures and comparisons with experience nationally and specifically in other areas. Consistent guidance and challenges were provided to ensure that improvement planning was carried out.

The trust and respect built up meant that the staff team contributed to a positive and soundly costed Improvement Plan and felt confidence that they could deliver challenging performance increases and cost reductions. The Service took ownership of clear objectives to improve quality and performance for main customers, in a competitive Public Sector Comparator with key investment in plant, systems and staff training.

The links to the main APSE project were very valuable in ensuring understanding of the ABM and PSC, with their demanding timetable and careful objectivity and separation of processes. This was critical for the Catering teams and also for management links with the Council at a time of considerable change of structures and personnel.'