



Project Name	Conversion of No.55 Harkness Court, Hitchin
Project Manager/s	Stevenage Borough Council lead officer Andrew Clements, North Herts Officers Nafees Parker and Chris Robson As explained below, no clear Project Manager was agreed, however the above officers have been involved in this project

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
<u>Category - Skills and Experience of Project Team</u>				

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
S1	<p>Event: No formal agreement of Project Manager for Project Team.</p> <p>Cause: No terms of reference agreed and documented prior to commencing Project.</p> <p>Effect: Project lacked coordination and momentum raising confusion at times and preventing resolution of some issues in a timely manner. Failure to adequately deal with the building control conditions prior to start on site.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: The importance of formally assigning a Project Manager and its role of allocating or delegating Project responsibilities was given insufficient regard at Project outset.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: Regular Project Team meetings were set up during the Project's currency to clarify task progress, agree manageable targets & deadlines, and agree on members of Project Team who would be assigned particular tasks. This injected clarity and momentum, albeit belatedly. Future projects must place greater emphasis on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team selection and evaluation to ensure all members have the skills, experience and time to fully commit to project. • Team induction to ensure all parties are clear on their roles and responsibilities. • Producing written terms of reference for the Project Manager role and timetabling regular meetings of the Project Team. 	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terms of reference/engagement to be clarified, agreed, documented and communicated between Project Team and Client at the earliest opportunity. 2. Timetable regular meetings of Project Team to review progress, assess issues and adapt procedures as necessary. 3. Timetable regular communications between Project Team and Client to re-affirm or refine aims & objectives of project, evaluate progress against those aims & objectives and to generally improve dialogue fluidity between Project Team and Client. 4. Pursue training on project management.

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S2	<p>Internal resourcing. As part of the internal audit that was undertaken; One interviewee had raised the issue that there was a shortage of experienced staff to manage the contract for North Herts Council. The project became reliant on staff with no formal role in the project feeling obliged to make contributions to assist.</p> <p>Effect: Poorly controlled project, which has led to the project overrunning and increased costs.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: To review officers capability to run projects and if need be provide relevant training</p>	Steve Crowley	15-09-2023	To review training needs as part of 1-1's and regular performance reviews and provide relevant training if required.
S3	<p>Event: Better understanding of Building Control requirement.</p> <p>Cause: Full plans were not fully assessed following Building Control approval (with conditions) prior to a start on site.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: Ensure the full impact of Building Control conditions are fully considered to understand the impact on the project.</p>	Michael Clark	19-09-2023	Ensure any conditions that are set by Building Control are fully considered to understand the impact on the project.
<u>Category - Finance</u>				

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Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
F1	<p>Event: Better transparency of cost information</p> <p>Cause: The project was managed as part of an overall £3m capital budget allocation.</p> <p>Effect: The additional costs associated with the issues and delays were correctly managed and reported in line with the overall budget allocation, but setting a separate budget would have enabled improved transparency of cost changes.</p> <p>Proposals for improvement: To set capital budgets at an individual project level. These projects can still be shown as a sub-set of a larger allocation.</p>	Ian Couper	6-10-2023	To be noted for future capital project where there are distinct elements.

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F2	<p>Another item that was identified as part of the internal audit, was the issue surrounding capacity feed into another area in relation to cost models and options considered at the start of the project. The interviewee mentioned that while costing more, much of the risk involved in the project could have been outsourced by following the design and build procurement route. The Lessons Log may therefore look to include more information about the cost modelling carried out in the project planning phase and procurement options considered. The availability of trained and experienced project managers at the Council to manage any contract should be taken into consideration at this point.</p> <p>Effect: This was mentioned as part of an audit, and it is acknowledge that different approaches could have improved this project. However, it is hard to establish if these items were considered at the commencement of the project as many officers have left.</p>	Steve Crowley	15-09-2023	To ensure all options are considered as part of the feasibility assessment, which could include turnkey contracts.
F3	As identified as part of the internal audit. The need to undertake a full assessment, to understand the overall cost of this project.	Steve Crowley	15-09-2023	The inclusion of the results of any findings from work carried out examining the project costs.

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
Category - Quality				
Q1	<p>Event: Items of work on building conversion not addressed in good time.</p> <p>Cause: The original Project specification was not sufficiently detailed to identify the entire scope of works required in the conversion. It is understood this is primarily due to staff continuity issues and limited handover within Stevenage Borough Council following departure of several key members of the Project Team.</p> <p>Effect: Snagging works left incomplete had to be addressed in a less coordinated ad hoc manner, causing the Project duration to extend beyond that feasible had a coordinated approach been embraced earlier on. Incomplete works, especially cosmetic items, detracted from the appearance of the converted property and risked harming credibility of the overall project quality amongst key stakeholders.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: Limited oversight of the original Project specification meant that the absence of a full list of tasks with granular detail was not flagged at an earlier time.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: A detailed Project specification should be produced, evaluated and refined with the input of the whole Project Team at the earliest opportunity, seeking external support (for example from a quantity surveyor) to ensure it is comprehensive, logically structured and practicable.</p>	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To build in contingency professional support from external providers to ensure wider evaluation of Project specification, more robust specification drafting, and to generally add resilience to the Project Team in the event of loss of key team members.

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Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
<u>Category - Time Frame</u>				

Lessons Log

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
T11	<p>Event: Insufficient investigation and research into the existing building to be refurbished, including the provision and adequacy of existing mains services.</p> <p>Cause: Project scope not fully clarified from Project outset.</p> <p>Effect: Additional tasks had to be factored into Project schedule and attended to on an ad hoc basis. This forced some ongoing tasks to be paused or deferred until completion of the new tasks, and partially disrupted sequencing of critical path tasks. This led to an element of confusion in Project Team creating delays in the project timeline.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: The Project involved refurbishment of an existing building. Refurbishment projects often encounter unforeseen issues, so the generic risk was previously identified but not the granular level risks.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: To focus more diligently on a holistic and forensic fact-finding mission of building projects prior to commencing work.</p> <p>To devise and agree project plan at earliest opportunity to identify tasks, sequencing dependencies and increase buy in from all parties and stakeholders, for example by way of a detailed Gantt chart.</p>	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To ensure the full scope, aims and overarching objective of building and refurbishment projects are evaluated, clarified, agreed, documented and communicated between Project Team and Client at the earliest opportunity, seeking feedback and scrutiny to check understanding.

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
TI2	<p>Event: Several key members of the Project Team departed at critical stages of the Project due to health reason, leaving the work of three members in the hands of just one.</p> <p>Cause: Unforeseen circumstances forcing members of Project Team to stand down.</p> <p>Effect: Severely weakened resilience and efficient functioning of Project Team. Handover briefings of incomplete or ongoing tasks from former members to the single replacement member were either absent or insufficiently detailed in several cases. This adversely affected momentum and confidence levels in the Project Team and meant time had to be allocated to checking that tasks had been completed to the required standard.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: The loss of three key Project Team members in fairly quick succession due to the retirement of two members and the long-term sickness of a third member during the currency of the Project was not identified as a risk. Although attempts were made to address the issue quickly, only a single member replacement to the Project Team was secured, and not without delay.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: To focus more intensely on considering Project Team resourcing, resilience and building in a contingency margin to ensure better preparedness for loss of key Project Team members.</p>	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To widen due diligence of procurement and selection of Project Teams to encompass evaluation of resourcing levels, stability of resourcing and availability of contingencies. The aim is to improve resilience of Project Teams and help ensure Projects are kept on track, or at least able to respond to unforeseen resourcing issues more swiftly.

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
Category – Legislation and Regulation				
L1	<p>Event: Limited continuity of input by Building Control.</p> <p>Cause: Apparent limited resource in external Building Control team occasionally resulted in an inefficient pattern whereby one Building Control officer raised an issue, the issue was addressed by the Project Team, but for the same issue to subsequently be raised again by a different Building Control officer at later date.</p> <p>Effect: Duplication of effort by Project Team in addressing issues raised by Building Control, prolonging programme.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: This risk was not identified prior to commencing Project.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: To ensure a member of the Project Team communicates with Building Control officer, with an aim to improve timeliness and flow of feedback and push for clarity on complex or ambiguous technical requirements.</p>	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To focus early on establishing communication channels with key members of Building Control team to facilitate more proactive and efficient dialogue. Of course, this action will need to be mindful of managing actual or perceived conflicts of interest.

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L2	<p>As identified by the internal audit, the Council has not been able to find a contract for the agreement between North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Council.</p> <p>This would have enabled parties to be held accountable to signed terms.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: The need for signed contracts to be agreed with third parties that determine projects roles and responsibilities.</p>	Steve Crowley	15-09-2023	For all future projects ensure signed contracts are agreed with third parties to determine projects roles and responsibilities.
<u>Category - IT (Software Interdependencies, Licences, Server Capacity)</u>				
IT1	No issues identified.	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	Not applicable.
IT2				
<u>Category - Interdependencies/Conflicts with Other Projects/Services</u>				

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
IN1	<p>Event: Late coordination of installation of mains services with external statutory undertakers.</p> <p>Cause: Arrangements for the installation of mains gas, electricity and water with three separate external statutory undertakers were not addressed sufficiently early in the Project. As such, parts of the main conversion work had to be paused or works re-sequenced in the Project to ensure the safe and correct installation of mains services.</p> <p>Effect: Productivity of several work elements was adversely affected to a degree.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: A fuller survey of the existing provision, capacity and condition of mains services to the property would have highlighted the need for new installations earlier in the Project, allowing this work to be programmed to avoid later task conflicts.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: As part of the feasibility study undertake thorough searches prior to commencing future refurbishment projects to include investigations and tests into the availability, capacity and condition of existing mains services. This proposal will support improvements to Project scheduling and productivity.</p> <p>Investigate a design and build procurement route whereby appointed contractor arranges the design and installation of utilities.</p>	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To identify elements of the Project requiring third party input at the earliest opportunity. The purpose is to secure full buy-in and understanding amongst third parties regarding the nature of the Project and its issues. This action will help ensure third party work can be organised at a more convenient time in the project schedule, to avoid impinging on work productivity. 2. Investigate all types of build procurements, this could include a design and build procurement. Such route to include a liquidated damages clause to cover client losses (in this case rent and staff time), acting as a real incentive for the contractor to progress the works. 3. As part of the feasibility study ensure searches are undertaken to understand which services (gas, electricity, water, phone, board band) will need to be addressed as part of the project.

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
IN2	<p>Event: Identification of land ownership discrepancies.</p> <p>Cause: It was identified that parts of the property to be encompassed in the Project (specifically front entrance porch, rear garden and the site of a refuse bin store) had been incorrectly transferred to North Hertfordshire Homes Limited as part of the wider Stock Transfer between North Hertfordshire District Council and this organisation in 2003. Rectifying these land ownership discrepancies took longer than anticipated due to staffing issues at both the Council and settle group.</p> <p>Effect: Time spent addressing the land ownership discrepancies encroached into the Project. This forced the start date of the conversion work to be postponed pending completion of the transfer documentation for the three areas of land. Fortunately, the contractor agreed to hold their pricing on resumption of proceedings. However, this delay could have impinged on project viability if the contractor chose not to agree to hold pricing or if the project had to be re-tendered from scratch.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: The land ownership issues were identified prior to Project commencing.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: Greater contingency time must be built into Project programming to allow for potential delays due to addressing common problems affecting key Project milestones, such as staff shortages.</p>	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Land ownership issues are often complex and time-consuming to resolve. Sufficient time and contingency should be built into any property Project to allow for such issues to be fully investigated, rectified and documented conclusively. 2. At feasibility stage ensure all land ownership and easements are checked, or are in place and flag any potential issues.

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
<u>Category - Communications/Engagement with Stakeholders/Partners/Politicians</u>				
C1	<p>Event: Development of Project brief/specification.</p> <p>Cause: The Project brief/specification was short on clarity and not comprehensive.</p> <p>Effect: Work items remained outstanding after the main building works had completed, i.e. replacing a couple of windows, flooring, kitchen works, new front door and landscaping. This caused further delays and some works being carried out in a less efficient sequence.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: Limited clarity as to Project management roles between North Herts Council and Stevenage Borough Council, combined with key staff members departing latter, impinged on brief development and confident communication of brief to team.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: The Project brief/specification should take central & early focus and be exhaustively discussed with all Project Team members to evaluate its practical implementation and refine prior to any work is commenced.</p>	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set out Project brief/specification and discuss at earliest opportunity with Project Team. 2. Based on each team member's input, iteratively refine the brief/specification to ensure practical and efficient implementation and buy-in by all team members.
C2				
<u>Category - Procurement and Letting of Contracts</u>				

Lessons Log

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P1	(As per row with Reference No.IN1	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prior to commencing Project, explain Project strategy and objectives to Procurement team, including anticipated issues. 2. Seek early advice of Procurement team on suitable procurement and contract options. 3. Seek early advice of both Procurement and Legal Services teams for tailoring the contract(s) to the nature and anticipated issues of the Project.
P2				
<u>Category - Maintaining Business as Usual</u>				

Reference No.	Details of Lesson	Name of Officer	Date Recorded	Actions Taken
M1	<p>Event: Revision of Project programme.</p> <p>Cause: Unforeseen introduction of Government enforced site lockdowns during the Project following outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Effect: Delays in progressing work due to awaiting of Government confirmation as to when restrictions on construction sites were to be lifted. This introduced delays into the project programme. Although construction sites were permitted to re-open relatively early following the first Covid-19 lockdown, the Project was required to be managed in accordance with health & safety advice regarding close proximity working and minimising unnecessary contact. This inevitably reduced productivity of work on site. Furthermore, delays were experienced in securing certain materials during the Covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: Covid-19 lockdowns prior to the Project commencing were not envisaged.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: Ensure contracts take into account similar events to try and protect the Council.</p> <p>Greater contingency planning for unforeseen events should be built into future projects based on the Covid-19 lockdown experience. This will be combined with wider risk assessments of sites, more flexible methodology statements and broader risk mitigation strategies in order to improve adaptability of Projects to similar restrictions in the future.</p>	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To research and consult Legal Services more thoroughly on the options and legislative background for incorporating provisions in build contracts that focus on addressing Project delays due to unforeseen events. For example, greater emphasis will be placed on contractual force majeure and good faith clauses. The aim is to ensure the Project Team is clear on their rights and remedies should unforeseen events materialise. 2. The contract administrator should record all variations and extensions of time agreed between client and contractor. 3. The use of a liquidated damages clause within the contract should be considered.

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M2				
<u>Category - Training</u>				
TR1	<p>Event: Improved project management capability required.</p> <p>Cause: Limited project management training of Project Team.</p> <p>Effect: Restricted vision and forward planning of Project, limited clarity of roles of Project Team and limited coordination of tasks between team.</p> <p>Identification of Risk: Checking of the Project Team for formal training or experience in project management was limited to a few key members.</p> <p>Proposals for Improvement: Project management training should be mandated for all officers involved in any project (where feasible) and officers' understanding assessed following training.</p>	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recommended that project management training be mandated for all officers with significant involvement in Council projects, followed by appropriate assessment of knowledge.
TR2				
<u>Category - Governance and Probity</u>				
G1	No issues identified.	Christopher Robson	19-06-2023	Not applicable.
G2				