

APM Corporate



ACCREDITATION

CASE STUDY



City of Westminster

Introduction

Westminster City Council is one of the leading local authorities in the UK, responsible for delivering services to the borough that is home to the monarchy and the seat of UK government.

It has over 250,000 residents and over 48,000 businesses within its boundaries, with a daytime population in excess of 900,000 people.

The single tier authority is recognised as class-leading, providing over 460 services to its customers including social care, children's services, city management, planning, licensing and housing services within the borough. The council employs 3,000 people across a diverse range of professions and services.



Delivering change

Westminster City Council has a broad and diverse corporate transformation portfolio across the authority, ranging from the built environment and city management to public health, social care and corporate services.

Leading this is the Corporate Strategy and Transformation Unit, part of the council's Policy, Performance and Communications Directorate. The unit, previously known as the Change and Project Management Unit, ensures transformational concepts are fully developed with robust business cases and set up for successful delivery either within services or by programme teams.

The objectives for the unit are:

- To provide effective challenge and detailed oversight of the entire portfolio of change and transformation across the organisation and with partners, including both corporate and departmental projects and programmes.
- To lead the initiation and set-up of new projects and programmes, ensuring that they fit with the council's strategic priorities, have robust business cases, deliver to the highest project management standards, manage change and engagement effectively and are governed robustly.
- To have clear handover to project and programme delivery teams.
- To provide flexible resourcing of highly skilled project managers and analysts, and to grow our own staff, to fill gaps in our skill sets.

Laura Hulme, senior transformation manager and the recognised 'champion' of the Association for Project Management (APM) within the council, is supported at the highest level, endorsed by the chief executive at Westminster City Council.



“ APM accreditation recognises that Westminster City Council delivers quality project managers and assures our stakeholders that we will deliver to the highest standard.”

Julia Corkey, director of communication and strategy



Definition of professionalism

As part of its brief, the Corporate Strategy and Transformation Unit is responsible for defining project management development across the organisation.

The aim is to ensure projects are delivered using a consistent approach, giving senior managers confidence in project delivery. Programme and project managers are embedded within all services areas, rather than being employed by the central team, so this consistency is essential for supporting standards and delivery across the organisation.

At the heart of this are the professional standards, qualifications and guidance from the Association for Project Management, which the council has embraced.

Local authorities need quality professionals to manage projects and programmes because of the importance of their contribution in delivering high quality work which meets public expectation. The adoption of APM standards allows us to use a widely-known and respected approach to ensuring that this is possible."

Ezra Wallace, head of corporate strategy

There are three main professional capability groupings for council staff:

- Project and programme management
- Change management
- In-business leadership of change

Within each of these clusters are set or defined entry competence level and a target competence level based on APM's Competency Framework which is supplemented by corporate-specific competencies where appropriate.

A competency self-assessment tool, also mapped to the APM framework, is routinely completed by individuals and reviewed by line managers to gauge their current skill levels and identify gaps, which in turn informs individuals' training and training and development needs.

This is approached in a highly structured and planned way. Top-down planning is matched with bottom-up feedback from staff, ensuring that training plans are incorporated into annual performance objectives.

For example, the Westminster Leadership Academy has recently been launched to further develop leadership capability across the organisation. A key learning theme is 'leading change', this is a pillar of learning and development for the organisation.



Personal story

Alison Davies

Projects and programme manager (community services) – city management and communities

Alison began working at Westminster City Council as a temp straight after leaving university in 2003 with a BA in English Language and Literature.

She stayed for a few months before setting off on her travels to Australia. On her return, she went back to the council as the executive assistant to the deputy chief executive.

"This was an interesting and challenging role which helped develop my contacts across the authority. I had always been interested in politics so like many colleagues I ended up staying and have never looked back!

"I took the opportunity to manage major capital regeneration projects, mainly leisure centres as part of mixed use developments with private sector development partners.

"I completed the APMP qualification in 2013 which has helped hone my skills. I believe that communication skills and being a good 'people person' are essential to successful project management. So much of the role is reliant on having a good team who work together. Spending time developing relationships across many organisations, partners and contractors will help during the more challenging times in a project lifecycle.

"The ability to respond to major issues and adapt is also critical. Project plans, programmes and outcomes are continually changing in major projects that can span over five years."

Alison is currently working on the £20 million Active Queen's Park project to consolidate two existing ageing sports facilities and deliver new high quality sports facilities and increase existing local facilities by 40 per cent.



The effectiveness of learning and development is reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets the organisation's and the individual's need. Development programmes are aligned to the *APM Body of Knowledge 6th edition* and include APM qualifications and in-house training.

The council consistently promotes APM qualifications and gives financial support to those undertaking formal project and programme management training, which also includes PRINCE2, MSP and Management of Portfolios.

Training is delivered through a mixture of internal and external training as required by teams or individuals. Mentoring and coaching strengthens the learning and development process, both through formal arrangements and more informally by more senior project and programme management professionals.

Westminster City Council provides professional membership for staff relevant to their role. APM membership is mandatory for permanent members of the Corporate Strategy and Transformation Unit and is actively encouraged across the wider organisation. All manager-grade and above are entitled to have their membership fees paid by the council.

The council's project portal, available to all staff, highlights the importance that is attached to the continuing professional development of project and programme managers across the organisation.

The community is actively encouraged to take part in APM events, such as a committee meeting of the Enabling Change specific interest group hosted by the council and by attending a corporate event on the London Victoria Station upgrade project.

Association for Project Management and Westminster City Council

Westminster City Council is a corporate member of APM and mandates individual membership for all project and programme management staff. There are currently eight individual Associate members, nine full members and one Fellow. More are in the pipeline and the council is committed to grow APM membership across the organisation.

APM is the authority's sole organisation for professional project management support. It has clearly aligned its professional standards to the *APM Competence Framework*, the *APM Body of Knowledge 6th edition* and APM qualifications.

Participation in APM events is actively encouraged, with details regularly publicised to the project management community across the council.

Association for Project Management

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FIVEDimensions of Professionalism

APM Corporate Accreditation

APM Corporate Accreditation will help you stand out as an exemplar in the development of project management professionals. It provides assurances to your customers and suppliers and allows you to attract and retain the best project management talent in the country.

APM Corporate Accreditation recognises the commitment of organisations and professional development services to the defined APM FIVE Dimensions of Professionalism, each of which is supported by an APM standard:

Breadth

The *APM Body of Knowledge* defines the knowledge needed to manage any kind of project. It underpins many project management standards and methods including the National Occupational Standard in Project Management.

Depth

The *APM Competence Framework* provides a guide to project management competences. It is part of your professional toolkit; mapping levels of knowledge and experience to help you progress your skills and abilities.

Achievement

APM qualifications take your career in new and exciting directions. They are recognised across the profession and aligned with IPMA's 4 level Certification Program.

Commitment

Continuing Professional Development helps develop your project management practice. A targeted development plan will enhance your project management career.

Accountability

The APM Code of Professional Conduct outlines the ethical practice expected of a professional. Becoming an APM member shows your commitment to the Code and sets you apart from others.