

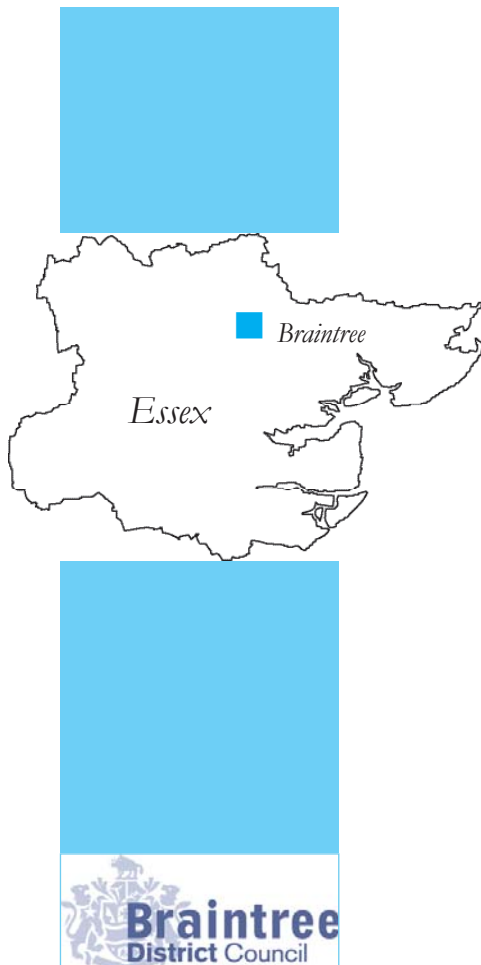
Case Study

Braintree District Council

A public – private sector partnership to develop and deliver a business efficiency

In brief:

- Braintree District Council faced a General Fund shortfall and needed to reduce costs by £3 million over a three-year period.
- The corporate management team wanted staff to work together to understand and respond to the challenges as a whole, deliver the required changes and meet the needs of local people.
- Braintree asked Alexander to work with them in partnership to develop and deliver a business efficiency change programme that ensured the acquisition of Lean Skills and the capacity so that change is sustainable.



Think with us ...

If you're reading this, then you're probably just like us, always curious about new ways of working.

The aim of our case studies is to promote sharing of knowledge and from it **thought leadership**. We hope this study helps you think through and explore some of the issues we now face.

Your questions and feedback are welcome.

Call us on 023 8022 5020 or email kay.bocock@alexander-ecc.com.

Braintree's challenge

Braintree faced an expected shortfall in General Fund revenue, as a result of:

- Residual costs, due to the transfer of the Council's housing stock, of over 8,000 houses, to a newly formed Registered Social Landlord, which raised significant staffing, accommodation and cost issues.
- The expansion of recycling throughout the district, inflation and increased leisure management costs.
- A need to provide a sum each year to meet new demands.
- A grant settlement below inflation and new responsibilities (e.g. concessionary fares).

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We agreed at the outset that the nature of the partnership would change at key milestones and the role required within the Council would move from 'hands on' to a programme management overview, still acting as a critical friend to ensure the challenge and pace is maintained. The flexibility and range of skills that can be called upon has helped us shape up for the next period of the never ending improvement journey.”

Allan Reid, Chief Executive,
Braintree District Council.

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The effect of all of the above was a need to reduce costs by £3 million, whilst ensuring that the rationalised authority is 'fit for purpose' and dedicated on improving service quality and customer outcomes. Allan Reid, the Chief Executive, and his corporate management team wanted to ensure that everyone in the Council understood and responded to the challenges and delivered the required changes that would meet the needs of local people.

Councillor Graham Butland, Leader of the Council said, "The Members recognised that the tasks of housing transfer and managing the residual costs at the same time stretched the management capacity of the organisation. It was also an opportunity for an external set of eyes to look at the way we managed our business on our quest for continuous improvement in service delivery and value to the taxpayer. We believe that the partnership with Alexander has enabled the significant financial and cultural challenges to be turned around far more quickly and effectively by their additional capacity, skills and experience."

Public and private sector partnership

Braintree asked Alexander to work with them in partnership to develop and deliver an organisation-wide business efficiency programme. Braintree chose Alexander because of their track record of working with UK local government using Lean Systems Thinking. The partnership provided Braintree with access to Alexander's experience and expertise covering:

- Change programme & project management
- Leadership & management development
- Process improvement – Lean Systems Thinking
- Performance management and business planning
- Internal and external communications

Gaining Commitment

Initially, Alexander worked with the corporate and senior management groups and engaged in a series of leadership and change management workshops. Their purpose was to gain commitment to a shared understanding of the need for change and of how Lean Systems Thinking could support service transformation. Programme and project management arrangements were agreed with the internal programme team and the necessary governance systems were implemented.

Going Lean in support services

Alexander then worked with the programme team to complete a Lean-based feasibility review and analysis of all the services that were being charged to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) in order to validate Braintree's own figure of £1.6m. A significant amount of time was spent on face-to-face meetings with service managers discussing their business processes. This stakeholder engagement further cemented their commitment to change and enabled them to scope and define the projects that would realise the required figure. Following the definition of the projects within the HRA workstream, Alexander and the programme team continued to receive feedback and gain commitment from service managers through workshops. It is fair to say that the engagement of the Council's managers played a key role in the success of the programme.

Case Study

As a result, the realisation of the £1.6m savings has been achieved through a programme of systematic Lean-based process improvement projects and the development of robust service level agreements (SLA's) with Greenfields Community Housing (GCH).

Alexander's Programme Manager, Jan Lycett, commented, "Braintree is redefining itself as a learning organisation, benefiting from both significant cashable savings and improved services. The partnership has been a catalyst for change and the drive behind the authority's move towards achieving its vision and excellence."

Going Lean in front-line services

Alexander and the programme team also worked on Lean-based feasibility reviews across all front-line services. These approaches gained managers' commitment to change and enabled them to scope and define their own change projects, which are expected to deliver £1m cashable savings. Alexander provided training and facilitation support to the service project teams, who then analysed, redesigned and implemented more efficient ways of working. High level options appraisals were completed to test the range of the available alternative delivery vehicles and to enable Braintree to complete its full transformation in the long term.

Demonstrable efficiency gains

A key feature throughout Alexander's work is the development and use of a bespoke Cost-Benefit Model (CBM), which includes service CBMs and a consolidated programme CBM. The CBMs provide auditable evidence of improved Value for Money (VFM) and use of resources. The hard and soft efficiencies are captured throughout each Lean improvement project from initial identification at feasibility phase through to their validation during implementation. The provision of on-site programme management has also enabled the pace of delivery to be maintained and allowed for ongoing change to occur.

Alexander is an independent change management consultancy that specialises in strategy alignment, performance management and improvement.

For further information please contact Kay on 023 8022 5520 or email kay.bocock@alexander-ecc.com.

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“We have been able to benefit from a pool of highly competent consultants and associates. They are all signed up to Alexander's philosophy, which has meant that we have not had to spend time aligning providers with our programme aims – they are already on board and we are able to establish working relationships very quickly and effectively. Alexander proved able to meet our needs flexibly and responsively.”

Greta Irving,
Organisation Development
Manager
Braintree District Council

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Alexander People - what we believe

Alexander people are business people who are passionate about public services. We take what's good from the private sector and shape it to meet the demands and challenges of public service. So when we look at the world and see what's wrong, our instinct is not to complain about it, it's to do something about it. This means that, when we look at our own company, we don't just look at its performance as a business; we look at the difference we make to changing public services and society for the better.

The people who manage and deliver public services today face huge challenges. They deserve someone to think with and people who can help to do the things they haven't the capacity to do themselves.

That's why we **engage** and connect with the people at all levels in public services who face these challenges.

Then we help them **challenge** the way things are.

So that they can deliver real **change** for the better.

That's what we do: **Engage. Challenge. Change.**

There's a belief that, without a profit motive, there isn't enough to drive public services to be better. We say that the stakes couldn't be higher. For people who work in and with public services, if we fail, society fails. **We believe this is the most powerful driver there is.**

Alexander People - what we do

Knowing where to go and how to get there

- Strategic & organisational review and diagnosis
- Shared vision
- Transformation strategy
- Transformation blueprint
- Stakeholder engagement
- Change readiness
- Communications

Delivering customer value with less resources

- Lean Systems Thinking
- Service transformation, design and improvement
- Shared services
- Function and service reviews
- Options appraisals and business case development

Enabling change to happen

- Programme and project management
- Change Management and benefits realisation
- Building capacity to change
- Skills and knowledge transfer

Making change sustainable

- Leadership development
- Management development
- Continuous improvement strategy and culture
- Skills and knowledge transfer

We work with...

Alexander works with people & organisations in the public sector, including:

- District Councils
- Unitary Authorities
- County Councils
- Housing Associations
- Police Services
- Health Services

If you'd like to talk about how we can help you, call us on 023 8022 5520.

Alexander - contact us

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