

## Summary

In September 2021 the PFI Project Company handed over to the Authority Client services provided at 4 secondary schools which included cleaning and caretaking, security, grounds maintenance and catering.

These services had been provided by the PFI partners since the start of the project but as the needs of the service provision evolved all parties agreed that handing over the services would allow the Council to align the 4 schools with their broader provision and initiatives.



Achieving the effective handover of the services required all parties to engage early and openly on how that process could be managed and work together to ensure the key milestones were achieved.

## Vercity's Involvement

Vercity is the provider of management services to the PFI Project Company and was able to use an understanding of the delivery of services in the education sector<sup>1</sup> to plan and support the transition. There was a significant volume of activity required, not only to ensure that the contractual relationships were redefined but to manage the practical aspects of the change and protect the nearly 5,000 pupils attending the schools from any disruption.



The Council, the PFI Project Company and the existing contractor ensured that additional resource was brought in to help manage the discussions on transition and the process needed to ensure a smooth handover. Having additional expertise deployed allowed the day-to-day service provision to continue with minimal disruption, while ensuring that project knowledge was harnessed to support the changes.

### Key Learnings:

- i) Multiple changes at the same time adds complexity that can be delivered but increases the management requirements.
- ii) Put protocols in place for handover including the contractual cut-off and impact on mechanisms and reporting.
- iii) Ensure that replacement services infrastructure such as helpdesk are ready, and that any new arrangements are clearly communicated to end users and to staff transferring.
- iv) Establish a momentum for the process and all parties then need to sustain it.

<sup>1</sup> At 1 February 2022, Vercity supports education facilities in the UK providing over 160,000 student places

## People Impacted

A number of individuals were impacted by the right to TUPE, either to the direct employment of either the Council or the Academies or to the incoming service providers who the Council already contracted across other estate.

Reassuring the staff involved and ensuring communication with them was an important part of the process.



## Caretaking

Caretaking staff were eligible for transfer to Local Authority employment as part of the new model adopted. This meant a need to define the interface between the caretaking role and the Hard FM provision and supply chain, which were now with separate entities.

The infrastructure provided by the outgoing contractor was no longer available to these staff and there is a need in this situation to map out is required to support them, including IT arrangements, phones, uniforms and a handbook on how the roles would be delivered (linked to defining the interface).

## Catering

To ensure that the Council could complete their negotiation with the intended contractor it was agreed to retain the incumbent PFI contractor for a transition period after the formal handover of the catering service. Agreeing this required a change from the intended plan but could be achieved as all parties were working to minimise disruption and ensure a smooth change (at a subsequent date) to the new arrangements being put in place.

## Summary

It was a significant exercise for all involved to smoothly transfer the delivery of various services from the PFI Project Company to Council oversight with multiple contractors each delivering part of the service. The focus for all parties was ensuring that the impact on the staff affected was minimised and that there was no negative impact on the 5,000 pupils attending the schools.

Ensuring appropriate management resource and facilitating effective communication between all parties, especially when there were commercial questions to resolve, were key parts of the solution.

A lot of work went into ensuring that transition and it was not always easy but with all parties working to a shared objective we were able to reposition the services provided to the schools to help reflect the Council's broader strategy for delivery.

**Rachel Buckley | General Manager**