



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

My thoughts and experiences of LGR.....

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Introduction and Context Setting

- Appointed Assistant Director for Commissioning & Procurement for Westmorland and Furness Council shortly before LGR in Cumbria (1st April 2023)
- Cumbria LGR bought together the 7 sovereign Councils
 - Cumbria County Council
 - 6 District Councils
- Westmorland Furness Council drew from
 - c. 40% of the County Council
 - Barrow Borough Council
 - Eden District Council
 - South Lakeland District Council
- Prior to this role I was the Senior Manager Commissioning at Cumbria County Council. Involved in LGR preparatory work focused on commissioning, contracts and schedules and Inter Agency Agreements
- No sovereign councils bought any dedicated external support for the procurement and contracts workstream
- Legal advice was sought on areas such as the Inter Authority Agreements and contract novation clauses
- Looking back, there are things I wish I had known at the time – I will try and share some of these reflections in the next 10 mins or so



Getting Things in Order (Wherever You Are on the Journey)

- **Contracts register**
 - Is it up to date, complete and accurate?
 - Are all contracts stored in one place and accessible?
 - Information often sits in “peoples heads” and is easily lost during LGR
- **Contracts pipeline**
 - What activity have you got “included” for the next 12, 18 and 24 months?
 - Can any of this be bought forward or delayed to smooth demand?
 - Plan further ahead than you think – including beyond Vesting Day
 - Start identifying areas for the aggregation early / alignment to potential new boundaries
- **Spend Analysis**
 - Understand where money is being spent and why
 - Work closely with finance to model the impact of change
- **Governance**
 - Ensure Contract Procedure Rules are robust and up-to-date
- **Staffing**
 - Understand skills and capacity within the team
 - Act early to address gaps and share knowledge



As You Get Nearer to Vesting Day

- **Hosted contracts and services**
 - Inter Authority Agreements / SLAs will become clearer
 - Be specific about responsibilities, timescales and governance
- **Staffing structures**
 - You will know which staff are transferring where, so test capacity and capability assumptions early
 - Address risks through recruitment and training where possible
- **Culture**
 - Start building the future procurement culture
 - Create opportunities to meet, share information and build relationships
 - Minimise the feeling of this is being done to us
- **Contract Procedure Rules**
 - Are these developed and ready. *Ask yourselves can we mobilise effectively from Day1?*
- **Communication with suppliers**
 - Engage suppliers early
 - Be clear about what LGR means for them and what to expect
- **Shadow Arrangements (Section 24)**



Post Vesting Day

- The organisation plans intensively for Day 1 – procurement must plan for **day 2 – 365**
- Requests for contract information will increase as:
 - New managers take responsibility
 - Staff move on
 - Knowledge gaps emerge
- Recognition that there will be a difference in procurement knowledge, confidence and compliance; plan training and information sharing early (across the organisation)
- Policy decisions begin, thereby driving procurement strategies and increasing demand for support
- Multiple ICT systems may still be in use, making collaboration harder
- You may face complex (“wicked”) issues caused by:
 - Decisions not taken pre-LGR
 - Poor data
 - Informal or undocumented arrangements
- Important to build the confidence of Members / SLT and take the opportunity to demonstrate you are managing and understand the pipeline and data you have
- Managing the expectations of Members and CMT is critical – not everything can or should be aggregated immediately



Personal Reflections (Three Years On)

- Significant variation in procurement approaches across sovereign councils
 - County Council had a dedicated senior procurement role
 - District Councils often did not
- Wide difference in procurement knowledge, confidence and compliance
- Governance and decision-making processes differed, making it harder post-LGR
- Procurement team capacity was a real challenge:
 - Budgets transferred, but workforce numbers did not always follow
 - Recruitment challenge added pressure
- The contracts 'list' was helpful – but there was no **comprehensive pipeline** in place on 1st April 2023 (*my number one recommendation*: build a robust pipeline early)
- Reluctance to make contract decisions pre-LGR led to an avoidable spike in activity during the first 12 – 18 months
- Decisions around grants were not taken early enough – including clarity on ownership
- The impact of hosted services on workload and pipeline was consistently underestimated

