

Candidate Profile

Liz Watts MA, MBA, ACCA

Profile:

An accomplished leader with an extremely varied background. Experienced in delivering organisational transformation in UK and international organisations. Extensive senior management experience in local government, including the delivery of Medium Term Financial Strategies, Local Plans, complex partnerships and commercial agendas. Outstanding academic record to match experience. Confident and convincing communicator, with sound political insight.

Board Positions: Non Executive Director of Havebury **Housing Association** 2010 – 2013

Employment:

Oct 2012 – present Director West Suffolk (Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury) Councils

One of two directors employed by two districts in West Suffolk (population 170,000), this role is strategic in nature, providing support and advice to staff and councillors, and working with a number of key partners to deliver services in innovative ways. The first 18 months in this role were spent creating a single staff structure across both councils, which delivered 18% staff savings. The councils are ambitious, and I have led a number of key projects, including:

- **expansion** of the Anglia Revenues Partnership from two to seven partners (now the third largest Revenues & Benefits provider in England)
- the **creation of a commercial team** within the Leisure service to reduce cost of subsidy in our arts centres, parks and museums
- a **community-led partnership** project to transform the town centre, traffic, tourism, economic development and educational offer in Newmarket (@Nmktvision)
- **politically complex projects**, including gypsy and traveller temporary stopping sites and pre-emptive injunctions on vulnerable council-owned land
- a **business process reengineering** project to improve service efficiency and deliver a further £250,000 savings
- the on-site construction start of a £15m **nationally significant Heritage Centre** for Horseracing and the Sporting Arts, a project which will open in 2016 and play a important role in the regeneration of Newmarket.

Feb 2008 – Sep 2012 Chief Finance Officer St Edmundsbury Borough Council

My role as CFO entailed management of Finance, Internal Audit, ICT, Procurement, Revenues and Benefits, Risk Management and Business Continuity. I had a staff of nearly 100.

Achievements included:

- **Establishing a shared ICT service** with Forest Heath District Council
- Delivering c. **£0.5m annual procurement savings** within 9 months of taking on responsibility for the function
- Leading a budget **consultation exercise which delivered significant public buy-in** through an extensive programme of engagement with a wide range of individuals and groups;
- Leading a corporate Administration Review to **improve value for money** through more effective administration support to the council. Annual savings of £75k achieved;
- **Redesigning the budget monitoring reports to be more accessible and user friendly**, and to ensure that budget holders are properly held to account for their budgets.

Mar 2002 – Jan 2008 Deputy Director of Resources Office of the High Representative, Sarajevo

The Office of the High Representative is an international organisation set up directly after the war in Bosnia, to oversee the civilian elements of the Dayton peace agreement. I had direct responsibility for 100 staff, in HR, Finance, Procurement, Logistics and Audit. Key achievements included:

- **Downsizing the organization from 750 to 250 staff over three years**, whilst maintaining operational effectiveness. I was the lead officer on this project;
- **Integrating OHR and OSCE** (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe), **two entirely separate political organisations** including 13 offices and staff groups across Bosnia.
- Designing, tendering, selecting and implementing an **organisation-wide IT system (SAP)**, to replace a number of legacy systems. Project from start to finish was completed in 9 months, with successful on-time and in budget 'go live' date (initially with 60 SAP users); the system enabled OHR to reduce staff whilst still maintaining all back office functionality;
- Establishing a system of **performance management** across the Administration and Finance Divisions, training staff in its operation, and driving improvements in performance on the basis of the data generated;
- **Empowering** Bosnian staff who had traditionally been very undervalued, thereby reducing the need to appoint international expatriate staff (and significantly reducing the cost of the OHR);
- **Project Managing** the construction of a cemetery to bury the 8,000 victims of the Srebrenica genocide, including **complex negotiations with victims' families and a ceremonial opening by Former President Bill Clinton**.

Previous roles

Feb 2000 - Feb 2002 Deputy Manager EU Quick Impact Facility

Nov 1999 - Jan 2000 Training Manager, The Refugee Council, UK

Sept 1995 – Oct 1999 Assistant to the Chief Executive, the Refugee Council UK

Mar 1992 – June 1995 General Manager, The Old Town Hall Arts Centre

Jan – Sep 1991 UK Producer 'Voice of the Turtle'

Education & Continuing Professional Development:

2011 - 2012: Institute of Leadership and Management, **Level 5 Certificate in Coaching**

2008 - 2009: CIPFA membership awarded in March 2010 (distance learning study)

2005 - 2006: ACCA (Association of Chartered and Certified Accountants) **membership awarded** in 2007 (I received the **highest mark worldwide for the ICT Paper**)

2000 - 2004: University of Warwick Business School (UK), **MBA with distinction** (distance learning study)

1996 - 1997: University of London (UK), **Diploma in Quality Management**

1992 - 1993: Brooklands College Weybridge (UK), **Chartered Institute of Marketing Diploma**

1991 - 1992: College of William and Mary (Williamsburg, USA), **4 month scholarship** study

1987 - 1991: University of St Andrews (UK), **MA in Moral Philosophy and Logic and Metaphysics, 2:1**

1980 - 1986: St Leonards-Mayfield School, **3 A' levels and 12 O'levels**

Publications:

I edited 'Forgotten Beauty – A Hiker's Guide to Bosnia and Herzegovina's 2000 Metre Peaks' which was published in 2005.

In 1991 I interviewed His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Northern India, published by 'Scotland on Sunday'.

Voluntary work: Great Barton Scout Group, Beaver Leader (since 2011)