



Running public service mutuals in real life



**Fiona Williams, Chief Executive
Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Ltd**

Explore York Libraries and Archives Mutual Ltd

- Five Explore Centres
- Nine Explore Gateways
- One Explore Mobile
- Five Reading Cafés
- Archive and Local History Centre
- Home Library Service
- Prison Library
- Inclusive Arts and Media



Background Stuff

- May 2014 we left the council with a five year contract
- IPS with charitable status
- Board of seven - paid staff on the Board
- Strategic Management Team
- Staff own one third
- Community Members own two thirds

Benefits

- Simply the freedom to act quickly, make speedy decisions
- Focus on Explore and our core business of libraries and archives
- Explore is now more visible to other organisations
- Able to call on our Board and our Community Members to access new skills and knowledge - people are much more likely to help us now

Challenges - responsibility

- To make sure everyone is paid at the end of month
- To ensure the quality of service is high
- To build the business and income streams
- To quickly identify risks and mitigate their impact

Challenges - Financial

- It's different from local government budgets
- Cash flow is king
- You need to understand how every penny is spent
- You have to negotiate for the best deal on every contract
- A good finance manager from day one is essential

Challenges - People

- How to involve staff as owners as well as employees
- Capacity - we are lean and each person is vital to success. Our staff work very hard and commitment is essential
- The need for new skills and be flexible in your roles
- That means that staff wellbeing needs lots of attention - we succeed or fail together

Challenges - Governance

- Attracting the right people to be Board members
- Learning to work with a Board rather than councillors - how much to tell them, how to showcase the breadth of services we deliver
- Community members - the need to keep them informed and involved. This takes time. They own two thirds and so need to be engaged with

Critical Success Factors

- Strong vision and leadership
- Commitment to that vision from everyone
- Clear business plan to deliver the vision
- Willingness to take risks, more than a willingness - an eagerness
- Good finance manager with experience of the not for profit sector
- Excellent working relationship with the council

Critical Success Factors

- Partnership between the CEO and the Chair is crucial. Their relationship must be honest with trust
- Strong leadership from the Chair who is an important advocate outside Explore
- Board that works collaboratively
- Staff that are committed to Explore
- Excellent relationship with Community Members