

# CASE STUDY

## Roffey Park Development Programme helps West Sussex County Council evolve to meet the challenges of reduced budgets

### Introduction

West Sussex County Council (WSSC) is the authority that governs the non-metropolitan county of West Sussex, comprising seven district and borough councils, and 159 town, parish and neighbourhood councils. The Chief Executive and his team of Executive Directors are responsible for the day-to-day running of the council, including areas such as education, transport, strategic planning, emergency services, social services, public safety and waste disposal.

### The Challenge

Across the UK, all areas of the public sector are under tremendous pressure to reduce costs due to the budget deficit. In 2009-2012, WSSC itself is required to make £79m in savings. As a result, the organisation recognised the need to work differently, introduce leaner and flatter structures and develop a culture of self-service. In order to do so, WSSC wanted to establish new operating models around strategic objectives that would encourage greater responsibility and accountability.

"We identified a set of seven core management capabilities that would be underpinned by a development programme to equip our senior managers with the skills they need to thrive

in a changing environment," explains Tim Jeary, HR Consultant at WSSC. "Following rigorous assessment of our Operational Management Group (OMG) of over a hundred managers, we had the data we needed to create a vision of what our development programme would like. The logical next step was to find a partner that could deliver on that vision."

WSSC issued an open invitation to tender for the project which generated over 50 responses. Measuring each against a strict set of criteria, it whittled this number down to a shortlist of three. The key criterion was value for money, followed by professional expertise, design quality and the ability to manage the expectations of multiple stakeholders. Roffey Park emerged as the overall frontrunner:

"Roffey Park was streets ahead of the competition when it came to expertise, experience, quality and innovation. It also had the flexibility and capacity to meet our timescales and volumes," adds Jeary. "Although it was not the cheapest proposal on the table, the sheer quality of Roffey Park's tender won the day. We knew the team at Roffey would be the ideal partners in delivering a Development Programme that would address the individual needs of a very large – and sceptical – group of people."



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## The Solution

Jeary worked with Roffey Park from March 2010 to develop the programme, which was ready to receive its first cohort of participants in August of that year. It consisted of a mandatory three day module, comprising two consecutive days and a follow-up day six weeks later; complemented by elective master classes on a range of subjects. Overall five separate cohorts of 25 participants each took part in the programme, which ended in February 2011.

In the first two-day session, following a series of practical sessions covering topics such as emotional awareness, leadership theory and handling challenging situations, groups were divided into smaller teams of seven and eight and given a real world business case study to address. The brief asked them to put their newly acquired skills into practice and together address a challenge that the WSCC was facing. They then had six weeks to work together before presenting back to the board during the final one day session.

"The beauty of the development programme was that it was finely tuned to the needs of the participants, it enabled them to work with peers who they normally wouldn't know and it gave them a real business case to examine so they could feed back some value into the organisation," says Jeary. "100 per cent of the groups completed this task successfully while almost half also engaged with the master classes, exploring areas such as financial management, political awareness and business planning."

The success of the programme was due in no small part to the input and execution of Roffey Park: "The Roffey Park team was incredibly responsive, flexible and highly experienced. They drew on their huge amount of expertise, combined with a credible, consultative approach to deliver a bespoke solution that absolutely met our needs. And given many participants had undergone similar training in the past and were sceptical about the enterprise, they managed to instil a high degree of confidence and credibility in the process."

## The Results

Feedback was gathered both immediately after participation in the initial module and via telephone interviews when the entire programme was completed with the general consensus being positive. Participants reported being able to work far more effectively and many even embraced entirely different ways of working which were more suited to the way the organisation was evolving. Levels of motivation and commitment also increased as a result of participation. Working with previously unknown colleagues was described as invaluable and indeed many participants formed relationships that extended beyond the life cycle of the programme.

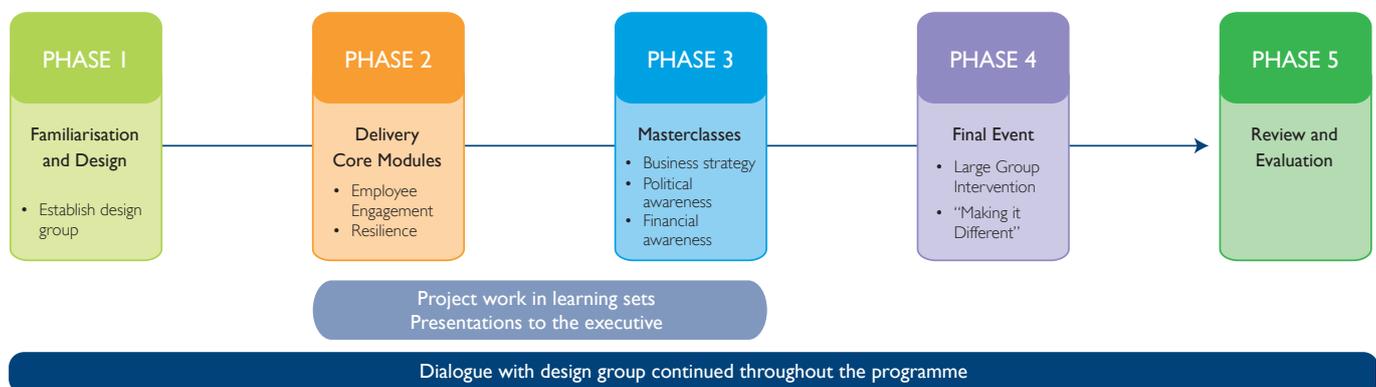
"The programme was a great success and was received very positively by the majority of participants," concludes Jeary. "It has equipped the OMG managers, who are fundamental in supporting and delivering significant change, with the knowledge and skills to support new ways of working and lead their associated teams through the challenges ahead."

*"In common with many large organisations, the County Council faces a challenge in terms of maintaining and developing the skills of its middle managers and in terms of unlocking their potential to drive success. The format of the programme supported the development of individuals but it also, crucially, challenged their ability to work in cross functional teams.*

*The real success of the programme will be felt in the next couple of years. However, the signs are encouraging. Participants have been positive about their experience and I have seen visible and obvious increases in motivation and enthusiasm. Most pleasingly, our middle managers are now beginning to challenge me and my Board colleagues to match the development they have done."*

Kieran Stigant, Chief Executive, West Sussex County Council

### West Sussex County Council Management Development Programme



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