

CATALYSING EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION THROUGH BSF



In November 2008, the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Croydon embarked on the early stages of their Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

A specialist team was assembled to deliver this complex joint programme - which will have a capital value of approximately £700 million - with EC Harris appointed to provide programme management and project management for Kingston and cost consultancy services for both authorities.

Creating solutions

The initial challenge for the team was to set up the structure and governance arrangements to enable the programme to function effectively across two local authorities with differing constitutions, political make-ups and which are geographically separated.

EC Harris provided experienced programme and project managers along with expert cost-consultants to manage the process and ensure all the necessary procedures were in place from the outset, setting the programme up to the best possible start.

One of the key early tasks was to produce a revenue budget that worked for each authority and which allowed the two programmes to move forward as one. With ever tightening financial constraints this was a challenge.

The client was keen to ensure that the budget was robust and made sufficient provisions to allow the BSF Programme to be 'transformational' from an education perspective. The EC Harris team used experience gained from working across a number of other BSF waves, to produce a budget that met the clients requirements and was benchmarked against other programmes to demonstrate its robustness. This was vital to the success of the whole project.

“EC Harris was the obvious choice for us given their proven track record of delivering BSF Programmes and their in-depth knowledge of the cost of education projects. Our rise up the priority rankings was significantly enhanced by the input from the EC Harris Team.”

Jo Twine, Programme Director

“EC Harris has helped catalyse the BSF process for the Royal Borough of Kingston and the London Borough of Croydon - this will ultimately help transform learning environments for young people across the boroughs.”

Adding value

In developing the team the client was keen to harness expertise not just in delivering BSF school projects but also to include expertise and experience from other sectors to provide a rounded group of professionals. EC Harris therefore assembled a team with this in mind including technical experts with extensive BSF experience but also professionals with other complimentary skills and educationalists.

It was extremely important for the client that the team worked closely with schools to ensure transformation was at the heart of the programme. Practically, this meant preparing 'Education Design Briefs' to ensure the needs of the schools were understood and to produce a coherent briefing document - setting out the schools vision and design requirements - which was then made available for all design consultants joining the team.

In April 2009, Partnerships for Schools (PfS) advised the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Croydon that they were placed 54th and 45th respectively in terms of the priority list for entry into the BSF programme. This indicated that it would be a long while before they could join the programme.

The EC Harris team worked closely with many departments within the councils to pull together a 'Readiness to Deliver' document that clearly demonstrated the councils readiness for BSF. This work was not just around education but articulated the wider benefit that BSF can bring.

Following the joint 'Readiness to Deliver' submission to PfS, it was announced that the two authorities were ready to join the BSF Programme. This was a significant acceleration from the position the authorities faced in April 2009 and shows the value of a close working relationship between all parts of the council and the BSF Team.

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