

New deal for stakeholders in partnered schools



Coventry Schools

Client - Coventry Local Education Authority
Constructor - Galliford Midlands
Client's Agent - The Client Agency, Coventry City Council
Architect - Corstorphine and Wright
Partnering Facilitator - Atkins Consultants

Case history

Ref. no: M4I 223
Date: February 2003
Theme(s): Partnering

A construction programme in three Coventry primary schools gives *New Deal* – the government's programme for devolved funding to schools – a whole new meaning. Coventry City Council partnered with Galliford Midlands and designers to build two classrooms at Foleshill, six classrooms at Ravensdale and a whole new junior department at Coundon. Head teachers awarded the construction team top marks for consultation skills, in a glowing end-of-term report on the £2.2m contract.



Class of 2002

Head teacher of Coundon Primary School, Kevin Snow, recalls his previous encounter with construction (the refurbishment of another school). "There's no comparison whatsoever," he says. "Partnering means we get a finished product, what we want and handed over to the school on time." In fact Galliford finished Coundon School a month early.

The partnership included the LEA client, client's agent, main contractor, lead designer and the three school heads. A key decision was to engage a partnering adviser from Atkins.

LEAP OF FAITH FOR COUNCIL

Coventry City Council has got over its initial hesitation to adopt partnering. Councillor Duggins, Cabinet Member for Education, reported to Council: "If the people of Coventry want to see what the City Council intends for future school buildings, they need only look at... Foleshill, Ravensdale and Coundon Schools."

REWARDS OF PARTNERING

Customer satisfaction – School satisfaction with the product and service was either 8/10 or 9/10 and defect scores were 9/10 or 10/10, using the scales on the Construction Industry Key Performance Indicators. Jeff Adams, Regional Director of Galliford Midlands, explains: "Defects were cleared as they occurred, with the aim of zero defects at handover. We didn't leave individuals to solve

problems in isolation; team members from client, consultants, contractor and subcontractors helped to resolve them."

Added value – Governors took advantage of the 'new deal' with the construction team to negotiate additional minor works that enhance the learning environment. These included various pavements and covered links, an electronic security gate and an environmental pond. "Regular meetings on site allowed us to discuss ideas and effect minor changes that had a significant educational impact," says David Stanier, head teacher at Foleshill.

Cost – The final account was 3% over the adjusted target cost, but this is better than the track record in previous Coventry schools.

RESPECT FOR PEOPLE

Consultation – "We wanted to change what happens when a builder comes into your neighbourhood," explains Coventry's client manager Bruce Oliver. Their extensive consultation with stakeholders got results. "We only had one complaint from neighbours, and that was actually about another contractor," he adds.

Toolkit on trial – The team took part in a trial of the Respect for People toolkit – *Site Safety*. They scored better than the average of the national trial in all of the eight criteria. Coventry City Council is planning trials of other Respect for People toolkits.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Engage a partnering adviser to recommend a framework and facilitate workshops from project start to finish
- Best value demands time for design; there are no short cuts to good design.
- Think hard about allowing for information and communication technologies of the future
- Devise a way to involve the larger package contractors actively in the partnership.

HOW TO CONTACT US:

Rethinking Construction
 108-110 Judd Street
 London
 WC1H 9PX

Tel: 020 7837 5702
Fax: 020 7813 3060

Email:
support@rethinkingconstruction.org.uk
 Website:
www.rethinkingconstruction.org.uk

The Rethinking Construction Strategy Model – applied to this innovation



THE CHALLENGE

School construction in Coventry had a history of contractual claims, overspends and delays, and the local education authority was under pressure from central government to halt the slippage in budgets. Officers saw partnering as a likely remedy for this long-running problem and also the ideal platform for consultation with stakeholders. Elected members would endorse the move away from the Council's traditional lowest-price-wins strategy, provided it offered the best value and right-first-time delivery.

THE SOLUTION

Selecting the contractor – Coventry City Council invited a 'long' list of 'approved' contractors to pre-qualify against four criteria - partnering experience, schools experience, partnering experience in schools and past performance. They selected a 'short' list of five to submit proposals, giving them the design brief, concept design, preliminary programme, cost plan and cost analysis of a recently completed school. Proposals covered seven headings: conditions of contract, programme, preliminaries and view of budget, partnering structures and procedures, risk log, design input and organisation. Bidders knew the value each heading would attract in the assessment. Three gave presentations to the client team (the LEA 'client', client's agent, project architect and three head teachers). The presentation accounted for one-third of the final analysis. Try Construction (now merged with Galliford) was judged to be the best bidder and joined the partnership.

Partnering workshops – No one, except the contractor, had much experience of partnering, so the client engaged a partnering adviser from Atkins to facilitate three workshops – at start up, mid way and the end. This strategy was a success as shown by the high level of customer input and satisfaction with the result, and the many lessons learned along the way.

Form of contract – Selecting the NEC Engineering and Construction Contract (Option C: Target Contract with Activity Schedule) was another key step in the solution. It included a pain/gain incentive, balanced 40% client, 40% contractor and 20% designer (with a cap on the designers'

pain). The contractor was paid to participate in the detailed design and value engineering.

Flexible design – In consultation with the schools, the layouts were adapted to give better security and reduce risk to expensive equipment, and teachers were able to enlarge teaching areas simply by sliding back soundproofed doors. Classrooms were equipped with interactive whiteboards and there was built-in provision for future information and communication technologies via accessible spaces and ducts.

Stakeholders – Communication initiatives targeted five groups:

Neighbours: fliers, comments box in reception, head teacher and agent visited immediate neighbours and left contact telephone number, phone log of comments and bulletin board with responses from the team, and stamped addressed envelope for final feedback.

Parents: as for neighbours, plus an open evening to present the project.

Teachers: issues channelled through head teacher who had weekly meetings with the agent.

Pupils: health and safety presentation at assembly, progress photographs, site visits and projects for pupils to contribute to the design.

Construction team: visitors to notify before entering the site and regular self-appraisal of team cohesion by secret ballot on qualitative issues.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Ideally officers would like to progress to strategic partnering, and this will occur where there are sufficient suitable projects for such a long-term contract. But central government policy is to procure larger projects such as comprehensive schools under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Mindful of the criticisms of some early PFI schools, Coventry officers will try to weave the ethos of team working and consultation with stakeholders into PFI contracts.

Trials of other Respect for People toolkits will cover workforce satisfaction, work in occupied premises, training, health and safety, the working environment, and equality and diversity in the workplace.

Next steps:

Things you could do to apply these ideas:

- Read the case study for M4I demonstration project No. 239 North Tyneside Partnering Agreement: *Strategic partnering works in North Tyneside schools*, at www.m4i.org.uk
- Use the *Respect for People Toolkits*, available from Rethinking Construction. Apply to be a Respect for People demonstration project.
Tel: 020 7837 5702
- Ask Camargue about the Learning by Doing course: *Skills to Develop Innovative and Motivated Team Working*.
Tel: 01242 577277



Department of Trade and Industry



Construction Best Practice

For further information:

Bruce Oliver
Client Manager
Coventry City Council

Tel: 024 7683 2675

E-mail: bruce.oliver@coventry.gov.uk