



Suffolk County Council Case Study

Suffolk has a population of approximately 700,000 and due to benefits such as low crime rates and a good environment, when questioned the majority of its residents rated it as a good place to live. That said it does face a number of significant challenges including a low skills base, a low earning economy and an ageing population.

These few examples alone call for strong management if the authority is to achieve its core objectives, similarly the risks and opportunities impacting on these objectives also need to be successfully managed. This is being achieved through much hard work across the authority but with the added assistance of a dedicated risk management software solution provided by JC Applications Development.

Request

When Sue Edwards became corporate risk manager in 2004, the approach to risk management at Suffolk was fairly disjointed with no single, unified corporate process. One of her first tasks was to remedy this situation by creating a solid and dependable risk framework. Additionally, having established that the risk management software system in use, a hangover from a previous external consultancy, was not sufficiently flexible or user friendly Sue realised a new technology solution would be required.

Solution

The authority approached a number of Risk Management system providers but after careful consideration decided upon JCAD RISK. 'The system chosen needed to be intuitive yet sophisticated enough for users to be confident that it held all the information they needed. We felt that JCAD RISK had what we were looking for'. Sue Richardson Corporate Risk Manager JCAD RISK now provides a central repository for all corporate and directorate strategic risks which are then linked back to the authority's key corporate and directorate level objectives. The authority is also able to distinguish between threats and opportunities and thus manage resources accordingly. Through the use of the web component the Principal Risk Officer,

Chloe Drew, has been able to provide individual team managers with access to update and review their own risks and controls. This has empowered personnel enabling greater responsiveness to managing key directorate risks which also has an impact on operational risks. Chloe has now also created a risk portal on the council's intranet with advice, links and guidance on the whole process of managing risk.

Results

The results of the last two years hard work can be seen in a variety of ways, for example Suffolk Fire Service were Highly Commended at the 2007 national ALARM conference for their work on 'Impact Days'. Also in the council's recent Corporate Assessment the authority's progress in implementing successful management frameworks was noted. Extracts from the report include; 'A comprehensive performance management framework is in place. Performance, financial, legal, risk management and staffing information are well integrated to provide a comprehensive overview for managers and councillors.' 'Risk management is strong and embedded in service and partnership activity. The Council's comprehensive strategy outlines its approach to risk and opportunity management. Managing risk is integral to the performance and financial management frameworks.'

The Future

Chloe is now building in the ability to manage project based risks into the system to support national initiatives like Building Schools for the Future, as well as Suffolk specific projects including internal transformation. Chloe concludes... 'Going forward we will require closer integration with the authority's performance mechanisms especially as the CAA will be more risk focused and we are confident that JCAD will be a good partner in this'.

