

## Coaching a New Leader to Hit the Ground Running

*New Head of Herts Highways needed to lead the alliance*

### The situation:

Hertfordshire Highways (Hertfordshire County Council, Amey Lafarge and Mouchel) was formed in 2002 as a fully integrated three-way alliance managing the county highways. It was responsible for end-to-end service to Hertfordshire residents and road users. However cracks in the partnership were evident. A new Head of Hertfordshire Highways was appointed to refocus the operation. He arrived in the middle of major changes and in the face of big issues.

*Coaching the new leader to make a flying start*

### My work:

The new Head of Herts Highways asked me to coach him during the early days in his new role. In a highly politically charged environment, he needed to show confident, strong and consistent leadership, and to cut through the issues that had infected the organisation before he arrived. He had a lot to assimilate to make sense of the organisation. My work was to create a safe space for him to:

- tease apart the issues
- speculate freely
- experiment
- review experiences privately, and
- rework and reapply his ideas.

*Self sufficient in no time*

### The outcome:

From the beginning this was designed to be a highly focused activity. The point of the exercise was for the Head of Highways to get up to speed and happily operating independently in as short a time as possible. We reached this point after just eight weeks, and our intensive coaching work together finished. We periodically meet to review how things continue to change and develop.

*Realism, pragmatism, challenge, safety*

### The Goldsmith factor:

The value I added was in creating a balance between safety and challenge:

- safety to explore any idea (however off the wall) positively, knowing that my client could place his full trust in our relationship;
- challenge in not simply accepting and reflecting my client's ideas back to him, but to stretch him, test for alternative possibilities and ground the ideas in the real world.