



Charnwood Borough Council Case Study

“NEW IP TELEPHONY SOLUTION TRANSFORMS CHARNWOOD BOROUGH COUNCIL’S CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS - IP Integration and Networks First install new converged IP network”

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Charnwood Borough Council sits centrally in the triangle formed by Nottingham, Leicester and Derby. Just over one third of the 155,000+ population live in and around the thriving university town of Loughborough. Of the remaining two thirds, many live in the larger villages/small towns of the Soar and Wreake valleys and on the edge of Leicester itself.

The Project

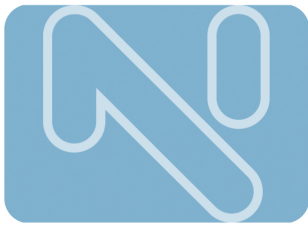
Charnwood Borough Council was not only keen to have a greater understanding of its customers to enable it to better serve the region, but it also needed to respond to one of the Audit Commission’s key targets for local councils across the country – to improve customer access. The Council was aware that customers often had difficulty in getting through to the Council over the telephone and then were not always put through to somebody who was able to help them. However, the Council had a significant number of disparate systems supporting its voice and data requirements, which made sourcing, collating and analysing such data, to see where the problems lay, extremely difficult.

Steve Phipps, Director of Partnerships and Customer Service at Charnwood Borough Council explains, “Not only

were we keen as an organisation to improve the speed and efficiency with which we met our customers’ enquiries but we were also coming under increasing pressure to illustrate this. Our call centre was originally only designed to answer housing repair queries so it was clear that we needed to take a close look at how we treated and routed all our callers with the aim of resolving all future queries at first point of call.”

Working with Improcom leading consultants to Local Government, Charnwood undertook an in-depth evaluation of its customer response processes including call volume and response rates. Internal research also revealed that 61% of its customers still preferred to contact the council via the telephone over any other communication channel, demonstrating how important it was

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for the council to invest in the right telephony solution. This research and evaluation enabled them to put out a tender for a new communications solution that would resolve many of the key issues surrounding how the Council treated and routed callers.

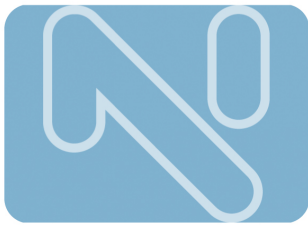
IP Integration, a leading UK provider of communications systems were one of four leading IT system integrators that were approached to submit a bid for the tender in January 2007.

IP Integration’s belief was that the Council’s old legacy systems needed completely changing and that the Council should take the opportunity to take advantage of the latest AVAYA communications

technology on the market. It was for this reason that it decided to approach them with a recommendation for a converged solution for all voice and data which led to recommendations on upgrading its old data network to incorporate an IP (Internet Protocol) telephony solution. David Glasgow, Sales Director at IP Integration explains: “We decided to develop two separate tender documents for Charnwood – one that responded solely to the specific tender request and a second that involved building a converged IP network that could offer other benefits including more sophisticated call routing as well as enhanced disaster recovery and resilience.” The consultants and council were

very impressed with IP Integration’s recommendations and awarded them the contract in May 2007. The new solution was to provide the ability for enhanced customer service and reporting through the contact centre and a distributed design that provided business continuity to the council and cost effective options to grow. The solution could not be supported reliably by the Council’s existing data network infrastructure and IP Integration working in partnership with Networks First, its network services partner, designed and built a brand new, state-of-the art converged network for voice and data.

Graham Walton, Contact Centre Manager, Charnwood Borough Council, comments: “We were very excited by the business case for incorporating IP telephony in to the original proposition. Once it was explained to us the business benefits that it would bring to the organisation and, in turn, the cost savings that could be achieved, we



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were extremely confident that IP Integration and its partner Networks First had designed the right solution for both our existing and future requirements.”

The Solution

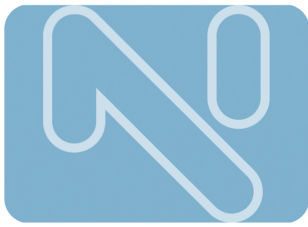
IP Integration led the project, applying its knowledge and experience to the design and implementation of the new Avaya VOIP and Contact Centre solution they recommended. This offers full convergence for voice, mobile working, multimedia, remote office locations and other applications. It is perfectly suited for local government because it cost effectively allows the distribution of users whether mobile or fixed across an enterprise whilst offering all the features and functionality employees require from Call Centre

agents, Operators, Administrators to basic extension users. The flexibility and power of the reporting tools were for the Charnwood Contract Centre a big leap forward and using AVAYA Call Management Suite (CMS), they are ideal for supporting councils trying to meet Government targets. With the AVAYA telephony foundations now in place Charnwood are able to easily cater for growth should new sites open and staff numbers change with the ability to now offer greater functionality to all users regardless of location and importantly at low cost.

This is supported by Extreme Network’s Summit switches and EPICenter Network Management Solution. EPICenter is capable of tracking and managing assets in

networks that are undergoing rapid change due to convergence. EPICenter accommodates convergence applications by offering intuitive user interfaces and by reducing the complexity of managing converged networking environments.

During the implementation of the new solutions, Networks First simultaneously installed the new network infrastructure. Paul Lewis, network consultant, Networks First, explains: “Charnwood’s existing network had grown organically with different technology being added-on as required. This meant it had become hard to manage, was no longer offering optimum performance and was relying on a myriad of equipment from different manufacturers.”



“Working with Network First in Partnership with IP Integration allowed us to realise a convergent solution meeting several of our strategic requirements”.

The finally accepted network design provides Charnwood with a fast and resilient solution. Based on maintaining legacy equipment whilst migrating to the new infrastructure allowed Charnwood to leverage existing aging, but still very capable, Extreme equipment, to ensure a least disruptive transition for the user base.

Based on 10 gigabit Ethernet, the new network will provide a fast, future proof and scalable platform for all the Council’s voice and data requirements. Working with IP Integration Networks First also has responsibility for the network’s ongoing design, installation support, monitoring and maintenance.

Charnwood’s Technical Service & Strategy Manager, Paul Bargewell

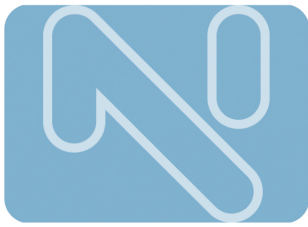
said: “Working with Network First in Partnership with IP Integration allowed us to realise a convergent solution meeting several of our strategic requirements. It has also allowed our I.T. staff to work closely in the design process and gain a much tighter grip on understanding the need for change and develop the technical skills necessary to support it.”

“It’s also worth pointing out that this underlying infrastructure plays a vital role in the support of Council’s I.T. systems in its entirety. It was vital the Extreme products and the design were developed with many factors taken into account – the needs for performance, security, reliability, resilience and support of technologies such as wireless, along with working practices like ‘hot desking’ and mobile working.”

David Glasgow comments: “With extremely experienced engineers and a reliable inventory in excess of £4.5m and a two-hour spares delivery guarantee, Networks First was the natural choice when it came to choosing a network support partner for Charnwood Borough Council.”

The Future

Commenting on the new solution, Graham Walton said: “The Council now has a resilient, future proof network that switches between our two sites if a disaster occurs, providing robust disaster recovery with dual site back-up. This forms the foundations for our state-of-the-art telephony solution, which supported by the new call centre technology, has enabled us to performance manage the contact centre at an extremely high level.



"The business benefits are immediate. As well as being easy to manage and easy to use, it offers extremely high performance standards. Most importantly it has dramatically improved the information we are gaining from every call. We used to have to take all our information on the calls into the call centre from only a handful of reports. We now have access to over 250 in real time – ensuring we have all the customer information we need at our fingertips. IP Integration invested their time to make sure we had exactly the right information and produced custom reports where needed and excellent training to give Charnwood the opportunity to effectively manage the system thereafter. This instant reporting has given us a real handle not only

on our calls but also on ensuring we have the right staffing support, something which simply wasn't possible a year ago when we used to rely on a single report 24 hours after the event.

"The Council is now providing better customer service to all of the people that live in our borough, whilst improving its overall efficiency and agility and reducing operating costs. And the new solution forms a great foundation for the future. We anticipate our call centre evolving to become a central contact centre that offers a number of different services. We are also planning to implement a recording device and a customer relationship planning product to further improve our service. There is so much scope now

moving forward that anything is possible."

Graham Walton concludes: "IP Integration and Networks First have really proved themselves to be the best partners for the job. We have been able to trust them to manage our communications whilst we focus on our customers. They have helped us with our goal to ensure every one of our customers has access to the information they need from us quickly and easily."

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