



## Charnwood Borough Council transforms customer communications productivity with IP telephony

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.

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 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. 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 and upgrade of 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. 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.

### 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

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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 Contact 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 is able to easily cater for growth should new sites open and staff numbers change.

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.

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 scaleable 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.

## The Future

Commenting on the new solution, Graham Walton, Contact Centre Manager 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 see, 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. The excellent training gave 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 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."

## About IP Integration

Our goal is very simple: to help our clients derive the maximum benefit from technology through flexible tailored solutions, and we measure our success on your return on investment with us and on your continued loyalty, won through the excellence of service we guarantee to every one of our clients.

We know that developing the most successful communications infrastructure and managing new telephony, data and application services is a significant challenge facing businesses today. At IP Integration we understand that organisations must evolve their communications strategy, and through proven knowledge, experience and support, we provide complete business communications solutions.

Our voice, data, and systems integration solutions embrace the technology of the converged multi-service network for businesses of all sizes and the partnerships we have developed with the industry's leading players coupled with our in-house bespoke software solutions allow us to offer unparalleled levels of application integration to our customers.

