

# Middlesbrough's state-of-the-art newcommunications system

Councils these days need far more flexibility than ever before. Many are implementing home-working, hot-desking and shared-devices policies to cope with accommodation reviews and the potential for sharing services with other councils. 40,000 people rely every day on the services of Middlesbrough City Council.

But responding to their needs was starting to become increasingly difficult given the diverse range of system types and ages, and their indifferent performances. Each of the 100 council locations throughout the city had its own telephone PBX system with fixed PSTN and ISDN lines, and high rentals. So, providing reliable communications and value for money to local tax payers was becoming more and more of a struggle as the cost of supporting such a disparate and legacy infrastructure continued to rise.

## Breaking the mould

Faced with these issues, the council began to assess their options for streamlining their communications infrastructure, improving their service to the local community, increasing the collaboration between employees and most importantly reducing their operating costs. One significant factor was that Middlesbrough had already outsourced their IT provision and support to Mouchel, a leading infrastructure and business services group. "We wanted to help the council find the best possible solution including technology, support and cost", said Mark Lamont, Sales director for Nowcomm. "We put forward a complete end to end Cisco Unified Communications system and proposed to break the traditional "outsourced outsource" model by encouraging Mouchel to take back more of the support responsibility. This would also involve us in sharing the load, integrating their help desk with ours, and training their people to handle the first and second line calls.

We would then provide a third line of support through our own Network Operations Centre to handle and resolve any more complex technical issues."

## One Hundred to One

Where there were once nearly 100 separate telephone systems there's now just one, supporting around 2700 handsets distributed across all the council offices. More flexible ways of working are now possible due to the inherent mobility support of the Cisco Unified Communications solution. Very importantly, the cost of managing, supporting and maintaining all those old PBX systems has been removed, along with the expensive line rentals.

Nowcomm were able to go further still in finding the greatest possible operational benefits. Centralised and resilient SIP-based trunk connections to the PSTN replaced hundreds of primary and basic rate discrete lines from a variety of providers, bringing further savings.

A Cisco Contact Centre Express solution providing four virtual contact centres and supporting over 90 agents made it much easier to handle a wide range of enquiries from school admissions and council tax to refuse disposal.

Additionally, Nowcomm developed Interactive Voice Response (IVR) solutions to support facilities such as leisure centres and swimming pools, providing callers with a variety of simple to use self-service options such as opening time and other information.

Middlesbrough Council, its staff and the people who call in every day are all now sharing the benefits of a state-of-the-art IP-based communications system that brings seamless collaboration across all locations.