

Case Study

# Staffordshire County Council



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## Staffordshire County Council

Covering an area of more than one thousand square miles and serving a population of over 870,000 residents, Staffordshire County Council (SCC) is keen to provide its local residential and business communities with the best facilities it can, and that means staying apace with technology and taking advantage of the most effective solutions.



### The initial challenge

It was telephones that first brought Forfusion to the attention of SCC, well, effective communication systems really. The council's existing telephony system and contact centre solution was at the end of the supplier support lifecycle and needed to be replaced. They were in the process of undertaking a full and comprehensive audit of their system with a view to exploring alternatives and the ultimate goal of integrating partnerships to support mobile and agile working and adopt newly emerging technologies. Ultimately answering the needs of different groups of constantly changing users across all of their customer groups. The council also needed to save money.

## Why Forfusion?

SCC needed to find an independent consultant with the relevant technical expertise, certification and sector knowledge who could advise strategically on options for the project they were already committed to undertaking. This would include reviewing work to date and advising on recommendations for the best solution for the council whilst identifying and documenting any mitigating actions that would need to be resolved to achieve a successful outcome.

**"It was essential for the Council that this consultant had considerable experience specialising as a multivendor offering hybrid solutions."**

### **Vic Falcus**

Head of ICT

Staffordshire County Council

It was essential for the Council that this consultant had considerable experience specialising as a multivendor offering hybrid solutions, in particular expertise around Cisco Unified Communications and Microsoft Skype for Business, including Office 365. The ability to remain impartial, offering advice and recommendations relating to market leading vendor products would prove invaluable to achieving the right integrated hybrid solution that took into account the existing and sunk investments in both Cisco and Microsoft technologies.

## Deliverables

Forfusion worked with SCC across multiple phases including the pre-project business case phase, initial project initiation and helping to ensure quality assurance in the later stages. Offering consultancy, technical design authority, quality assurance, integrated project management, engineering and implementation; emphasis was placed upon working in partnership throughout the whole project

### → Phase one - Technical assurance, offering advice and guidance

We were engaged to review multiple commercial and technical options. This involved vendor road mapping and evaluating whether a commercial arrangement or strategic partnership would be best fit. Importantly, user and cost profiling in relation to licence usage and phasing in/ out of legacy technologies was also undertaken. Ensuring that no stone was left unturned, investment protection played an important role in ensuring that any decisions made were taken with current investment in mind, as well as any in-house skills that could be utilised.

Throughout this phase we audited SCC's environment and advised on contracts, vendor selection, migration plans and programme management. We de-risked critical decisions by working as an extension to SCC's team, which led to the Council requesting us to deliver a further 100x days professional services, comprising project management, consultancy and engineering.

### → Phase Two - Project delivery support, making things happen, overcoming complexity

We delivered project management mediating between public and private sector verticals over a 100-day engagement, serving as an extension to SCC's team. We were also acting as the technical design authority and providing quality assurance services for network upgrades and Cisco contact centre rationalisation, as well as the design and deployment of a Cisco and Microsoft hybrid environment.

This work involved consolidating and rationalising contact centre users by streamlining processes and ratifying scripts and call flows. Crucial to delivery was using commercial and technical people right at the top of their game who are used to delivering in-line with a tried and tested approach, ensuring the council was protected from short cuts by third parties. Having advanced skills and knowledge in both Cisco and Microsoft camps was key.

### → Phase three - Skype for Business Proof of Concept (POC). All-encompassing solutions to identified challenges, designed, tested and implemented.

One of our recommendations was to run multiple user workshops to determine user profiles and personas, before designing and deploying an in production POC, which later became the unified communications platform for thousands of users, displacing a legacy Cisco platform.

The result was a split Cisco and Microsoft unified communications environment, working hand-in-hand with the council's agile Smart working initiative and laying the foundations for the imminent best use of softphones and other UC applications from each vendor. It afforded the council a clear path to deploying best fit communications tools across its user base.

## Trusted Partner

Over an 18-month period the relationship with SCC grew, during which time Forfusion discussed many business and technological challenges. The developing relationship, coupled with Forfusion's capability to deliver via Public Sector procurement frameworks such as G-Cloud, led to Forfusion winning the first Technical Assurance contract and delivering subsequent support in other areas.

Forfusion were able to identify some very common challenges experienced by many organisations wishing to consolidate, and/ or operate a hybrid environment with migration to cloud in mind. The ability to understand the complexities associated with hybrid environments, particularly Cisco contact centre and Microsoft Office 365 enabled the best solution to be implemented introducing new technology alongside legacy equipment.

## Improving efficiencies, saving money

SCC successfully migrated all Cisco phones and Contact Centre agents to a Public Sector partner, this achieved vendor compliance ensuring the council maintained its compliance with the PSN code of connection and avoided the need to fund a new system for the council.

This aligns to the council's strategy of moving to cloud\hosted services reducing the reliance on its on-premise data centres.

SCC is saving £100,000 per annum in revenue by moving to the hosted service which includes SIP trunking instead of ISDN.

## What next?

The council continues to exploit Skype for Business as its Unified Communication toolset and has seen exponential growth in the use of Video conferencing and Video meetings which is in part driven by Smart Working initiatives which now mean that it will soon adopt a 2:1 staff to desk ratio at its Headquarters in Staffordshire allowing for the letting of wider town centre accommodation saving around £750,000 per annum.

Increasingly the use of Skype is facilitating employee mobility coupled with the deployment and exploitation of Office 365.



E [hello@forfusion.com](mailto:hello@forfusion.com)  
T +44 (0) 191 500 9100

Forfusion  
CBX  
Cobalt Park Way  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE28 9NZ

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