



## WHY MITEL? CUSTOMER HIGHLIGHT SERIES

### Ashford Borough Council

Councils face constant pressure to better serve their citizens within tight budget constraints. In difficult times, when demands for services are up but budgets are down, this can be a tough-balancing act.





### First UK Local Authority to Virtualize Voice

For Ashford Borough Council in Kent, England, the opportunity to implement a virtualized data center environment meant that scarce resources could go even further, resulting in an even more robust and reliable network. In addition to that, Ashford Council could now entertain the idea of running voice on a virtual host which previously would have seemed unrealistic due to latency issues. Mitel® and VMware® have made radical steps forward by resolving any latency challenges. By working to integrate Mitel Virtual Solutions and VMware vSphere™ server environments, real-time voice performance is now a trusted application in a virtualized environment, for the first time ever.

Ashford Borough Council has been expanding its voice services with the Mitel Communications Director (MCD), and around the Mitel Contact Center Solutions portfolio for several years and has found it to be a robust and reliable solution which provides them with solid options for future expansion.

“We started to virtualize the data infrastructure with VMware in 2008 and wanted to take it to the next level and virtualize voice running on VMware vSphere. Virtual Mitel Communication Director (Virtual MCD) software has given us the flexibility to do just that. I can confidently say that we are the only Council in the UK to do this at present. I am also positive that we will start a trend for other Councils to adopt this strategy when they see the compelling cost-savings and reliability benefits to do so, which cannot be ignored,” said Rob Neil, Head of ICT and Customer Services, Ashford Borough Council.

### Moving the data center to VMware vSphere has allowed the council to:

- Consolidate hardware
- Improve service availability
- Reduce utility costs
- Simplify management
- Augment their business continuity strategy
- Improve staff productivity
- Enhance customer service

### Consolidation of Servers

There were six servers needed for the Council's voice requirements for MCD, Teleworker Solution, Contact Center Solutions and Unified Communicator® (UC) Advanced, and another 54 for its data requirements. The cost of maintaining all of this hardware and the time spent on maintenance was exceedingly high. Virtualization has enabled the Council to move towards reducing the number of servers from a total of 60 to a phenomenal three servers, resulting in massive cost-savings and maintenance time reductions.

### Powering down while gearing up

The reduction in server count is already saving the Council 40-45 percent on their electrical bill. The council plans to further improve these savings by deploying Mitel IP phones – the most energy efficient IP phones on the market today – this means the council will be well on their way in meeting the government target for businesses carbon footprint reductions.

Neil, points out that reducing the physical server count produces energy savings all across the data center.

“It all adds up, from cooling to storage and ports on switches and routers. We are expecting the savings to rise to a massive 60 percent as virtualization expands to voice and other areas.”

### Less maintenance means more reliability

With an IT team of three people to maintain an infrastructure supporting the demands of a population of over 112,000, keeping operations running smoothly was becoming problematic. The move to VMware vSphere has already brought dramatic improvements in the data center. While they are still required by law to apply operating system patches manually, they only have to go through the exercise a handful of times now. They've also seen impressive time savings when provisioning new systems. VMware vSphere gives them an integrated real-time and historic view of their server infrastructure usage which makes allocating, monitoring and balancing as well as planning / forecasting resource requirements for the future – far simpler than before.

### Simple, reliable disaster recovery

The business of local government never stops, and service continuity is a critical priority for a public service institution. Ashford Borough Council expects to see dramatic improvements in the reliability of its contact center by bringing it under the umbrella of the virtualized data center. Mitel's Contact Center Solutions will be part of the councils phase II data centre migration strategy, and a critical element of virtualizing their services.

"We don't have a lot of money for building resiliency into our IT systems," explains Neil. "Getting the old systems back up after a disaster would have taken perhaps five or six days. With VMware vSphere host image backups, we can bring the whole system, including all the intricate dependencies between components such as IVR, voice recognition, contact management, and others, back to full operation in about 20 minutes."

### More storage, fewer disks

Backing up entire networks as VMware vSphere images not only makes rolling back to a known good state simple, it also allows Ashford to extend the benefits of their SAN (storage area network) to the contact center. They expect to see savings of about 50 percent by reducing their need to purchase discrete disks for specific purposes.

### Less focus on maintenance and more focus on innovative projects

"The Council's IT staff are working with the most advanced solution offerings from Mitel and VMware. Instead of spending time fixing the same problems again and again, staff now has more time to plan and work on innovative forward-looking projects that will help serve the public better. This keeps them excited and engaged, and improves their ability to meet new challenges, giving them the agility to be responsive when policies or programs change; or to adapt quickly when a crisis demands a fast and dramatic reallocation of resources," said Neil.

### COMPANY

Ashford Borough Council, Kent, U.K. with over 112,000 constituents. Provides in excess of 500 different services to customers in the borough over a 220 square mile area.

### CHALLENGE

To provide an outstanding service to the citizens of the Borough.

### EVALUATION

Years of experience using Mitel and VMware products, their reliability, and the unique ability to create a virtual voice network, made the move to a Mitel and VMware virtual solution the natural choice.

### CHOICE

- Mitel 3300 IP Communications Platform (ICP)
- Virtual MCD
- VMware vSphere 4
- Mitel Contact Center Solutions
- Mitel UC Advanced

### REASONS

- Reduced hardware (CapEx) and operating costs (OpEx)
- Simplified IT management and maintenance
- Ensured continuity of service
- Maximized investment in virtual environment
- Freed up IT resources to focus on innovative projects

"Mitel is ahead of the game with their relationship with VMware – the timing is absolutely perfect. Our organization is comfortable with virtualization having proved it on the data side – now we can take the last step and bring the voice side in."

– Rob Neil, Head of ICT and Customer Services, Ashford Borough Council



### The Future

Ashford Borough Council plan to run many more Mitel applications on the virtual network in the near future and will realize even greater time and cost savings associated with their initial deployment and ongoing management activities. Teleworker Solution, UC Advanced, Mitel Audio and Web Conferencing application (AWC) and the Contact Center Solutions are all earmarked for the second phase of Ashford's journey to virtualization.

The Borough of Ashford has been selected by the British Government to encourage population and economic growth over the next two decades, and they expect an increase of 30,000 people in the coming years. Meeting this challenge with constrained resources would have been virtually impossible in a conventional IT environment. Blending the Virtual MCD solution with VMware vSphere in the datacenter is a critical part of its strategy to meet the future with reliable, innovative services for the public.

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