

Oldham Council set to transform its communications services through utilisation of Arqiva's CouncilNet solution

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Martyn Scholes
Business Development Officer,
Oldham Council



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Challenge

The core job of a council is to manage the best interests of the local area – not to manage technology. But for one department of Oldham Council, technology management was becoming a resource-intensive task.

The council's Command and Control centre is situated in the heart of Oldham, and is responsible for managing civil emergencies and public security in the town centre. To help keep vital information flowing, the team was communicating via a number of analogue radio systems – and managing these systems as well. “In the end, we were looking after six different radio networks; three of our own, and three that we inherited from local businesses,” says Martyn Scholes, Business Development Officer for the council. “This was taking up too much time. Plus, we knew there was better radio technology out there that could help us to deliver a better public service.”

For this reason, the council decided to invite companies from the Buying Solutions Framework for the delivery of a new, more future-proof radio system – with an innovative idea for how it would be managed. “The council was already sharing radio systems with local businesses, such as taxi firms. So we decided to look for a single, future-proof radio network that the council could own and rent out to such businesses. This public/private partnership system would be more reliable and cost-effective for everyone.”

Solution

Given that this was uncharted territory for Martyn and his team, it was very important that the supplier would take away technical and operational responsibility through a fully managed service.

SUMMARY

Client: Oldham Council

Region: UK

Industry: Local authority

Challenge: To improve local safety and public services by installing a new radio network for the council's Command and Control centre and local

businesses. The improved service delivery should be achieved with minimal additional cost to the council.

Solution: A secure TETRA digital radio network with capacity for up to 1,000 users across the whole borough. Additional capacity on this network will be leased back to local businesses, helping to offset the costs of deploying the network.

Results and benefits:

- Improved public safety, security and emergency response
- Improved quality of radio coverage over a wider area
- A cost-effective way for local businesses to use digital radio



Arqiva was the chosen supplier with its CouncilNet solution. This would extend across the borough's 55 square miles, providing up to 1,000 users with highly secure push-to-talk voice calls and text messaging capabilities.

Importantly, Arqiva would be the central point of contact for the whole network. It would work closely with a trusted radio handset supplier to deliver the managed service to the council and to local businesses, requiring minimal involvement from the council and its staff.

Results and benefits

The new network will be the first public/private partnership radio network in the country. And while not live yet, Martyn and his team are excited about what it promises the local area. "The Command and Control centre should be able to extend its radio coverage beyond the town centre and to the outlying districts. This means more people will be able to communicate directly with us to improve security, safety and emergency response in the wider Oldham area."

Many local businesses have also expressed an interest in the radio system, such as taxi firms. "Typically, taxi radios only have a reception radius

of about five miles from base. If they go beyond that, they have to move to other firms' aerals which causes interference. Using Arqiva's solution should improve quality of coverage," says Martyn.

Local security companies and shopping centres are also interested in the cost-effectiveness and reliability of the new council system. System scalability means the council could extend coverage to businesses at night-time. Local bars, restaurants and clubs can now work more closely with the council for the sake of better security and safety in the local area at night.

Even though the radio system has yet to go live, Martyn is extremely happy with the work that Arqiva has done to date. "Arqiva's people have been absolutely brilliant from day one. Whatever the question we've asked them – whether it's been something very technical or seemingly very trivial, they've given an excellent response."

And what would Martyn say to any other council that was contemplating a public/private partnership such as this? "Go for it! It's not up and running yet, but I have no worries – I'm totally confident of the benefits Oldham is going to see."

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