SECURING PUBLIC SERVICES

Essex County Council supports service transformation and data growth with new storage and backup environment

SERVICES
- Data & Storage Management
- Supply Chain Services
- Smart Supply
- Strategy & Advisory
- Design & Build

USER EXPERIENCE
- Seamless migration
- Faster access to data and services

BUSINESS IMPACT
- Reliable, future-ready infrastructure
- Safeguards services and productivity
- Simpler management frees up IT staff

BUSINESS OUTCOME
- Reduced risk
- Enhanced customer experience
- Supports transformation

OBJECTIVE

Essex County Council is one of the largest local authorities in the UK. To accommodate ongoing budget cuts and drive greater efficiency, the local authority is transforming its ICT. To ensure its new virtualised infrastructure offered sufficient availability and capacity to cope with egovernment services and data growth, the council needed to upgrade its existing storage and backup capabilities.

SOLUTION

The council selected Computacenter to help it source and deploy a new storage and backup solution based on NetApp technologies. Computacenter worked closely with NetApp and the council to design a solution that would meet current and future needs. It also provided advice and professional services to help the council's internal team migrate more than 500 virtual machines to the new environment.

OUTCOME

The new storage solution offers greater capacity and better performance, enabling the council's users to access the data they need faster. With disk-based backup, the council has been able to eliminate its legacy tape environment, which has not only significantly reduced costs but also data recovery times. This reduces risk for the council and ensures continuity and quality of service for Essex residents.

500
virtual machines migrated

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With Computacenter's help, we devised a migration plan that minimised downtime for our users.

Iain Shipley, IS Project Manager, Essex County Council

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Safeguards services for
1.7 million
residents

OBJECTIVE

Supporting transformation and escalating data volumes

As with all local authorities, Essex County Council has to cope with ongoing spending restrictions. Over the last five years, the authority has had to reduce its budget by £520 million, with a further £70 million of savings needed in 2016/17.

To adapt to this new landscape, the council is undergoing significant transformation. The council's Information Services Delivery Programme aims to ensure that the organisation has a fit-for-purpose technology infrastructure to help support transformation and minimise costs.

This critical environment, comprising 500 virtual machines based on both Hyper-V and VMware virtualisation technologies, supports core council systems and services. Iain Shipley, IS Project Manager at Essex County Council, comments: "To ensure the new virtual environment offered high availability, we conducted a review of our current storage and backup solution, which revealed that we were already running near capacity."

To cope with escalating data volumes and safeguard the user experience, the council urgently needed to upgrade its storage and backup capabilities. "We were keen to deploy the latest NetApp solution, NetApp SnapVault, as it offered the lowest total cost of ownership and would enable us to decommission our tape backup system, but we needed an experienced partner to assist with the project," explains Iain.

SOLUTION

A best practice approach enables risk-free and timely deployment

Following a competitive tender, Essex County Council selected Computacenter to supply and deploy the new storage and backup environment. "Thanks to its economies of scale and vendor relationships, Computacenter offered the most competitive pricing," comments Iain. "It also had the specific skillset we needed to execute a highly technical project."

Computacenter worked closely with the council's IS team to understand its needs before designing and deploying the new storage and backup environment, which is based on NetApp FAS8060 storage arrays and NetApp SnapVault Backup SAN.

With tight project timescales, Computacenter ensured the new solution was shipped from Holland and installed in the council's two datacenters within a matter of weeks.

"Computacenter was responsive and flexible throughout the project," says Iain. "We were particularly impressed with the engineers' technical knowledge and commitment to our goals. The team understood the complexities of working in a local government environment, particularly the health and safety requirements, and were attentive and professional throughout."

Following the success of the deployment, Computacenter was subsequently engaged to provide advisory and professional services to help the council migrate more than 500 virtual machines from its legacy NetApp storage infrastructure to the latest NetApp Clustered Data ONTAP (cDOT) operating system.

> We now have an environment that is cost effective to manage and can support transformation.

Iain Shipley, IS Project Manager, Essex County Council

ABOUT ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Essex County Council is one of the largest local authorities in the UK, with more than 7,000 employees delivering services to around 1.7 million residents. These services range from highways and libraries to education and social care provision. Headquartered in Chelmsford, the council is dedicated to improving Essex and the lives of residents. It plans to achieve this by providing effective and efficient services that deliver real value for money and encouraging prosperity through innovation.

"Computacenter conducted a discovery and documentation exercise, which revealed specific dependencies and requirements. This meant we could devise a migration plan that would minimise downtime for our users," explains Iain.

Thanks to the best practice approach taken by the joint council and Computacenter project team, the storage and backup upgrade was completed on time and to budget with no impact on users or public services.

OUTCOME
Safeguarding the continuity and quality of council services

With a more reliable storage infrastructure, greater capacity and better disaster recovery capabilities, Essex County Council can ensure that its virtualised IT environment meets user requirements. "We now have an environment that is cost-effective to manage and can support transformation," comments Iain. "It will meet our requirements for performance and growth over the next three years."

Storage and backup capacity has increased significantly, which enable the council to store additional data generated by egovernment services.

The project has also helped the council to:

Simplify IT management and free up staff: The new disk-based backup solution eliminates the council's legacy tape environment, which was time-consuming and costly to manage. With engineers no longer required to travel between datacenters to swap out tapes, they are free to focus on more strategic activities.

Safeguard council services: The council can now rapidly restore data in the event of an incident, which reduces risk for the council and ensures continuity and quality of service for employees.

Improve the user experience: With better IT performance, council employees can access the data they need faster and with greater reliability.

"We rely on electronic data more and more to deliver council services," comments Iain. "With the new storage and backup environment, we can continue to innovate and transform our services for the benefit of the entire county."

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