

Councils improve IT energy efficiency by one third

Kingston and Sutton councils' farsighted IT strategy ensures business continuity and large energy savings

When the London councils of the Royal Borough of Kingston and Borough of Sutton launched their shared IT service in 2013, they couldn't have anticipated the benefits it would yield in 2020. In a year of dramatic disruption for many organizations, the two councils' 5,000 staff worked from home to provide services for 400,000 citizens.

The councils also reduced their carbon footprint by the equivalent of 3,700 acres of mature forest and generated annual electricity savings of £40,000.

"The whole strategy behind our infrastructure has been to enable our people to access all of their services from any device, anywhere," explains David Grasty, Corporate Head of Digital Strategy & Portfolio for the two councils' Digital and IT Service. "We started by consolidating into two physical data centers and Citrix has been our partner right from the start. We now deliver council and shared service applications using [Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops](#)."

Collaboration and accessibility were important to the councils and this guided the decision to choose Google Workspace. Together, Google Workspace and Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops deliver a virtual desktop to low-energy, low-support Acer Chromebooks, replacing the councils' estate of aging Windows PCs.

"Citrix has been a proper partner to us in helping us shape some of these things, especially in the early days of planning," says Grasty. "Choosing the right partners is important in a project of this complexity and Citrix has been really good in working with our other major partners – Google and Acer – to deliver the overall solution."



Industry
Public Sector

Location
UK

Citrix Products
Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops

Key Benefits

- [Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops](#) supports a dramatic reduction in carbon costs and new patterns of work. It provides 5,000 staff with secure anywhere, anytime access to council applications and data enabling them to provide services to 400,000 citizens
- [Google Workspace](#) enabled 5,000 staff to move from office to homeworking overnight with full access to video conferencing and business resources

A seamless move to homeworking

When the COVID-19 lockdown was announced, Grasty says, the Citrix and Google solution, “Enabled us to respond very easily. The lockdown decision was made and the next day we had over 90% of our staff working from home. The fact that staff could use their own home devices meant that even staff who didn’t have a council Chromebook were able to work from home. Within two weeks, we were up to 98% of people working from home.”

Whether on a council or personal device, Citrix ensured that staff could access the applications and data they required, easily and securely.

“From day one, all of our staff could video conference using Google Workspace,” Grasty explains. “Most of our processes use line of business apps like case management tools and all of that is delivered using Citrix technology. The combination of Citrix and Google has enabled people to work seamlessly from home without the workarounds that some other councils have had to create. People have gone home and been able to concentrate on delivering their service to citizens without worrying about the technology that’s supporting them.”

“For the residents and the businesses of our boroughs, access to support didn’t change,” emphasizes Contact Center Manager, Alex Marston. “In fact, it got better. And that was vital because we were dealing with residents who suffered food insecurity as well as physical and mental health conditions which needed prompt attention and action. At no time was our contact center unable to take calls. We were available 24/7. We set up a 24x7 COVID response line, we did it quickly, we did it efficiently, and we did it well.”

The video conferencing and collaboration tools within Google Workspace provided an essential means of keeping team members in contact with each other. As Marston says, “We made the technology work so that our contact center agents could not only keep working, but also feel supported and protected.”

There has been a spin-off benefit for recruitment, retention, and diversity and inclusion, Marston adds.

“There’s been a better appreciation of how we can use technology to be more flexible. One of the key outcomes is the fact that we’ve improved career development for our people. We’re also better able to recruit more widely, which is important for a public service based in London. It can be expensive to live in the borough, so being able to recruit from outside the area helps massively. We have proved that you can do a great job from your home – and we have the right tech and support to enable you to do it. That will help us drive our diversity and inclusion goals.”

As Grasty says, the organization’s dramatic response to the pandemic has been achieved with no fundamental changes.

“Using Citrix ... makes us more energy efficient in our operations, it gives our staff more control over their workstyles, and it provides Kingston and Sutton councils with greater resilience in the face of disruptive events like the COVID-19 pandemic.”

**David Grasty
Head of Digital
Strategy & Portfolio
Kingston and Sutton Councils**

“We haven’t changed our infrastructure in any big way to support nearly everyone working from home. That’s been the biggest result for us – we haven’t had to do anything differently and the combination of Chromebooks, Google Workspace, and Citrix simply works. Overnight, remote working became essential for everybody and we’ve been able to deliver two years’ worth of change in a couple of weeks. As an IT team, I’d say we were under pressure, but not under stress.”

A 32% reduction in energy use

Kingston Council is committed to making the borough carbon neutral by 2038 and its IT strategy is making a significant contribution. The move to Citrix, Google, and Chromebooks supports this in a number of ways:

- Significantly greater energy efficiency from new, thin-client Chromebooks compared to aging desktop PCs
- An estimated one year longer life of Chromebooks compared to PCs
- Reduced commuting – even beyond the requirements of the COVID-19 lockdown, the solution enables staff to work effectively and securely from home or any other location.

Environmental consultancy Px3 conducted an audit of the power and carbon savings from the project.

Lead Consultant Ewen Anderson says, “We calculated a 32% reduction in energy usage from the move to Citrix and Acer Chromebooks. Combined with the reduced commuting from more than 95% of staff working remotely, it is equivalent to the carbon offset from 3,700 acres of mature forest.”

In budgetary terms, Grasty says, “We estimate a £40,000 reduction in our annual electricity bill just from migrating from old devices to new, ‘state of the art’ ones.”

Kingston and Sutton councils are confident that a much greater degree of home-working – and the consequent reduction in commuting – is here to stay.

“The overwhelming majority of staff say that they prefer the work patterns that we have at the moment,” says Grasty. As a consequence, the councils are disposing of a large proportion of their expensive real estate, including one of the current data centers, to adapt to future workstyles that are better for the councils, council staff and the environment.

Looking ahead

Sutton and Kingston are now evaluating alternative cloud providers and looking forward to the greater environmental benefits of using a large-scale, environmentally friendly, cloud data center rather than a smaller, local one.

At the same time, they are considering how to facilitate future workstyles.

“When we think about future work practices, our focus is all on culture and how we use the tools we have. We don’t need to worry about changing the infrastructure.”

In conclusion, Grasty says, “Using Citrix, our staff have secure access to council applications and information from any device, wherever they need to work. The Citrix, Google and Acer solution makes us more energy efficient in our operations, it gives our staff more control over their workstyles, and – with no geographic restrictions on where people can live and work – we can access a greater pool of talent. Kingston and Sutton councils have greater resilience in the face of disruptive events like the COVID-19 pandemic and we can support the inevitable change in work patterns that will develop following the pandemic.”



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