



Harrogate Borough Council: Case study

Introduction

Harrogate is a local government district and borough of North Yorkshire with a population of over 150,000. Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) has 54 councillors and is led by a Conservative administration.

Harrogate is one of the largest shire districts in England. Covering a little over 500 square miles, it lies north of the cities of Leeds and Bradford. The District forms an integral part of the Leeds City Region. Over 100,000 people live in three urban areas and a further 50,000 live in rural communities.

A recent Audit Commission report said that "Harrogate Borough Council performs well. It manages its resources adequately and does well in achieving its priorities for the communities that it serves. Its successes in improving services have caused us to assess the Council as performing well overall."

Challenge

How can a borough council use technology to work more flexibly and productively?

Solution

A comprehensive trial signals the way forward and creates opportunities for savings and efficiency.

Results

- More efficient working
- Cost savings
- Better customer service.

Products and Services

- O₂ consultancy service.

"O₂ took an interest in our business and what we were doing. Cost is important but it's more important that your suppliers understand where you're going."

Mike Kenworthy, Director of ICT,
Harrogate Borough Council

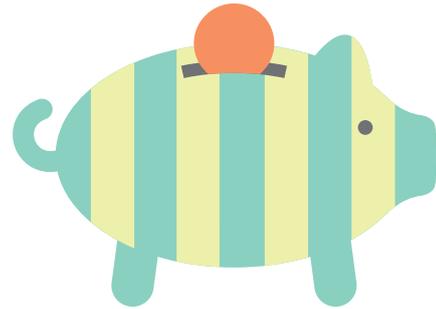


The Challenge

Harrogate Borough Council (HBC) is committed to taking advantage of technology to ensure that it is as efficient as possible, in a way that works in practical terms for its employees and citizens alike. Under its New Ways of Working programme, the council wanted to explore how flexible working could save money and improve working practices. However, with technology developing so quickly and an enormous range of options available, HBC needed to understand how different choices would work in practical terms.

“We wanted to investigate smarter, more agile ways of working, and see how we could work more effectively.”

Mike Kenworthy, Director of ICT, Harrogate Borough Council



The Solution

HBC decided to run a pilot scheme to identify the business benefits of flexible working across the Council, and chose O₂ to carry it out. Mike Kenworthy says “We’re satisfied with the O₂ mobile service we have and we knew they were interested in working more closely with local authorities. It was a natural fit because O₂ were prepared to be flexible and learn with us.”

An experienced O₂ consultant took the time to understand what HBC wanted to achieve and what would be possible. O₂ recommended the parameters of the trial to ensure it would provide clear recommendations to enable decision making.

During the six-week pilot scheme, 30 people were provided with a range of devices and applications to trial and provide feedback on their suitability to their roles and activities.

Mike Kenworthy says “The pilot gave our team a clear understanding as to what’s available and suitable, and we’re already implementing some of the findings.”

The pilot identified numerous areas where flexible working would dramatically reduce both costs and staff time. For example, arboreal teams can quickly identify tree diseases by

sending images to an expert in the office. In practical terms, this means that days of work can be completed in a few hours, reducing the need to close roads and disrupt traffic.

Mike Kenworthy estimates that the capital costs of the devices is covered in about two months, with added revenue savings month-on-month and the ability to provide a better service. He says “O₂ have made it easy because they have been very receptive. We’ve signed up with O₂ to provide a flexible working solution because they took an interest in our business and what we were doing. Cost is important but it’s more important that your suppliers understand where you’re going.”

HBC has also discovered that flexible working can help provide exceptional customer service by enabling council workers to help customers with other services at any point of contact. Mike Kenworthy explains: “Someone out and about with a mobile device could order services not necessarily related to what they do, for example an Environmental Health Officer at someone’s house could arrange a large item collection, which is another department. It all adds up to great service.”

Mike Kenworthy concludes “There is a whole area where we can see savings but the key for us is improving the service. Working with O₂ has built our awareness of the enormous potential of moving to more mobile delivery.”