Providing Staff Self-Service & Improving Efficiency at Coventry City Council

Company Overview

Coventry City Council is responsible for all local services, from schools and social care to waste collection and roads, in the borough of Coventry in the West Midlands. Like many councils it is keen to take advantage of new technologies to enable smarter working and deliver better services for residents.

The council is currently implementing a number of major changes, including moving many of its staff to a new building in the city centre, which will provide more shared space, access to improved technology and the ability for staff to hot-desk. The council is also redesigning its services to take advantage of digital technology with a view to providing better support to users and implementing a new information management strategy.

The Challenge

With IT a key driver for all of the council's new initiatives, delivering services effectively and efficiently within the organisation is vital.

"Making sure that our teams have the tools to do their jobs - and the right self-service support when they need it - is so important," explained Lisa Commane, Assistant Director ICT Transformation & Customer Services at Coventry City Council. "We've got some massive challenges to deliver services to our residents and teams with much less money than ever before, but with growing expectations and opportunity for technology to make a real positive difference. We've been walking in the shoes of our teams and working much closer with our internal and external customers to design and implement kit and systems that work for us all. Improving our service desk

and the way people can request kit and log incidents is one important part of our journey."

"We wanted to empower our staff to do more for themselves, while ensuring that they didn't waste time trying to fix their own problems," added Jas Sandu, Service Delivery Manager for Coventry City Council. "For example, we already had a portal which they could use to log service requests, such as password resets and software problems, but the rest of the process was manual and we weren't very efficient at processing the results."

The council's IT team began by looking at its internal processes across all business areas to identify what could be streamlined or automated. After redesigning a number of procedures, they held a two day workshop with IT solutions and managed services provider EACS to work out the best way forward.

The Solution

Coventry City Council first met EACS in 2012 at Optimise IT, an event which EACS holds every year to highlight technology developments and trends. The two organisations also previously worked together to implement desktop monitoring at the council in 2014. "EACS built our solution from

the ground up to meet our needs as well as transferring knowledge to us, leaving us in a very strong position," said Jas. "We knew they were the right people to help us with this next project."

EACS conducted a workshop to understand the council's requirements, discuss the detailed design and scope deliverables. "Jas and his colleagues had a clear vision of what they wanted to achieve," explained Jason Bass, Technical Director, EACS. "They had an excellent technical team, but needed additional support to deploy new systems while continuing to manage business as usual. They also knew exactly how to engage with us to get the best results, sharing information and making our job much easier."

Both parties agreed that the solution was to implement Microsoft System Center. EACS recommended a phased approach: first Configuration Manager (SCCM) and Operations Manager (SCOM) then secondly Service Manager (SCSM), which would provide the majority of the benefits.

Phase one was straightforward – EACS carried out the initial installation and then worked with the council to ensure they had the

necessary skills to manage the system going forward.

Tailored Service Management

In the second stage, the focus was on service management. Coventry City Council had a heavily customised service desk solution based on an earlier version of SCSM, which was difficult to support as only the developers could understand it. They were therefore keen that the new solution should be off-the shelf as much as possible. EACS suggested supplementing System Center with a product which Jas had already come across called Cireson, a suite of enhancements that extends the capabilities of System Center Service Manager.

EACS and Cireson held a workshop with the council team to demonstrate the product and discuss its features. It is a web-based end user portal which can run on any browser, including both Windows and Apple Macs, as well as on mobile devices, making it ideal for flexible and remote working. The user interface makes it much easier to tailor SCSM to suit the council's specific requirements. It also integrates fully with all System Center components, automatically importing data and upgrading if SCSM is upgraded. Satisfied with the results, Jas asked EACS to implement Cireson with SCSM.

Process Redesign Before Implementation

New software, as always, was only part of the solution. To ensure that its service management became more efficient, the council knew it had to go back to the drawing board to define the most effective processes. "If there was a better way to do something, they wanted to find it," explained Jason Bass. EACS are experts in System Center

and brought extensive practical experience to the project. They began by designing the form that the Service Desk team would use to obtain information from callers and then looked at each type of call to assess how it could be automated. With this work complete, installation could begin.

"EACS helped us get the combined solution up and running quickly, because they knew both the Microsoft and Cireson software really well," said Jas. "Just before we were due to go live we discovered an issue which related to the configuration of extended management packs, however this was resolved quickly, so we could get back on schedule. This could have significantly delayed the implementation, but EACS owned the issue and solved it."

Staff Self-Service

A year after the new solution went live, the project has more than justified itself by the level of staff self-service achieved. More than 95 per cent of support requests are logged via the new 'MyServiceDesk' portal and users receive automatic email updates on progress. They can request a wide range of services, from an automatic password reset to a new laptop build, with the portal making it easy to manage even complex issues. As all systems are integrated, reporting is much improved, making it simple for the IT team to track progress on everything from the number and type of tickets to the length of time to resolve them.

"One aspect we really like is that we can now use the information in SCSM intelligently," explained Jas. "We can drill down into information pulled directly from SCSM and easily identify any trends, pinch points etc. which enables us to redesign the service going forward. We're now planning to move incidents onto our self-

service portal. Due to the success of the portal we are now considering extending it to other areas as well, such as HR.

Desktop Refresh

System Center has also been used to refresh all user desktops and carry out a rapid deployment for around 5,000 people, updating up to 100 laptops a day, a process Jas describes as "a huge success." EACS set up the initial desktop configuration and then used SCCM and SCSM for the deployment. Users can select the applications they would like from a catalogue, their manager is emailed to obtain approval and the software is then installed automatically.

The council's IT team handle first line support, while EACS provides second line support as well as maintenance health checks. They also support the Cireson product, which means that the council has a single point of contact for any issue that might arise.

"It's been a true partnership," concluded Jas. "EACS transferred knowledge to my team throughout the project and they built the documentation alongside us so we know exactly how everything is configured. As we look at developing the system further, we can talk to them at any time as part of our service contract and discuss everything from processes to software configuration. We've come a long way since we began this project and our investment has definitely paid off."