

Moving to Remote Hosting ... A Clerk's Story

by Sarah Robson

Chard Town Council is a large council and the administrative functions rely heavily on its IT system. When I first started here in 2009 a new server based network system had been installed which catered for about 10 users. The system was fully supported with a Service Level Agreement that had been set up for a five year period and I assumed this would be adequate to cover the life expectancy of the hardware. There were a number of flaws with the Agreement and the Council found itself tied in to a costly long term arrangement that was weighted heavily in favour of the Contractor rather than the Council. This manifested itself in a number of different ways one being when one of the pcs needed replacing and we had to go through the Contractor to purchase the new equipment and install all the necessary software. This proved to be an expensive purchase and one that, due to the Contract, offered no alternative. This in turn over the years created a number of other problems as the machines were running on different operating systems that weren't always compatible.

Investigations began to look for a replacement and there were a number of big decisions to make. The main one being whether to go down the hosted route or to replace our server. Discussions began with a number of potential providers

of which Microshade VSM was one. It quickly became obvious there would be a number of benefits towards moving to Microshade VSM solution however at this point I still had concerns about the robustness of the system and also what the potential problems might be with which the speed data was moving at.



I attended a local branch meeting where Microshade VSM gave a presentation on the merits of having a hosted service and this allayed any fears or concerns I might have had.

Microshade VSM was the only company we met that we felt understood our business, they are a company that deals exclusively with the town and parish sector and this gave us a huge degree of confidence. We knew they had a proven track record with other councils and clerks and the feedback we had from other clients of theirs was only positive.

The next step was to persuade the Councillors that moving to Remote Hosting was a positive

and cost effective option and this was easy given the number of advantages the proposed new system would offer. It meant that although we would decommission our old server, we could retain our other hardware. The operating systems would all be upgraded to ensure compatibility and the rest we could leave up to the Microshade Team to come in and work their magic. This would involve the migration of all our data and the setting up of fully networked shared drives and mailboxes. The transition went smoothly with the bulk of the work taking place over a weekend and when the staff returned to the office on Monday morning there appeared to be very little that was different. I think for me the main difference was how fast everything suddenly felt!

Six months later we remain extremely happy with the change over. It has proved beyond any shadow that this was the right move for us and the team at Microshade VSM have been responsive and efficient. The flexibility of the new system has been welcomed and has brought about changes in many ways, being able to access emails or data at a time and place that suits us has brought about significant changes in the way in which we can work.

Sarah Robson
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