



Secure Resilient Networks

Improved business continuity and security for Worthing Borough Council

Worthing Borough Council has selected Wide Area Networking specialist CI-Net to help improve business continuity and security related to online public services as part of an overhaul of its connectivity and firewall infrastructure.

The council awarded CI-Net a three year contract to cover installation and ongoing management, which includes dual, load-balanced clustered internet connections, which automatically failover in the event of disaster, and a centralised jointly managed firewall with round-the-clock intrusion monitoring. A new Virtual Private Network (VPN) is supporting secure remote working for an increasing number of the Council's employees.

"In the last few years we have seen a sharp rise in the number of council services delivered via the web – from council tax and housing benefit to a variety of leisure offerings. And many of our staff are now heavily reliant on Internet and email. So it is essential to have a resilient and secure environment to keep public services online and employees productive. Because we're handling people's personal and financial information, security is paramount," explains Mark Gawley, ICT services manager at Worthing Borough Council.

"Having enhanced our border security with the help of CI-Net we are well placed in terms of our future commitments to government computing."

Mark Gawley, ICT services manager at Worthing Borough Council

Load balancing

The CI-Net service is built around a StoneGate firewall which is being configured to load balance and failover between a primary 10 MB/s Ethernet line and a secondary 2 MB/sec connection. These two separate connections from different service providers means public services and staff productivity will not be affected if one of them is hit by a problem. And the firewall enables the Council to control Quality of Service for specific traffic types, so that they can decide to give a bigger priority to email or web traffic for example.

24 hour monitoring

CI-Net will provide regular reports on traffic crossing the network border and 24 hour monitoring to identify any unusual activity trying to infiltrate the network through web servers, web services or by breaking firewall rules. "This jointly managed service with experts tracking our borders 24-7 is vital. We know we can pick up the phone to a CI-Net specialist if we need someone to change firewall rules or the VPN's remote access policies at short notice. This might be because it's outside normal hours in an emergency or simply because we don't have the manpower or specialist expertise to do something," adds Gawley.

Previously Worthing's connectivity infrastructure had grown organically over a period of years into a complex environment, with around ten separate internet links and a variety of firewalls and web servers relating to different council business units. It was essential for the Council to simplify and centralise things in order to manage security more effectively and benefit from economies of scale. "We saw a number of suppliers," says Gawley. "But CI-Net came up with the most straightforward cost effective solution, which is flexible enough to expand as our needs change."

Please contact us for further information

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Avoiding disruption

The nature of the old environment meant the Council was unsure how the different systems would be affected as things were moved across. To avoid disruption during the transition CI-Net kept the older connections and firewalls running in parallel while various Council services and systems were transferred to the new infrastructure – ensuring all the systems kept running during the changeover.

Secure VPN

Part of the CI-Net offering is a Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) VPN which provides remote access to around 70 employees, including 37 local councillors. For additional security, all authorised staff have been provided with VASCO two-factor authentication tokens. These generate unique security codes that must be used in order to log in to the network. The

VPN, which is built around an AEP Netilla Security Platform (NSP), has been configured to work with Windows Terminal Server to give staff web based access to desktop applications and the council intranet. It integrates with Windows active directory and CI-Net has configured it to do an automatic end-point scan of all remote devices to ensure they have up to date Anti-Virus protection before accessing council resources.

“Having enhanced our border security with the help of CI-Net we’re well placed in terms of our future commitments to government computing. We wouldn’t have to do too much work in order to come in line with the stringent security protocols required by Government Connect the trusted UK network for local authorities,” concluded Gawley.

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