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CLOUD EMPOWERED SOLUTIONS

Case Study

Client: Brentwood
Borough Council



Better backup, more storage, less cost for local government thanks to Azure

'We needed more computing power that our current set up couldn't provide. Cloud computing was just maturing so we decided to change our path and go a different way.'

- Barry Sharpen, Customer Support and Infrastructure Senior Analyst, Brentwood Borough Council.

Brentwood Borough Council is a local authority that needed to meet the demands of its residents with technology that was increasingly showing its age. Their IT team tried to be economical and efficient, but disaster recovery testing showed that they needed help to ensure smooth and continuous service delivery.

Sweating their assets

In early 2015, Brentwood Borough Council had a decision to make: they could continue to sweat their current assets or they could implement new hardware. The former would save them money, but it would increase the risk of problems in the long run, especially when manufacturers' warranties expired.

People 'want a self-service, 24/7 operation, but how do you provide a service like that with a small team?' says Tim Huggins, ICT Manager at Brentwood. In an era of transformation and growing expectations, Brentwood Council needed a new approach to its IT.

High availability by design

Then they came across StorSimple, a provider of cloud-integrated storage that Microsoft acquired to become part of Azure's cloud storage solution. They approached Microsoft who put them in touch with Sol-Tec Ltd.

'Brentwood wanted to improve its desktop experience, sort out capacity management and modernise when we met them,' says Paul Collins, Head of Cloud and Infrastructure Services at Sol-Tec Ltd. 'This was coming from a desire to embrace the cloud and the technology. The local authority was at a tipping point from a cost and capability angle.'

Overview

Location
UK

Industry
Government

Organization Size
Medium (50 - 999 employees)

Website
www.brentwood.gov.uk

Solution Overview
Product and Services
Microsoft Azure
Microsoft StorSimple

Quote

“Azure has helped us to shed the ageing technology we previously used and it has given us all the benefits of a modern data centre. By breaking the cycle of implementing new equipment only to replace it three years down the line, we have become increasingly more agile and scalable.”

Phil Ruck
Chief Executive
Brentwood Borough
Council

Solution

Sol-Tec Limited set up StorSimple, which uses an on-premise SAN linked to a new Hyper-V environment. This gave Brentwood the capability to use other Microsoft technology and build a hybrid data centre.

‘We use the term “high availability by design”,’ says Tim Huggins. ‘Other organisations have to spend a lot of money to achieve this, but we can build into Azure and have a very highly-available infrastructure at a fraction of the cost of doing it ourselves.’

Brentwood used a HP 4000 SAN platform that provided storage for all their VMware server estate.

As part of the wider initiative, they migrated VMware to Hyper-V.

‘We already had an HP SAN ourselves so we knew the technology well,’ says Paul Collins. ‘We knew the challenges of moving to something new which is why we started with this migration.’

By creating a back up around the SAN, Brentwood has improved disaster recovery and the ability to manage data growth using the storage platform.

Business Benefits of Azure

By choosing Azure, Brentwood quickly saw many benefits. In particular:

- **Reduced support costs** for hardware and by reducing their data centre footprint. Before, Brentwood had eight shelves in their data centre and another six to eight at their disaster recovery site. With Azure, they were able to reduce this down to two shelves at the data centre and close down their disaster recovery site completely.
- **Projected OPEX savings** during the first stage of this transition are close to £50,000. Total estimated one-off CAPEX savings are close to £90,000.
- **A move from reactive to proactive IT** means that Brentwood’s IT team is now the first to know about a potential issue, without hearing about it first when a user complains.
- **Big data analysis** is now possible, allowing Brentwood to look for patterns in their system centre and identify newly emerging threats.

‘Azure has helped us to shed the ageing technology we previously used and it has given us all the benefits of a modern data centre,’ says Phil Ruck, Chief Executive at Brentwood Borough Council.

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