

# Reading Borough Council



**After the reorganisation of Local Government in April 1998, Reading Borough Council became a Unitary Authority. Overnight, the Council increased in size by over 400% and took over the responsibility for all local public services. The challenges associated with supporting an enlarged IT and telecommunication infrastructure, were enormous, so Reading adopted an innovative solution - "Intelligent Outsourcing". In doing so, a platform was created in which seven private sector organisations could work, in partnership, to provide a cost effective, future-proofed communications structure. Pinacl Solutions took overall responsibility for all the voice and data systems in a 10- year Managed Service Agreement, which was later extended to 12 years.**

The decision to choose Pinacl Solutions was based on the company's experience in IT professional services, highly trained consultants

and the ability to tailor its solution to the individual needs of each project. The aim of the original 10 year project was two fold; to manage the exponential growth in the council's IT requirements and to provide a future proofed, cost-effective, high technology communications structure.

Firstly, existing networks were given a complete "technology refresh" involving key suppliers: Cisco and Mitel (hardware and software), BT and NTL (circuits connecting the Borough's WAN), and Telindus (cable modems connecting smaller remote sites). Subsequently, Peapod and Q931 Ltd provided network security software for the council and StrongBox file servers for schools.

Secondly, Reading Borough Council transferred all voice and data assets in trust to Pinacl Solutions for the duration of the contract, removing the time consuming burden of purchasing away from Reading's IT Managers. One of the other innovative approaches adopted by Reading was to pay for the services on a per port basis to allow managers to maintain a tighter grip on their costs. The relationships developed through the "Intelligent Outsourcing" project, have delivered a remarkable 99.9% service availability level. However, the real success of the project is that it has enabled the Council to deliver an improved quality of services to their staff and citizens of Reading.

Integral to the Managed Service is Pinacl's role in the support and delivery of any ongoing development programmes specified by Reading Borough Council. Throughout the contract Pinacl have completed and continues to complete a series of landmark networking and IT projects, including the installation of a Borough-wide Curriculum Network enabling all the primary schools to access the National Grid for Learning and enhance the educational service in this area

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and a New Opportunities Fund (NOF) initiative has extended free Internet access to the town's seven public libraries.

Pinacl Solutions have also provided technical support for the highly complex relocation of over 600 staff to a modern and more cost-effective facility without any disruption to Council services. Along side the ongoing development work for the Council includes a state-of-the-art Intelligent Telephony Services (ITS) and the provision of unified messaging.

These services have the potential to revolutionise Council's working practice supporting more flexible electronic communication and "location independent working". "Our partnership relationship with Pinacl Solutions has proved to be an enormous success, enabling the Council to take advantage of emerging technologies in a controlled, measured and cost effective way," said Howard Rigby, ICT Strategist for Reading Council. "Thanks to their honest, flexible approach and extensive experience of local government, we have received invaluable support every step of the way. This has been most beneficial in the areas of strategic planning, technology developments, bids for external funding and the final delivery of integrated electronic solutions." Caroline Croft, Pinacl Solution's Service Delivery Manager for Reading comments, "This is an example of a public private sector partnership at its best, and one which we are sure will provide a model for future local government initiatives."

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Howard Rigby  
ICT Strategist for Reading Council

## IN FOCUS:

- Pinacl was successful awarded a 10 year Managed Services contract which was later extended to 12 years for the complete voice and data infrastructure at Reading Borough Council.
- Pinacl delivered a complete technology refresh for the entire ICT Infrastructure, including the installation of an Intelligent Telephony Service (ITS) and unified messaging.
- Innovative "Intelligent Outsourcing" allows Reading Borough Council to take advantage of the latest technology, whilst controlling and projecting fixed costs using a 'price-per-port' structure.

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