

## SUCCESSFULLY SERVING THE NEEDS OF THE PUBLIC

**Government bodies and other public sector organisations have one of the toughest audiences to please – the general public. Not only is it an extremely diverse group, covering every race, age and class, but their demands are also numerous, which makes a good communications infrastructure vital.**

East Riding of Yorkshire Council has taken a proactive approach to managing the multifarious demands of its customers. Its Ericsson MD110 system has grown to encompass 27 LIMs and 17 remote sites, and it manages around 15 million calls a year.

The developments made by East Riding of Yorkshire Council have also won it praise from within the IT industry: the authority has won the SOCitm/ SOLACE/Intellect IT Excellence Award for MyEastriding and has been shortlisted for the e-Government National Awards.

### Proactively managing change

The largest unitary Authority in England by area, East Riding of Yorkshire Council serves the needs of more than 317,000 people. Such a wide geographical spread brings its own challenges, not least the need for a high performance IT and communications infrastructure to deliver, manage and maintain public services.

A flexible communications infrastructure is key; since the very nature of Government means that nothing is ever static. ***“As an organisation, we can never know what is around the next corner, so we need a communications platform that we can keep building on to meet whatever challenges are thrown at us,”*** says Paul Johnston, IT communications manager at East Riding of Yorkshire Council.

The catalyst for significant change came in 1996 when the new unitary Authority, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, was born, providing a far broader range of services than the previous County Council.

## MEETING CUSTOMER DEMANDS QUICKLY AND MORE EFFECTIVELY

Immediately, one of East Riding's first challenges was to create a single communications network, to ensure that each division within the authority could meet customer demands quickly and more effectively. This meant connecting all Council sites in a cost-effective manner, creating a single number plan and corporate identity, and building scalability for future growth capacity – providing a firm foundation for the Council's customer service network.

With the formation of new Council boundaries, East Riding had a larger pool of customers to serve. Not only did it want to be able to provide services to these customers efficiently, it also wanted to make sure that every customer in its Authority had access to as many services as possible, via multiple channels.

### A relationship developed over time

East Riding of Yorkshire Council had developed its communications infrastructure in a piecemeal fashion, relying on Ericsson's MD110 voice systems to develop a vast corporate telephony network.

To meet its new demands on becoming a unitary Authority, East Riding decided to continue using Ericsson's communications software and working with Damovo, which supplied and installed the technology. ***"We have a very positive relationship with Damovo; they do not just tell us what we want to hear,"*** says Johnston. ***"Their knowledge of our network is immense and they have earned our respect as a valued and trusted partner, helping us to achieve our high ambitions for service delivery."***

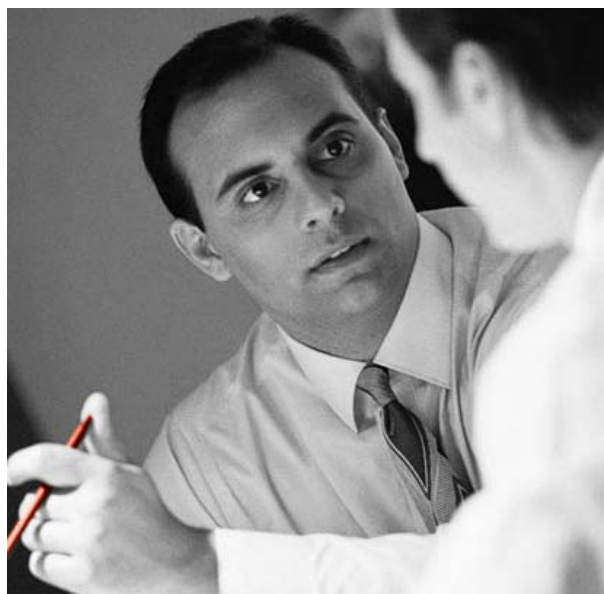
East Riding's first task was to deal with the increase in size of its new boundaries. This meant adding new sites, redeveloping existing buildings, moving and redesigning sites and integrating different systems. Large sites were connected under the new solution by remote LIMs, whereas small and medium sites were connected via MCK gateways and business phone IP gateways over a corporate Voice over IP (VoIP) network.

### Adapting to new customer channels

East Riding of Yorkshire Council's strategy for providing consumers with access to more services was the introduction of customer service centres. The 13 customer service centres now in operation have been enhanced and developed over the years. An innovation deployed in March 2002 was the provision of dedicated CitizenLink kiosks, in areas where the cost of building a new customer service centre was deemed too prohibitive. The kiosks are integrated into the Council's contact centre and the provision of video conferencing facilities means that visitors can talk to someone face-to-face or 'virtually' about any Council service. So East Riding benefits from lower staff overheads and its customers enjoy a better experience.

In 1999, East Riding introduced greater simplicity into its customer communications with the opening of a call centre which customers could reach via one telephone number.

***"We have a very positive relationship with Damovo; they do not just tell us what we want to hear..."***



## ANOTHER WAY FOR CONSUMERS TO ACCESS SERVICES - AT A LOWER COST

It also opened the prospect of dealing with more communication channels in the future, such as email and SMS. This would enable East Riding to offer consumers another way to access Council services, but at a lower cost than handling telephone calls.

The original call centre was based in one building and was served by 20 agents. Now the call centre is 'virtual' with its 60 agents distributed across different locations.

The contact centre is based on the MD110 Ericsson software and uses Ericsson Call Centre Manager (CCM) and Ericsson Call Centre Assistant (CCA) to provide management, monitoring, resource optimisation and configuration capabilities.

Damovo was a valuable partner throughout this period. ***“They worked with us alongside our telecoms and call centre people,”*** says Johnston. ***“The development of the call centre was very much a joint effort and they helped us develop a presentation for the call centre managers that was designed to gain their approval.”***

***“One of Damovo’s clear strengths lies in its depth of understanding of the public sector environment and the unique challenges it faces. If you think of a call centre, the chances are when an agent puts in a customer’s account number, their account details come up,”*** says Johnston. ***“It is not the same for us. We might take a call from anyone ranging from a child, to social services or a parent. Calls could last from 30 seconds to 30 minutes and each Authority’s needs differ.”***

In addition to meeting changing customer demands, East Riding has also had to adapt to new trends in working patterns amongst its employees, such as mobile working. Previously East Riding’s band of home and mobile workers would have had very little choice of connection into the corporate telephony network. However, the decision was taken to upgrade to Ericsson's

latest software release to enable IP extensions, free seating and personal numbering, giving these workers the ability to work from any office or location. So East Riding benefits not only from minimising its communications expenditure, but also from the gains in employee productivity that mobile working has brought to its workforce.

### Into the future

Service provision is uppermost in the Authority’s plans, benefiting its customers with higher levels of customer service and efficiency in providing relevant information. This underpins the Authorities eGovernment solution and has contributed to the achievement of 100% electronic services 12 months earlier than the Government’s December 2005 target.

Damovo has played a valuable role in helping the Authority achieve its IT and communication goals. ***“Damovo has worked with us for a long time, understands our business and knows how our***

***“Damovo’s clear understanding of the public sector environment and the unique challenges it faces...”***



## A VALUABLE ROLE IN HELPING ACHIEVE IT AND COMMUNICATION GOALS

*network works,” says Johnston. “It has very good people who can help with anything from writing software patches – (Damovo is the only authorised Ericsson partner to perform this task) – to testing new communications tools. They have the largest LIM simulator in the country with the capacity for over 40,000 extensions, which means we can test any upgrades and changes to the system before it goes live. While this offers no guarantees, it definitely gives me more confidence,” says Johnston.*

Commenting on the implementation at East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Damovo’s managing director, Paul Butcher says, **“Damovo has established a close-knit relationship with East Riding after spending many years working with the authority on its communications infrastructure. The challenges East Riding faces in serving the needs of 317,000 people in such a large geographic area are immense, but it has shown foresight and a willingness to adapt to whatever its customers want. We enjoy working with East Riding and look forward to contributing to ever greater success.”**

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