Case Study

Buckinghamshire County Council
IT Policy System Implementation

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Mark Steadman - Solution Owner – Security

ABOUT BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) has its headquarters in Aylesbury and has a staff of over 3500 people delivering diverse services to the population of the County. The organisation has an ICT strategy that embraces the use of cloud and managed services, together with new agile working practices to deliver significant savings.

BACKGROUND

Not long after BCC initiated a project to work on and standardise their existing suite of IT policies to reflect changes going on within the organisation it became apparent that the exercise would take a long time to conclude due to heavy workloads and the amount of work needed to make it a success.

CHALLENGES

Whilst policies had been updated since their creation, they required a major overhaul. Any focus tended to be reactive and it was not uncommon for a staff member to raise a query about a policy which highlighted that the content was out of date or not in line with technological advances.

The existing suite had been created in 2010 to demonstrate compliance with the then GCSX Code of Connection requirements. Whilst information security policy development and maintenance is deemed an ICT responsibility at BCC there has never been a dedicated resource for this function. Subsequently the policies had a number of contributors over time and responsibility for policy upkeep changed. This ad hoc approach contributed to the non-standard format and mismatch of information within the policies content.

"The policies form part of our Document Library which we look to maintain to the requirements of ISO standards. The commitment in terms of reviewing them and ensuring that latest versions are published is onerous, as is ensuring that they reflect latest changes to legislation and good practice" -Sarah Barnes, ICT Group Manager

Whilst BCC does not have the ability to readily quantify the time required to finish the initial suite of policies created in 2010 it was estimated - from checking the dates of filed documents - to have been a 14 month exercise. This estimate only covered the time needed to review and edit policies and did not factor in time required to actually create the initial draft policies or cross reference them to standards.

Aside from workload and staff availability issues BCC also recognised that to get their policies rewritten or edited in a short timeframe - and then maintained ongoing - would be a major challenge as the ICT team did not have a team of policy writers. Furthermore the content that was in place would need revising to remain relevant and the commitment to manage the policies and cross reference them to Standards would be very time consuming.

To this end a decision was made to work with Protocol Policy Systems, an IT Policy Compliance specialist. This would save the ICT team a significant amount of time, provide an independent assessment of existing content and give the Council a more professional and coherent set of policies.

A key requirement of the project was that their new or updated policies demonstrated compliance to the latest PSN Code of Connection, Data Security, Service Management Best Practice and ISO standards.

SOLUTION

Protocol Policy Systems started the project which entailed the following key steps. After completing an initial questionnaire BCC were issued with a first draft version of the IT Policy System. A Policy workshop was then booked and a Protocol Consultant facilitated this exercise over 2.5 days with key stakeholders at the Council including the Security team, Data Protection Officer, ITIL professionals and a representative from their Managed Network Provider. The outcome of this exercise saw a final draft version of the BCC IT Policy System created for review, final edits and submission for sign off. The project was concluded in under 8 weeks (elapsed time).

BENEFITS

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LEADERSHIP

The Council now has a fully branded and customised suite of policies that is cross referenced to standards. All staff members, managers and the ICT Team will have an easily accessible and intuitive reference point.

The short term focus at BCC is to ensure that mandatory/ minimum standards requirements are met. However, as the organisation develops and evolves its technology strategy to cater for mobility and cloud services the focus will shift towards enhancing the relevant policies/standards provided by Protocol Policy Systems. This will ensure the release of these services does not compromise the security of information and business assets.

"Without the necessary resource and commitment to keeping policies updated they can quickly become out of date and irrelevant. The ICT Team is committed to obtaining the ISO accreditation so keeping these policies up to date is now critical. Having a partner that can help share that load is a real plus" - Cath Birch, Chief Information Officer