



Case Study

Swindon Borough Council IT Policy System Implementation

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Glyn Peach - CIO



ABOUT SWINDON

Swindon Borough Council, a Unitary Authority in the South West of England, oversees an area of 230 square kilometres in the county of Wiltshire. The Council's administrative headquarters are based in Swindon Town which, in recent surveys, has been recognised as the third fastest growing city in the UK, having a population currently of over 210,000.

BACKGROUND

When the Council recently undertook a project to develop their strategic IT direction it was evident that their existing IT policies were out of date, not comprehensive enough and would not be suitable for use in the future.

The project stakeholders were also conscious of the need to verify gaps in the area of information governance and security, with regard to sensitive data for areas such as children's services, vulnerable adults and debt management.

CHALLENGES

Whilst the Council felt they had set of IT Security policies from which to commence a refresh exercise, they had not been reviewed since 2005 and were based on the old BSI standards format requiring a lot of work to make them relevant. One option to consider was to employ a suitably qualified person to understand which policies were still relevant after 10 years, review all the content to address the use of old terminology and then determine what additional policies would need to be developed. Furthermore there was a preference to be able to cross reference the updated policy statements to current standards. It was estimated the time to conduct this refresh exercise was in excess of 12 months which was preferable to starting the exercise from scratch as this potentially could be a two year project.

SOLUTION

Upon considering the best approach to address their requirements to deliver updated and relevant policies Swindon Council conducted a research exercise and identified that the Protocol Policy System offered a well-structured comprehensive policy system that was easy to navigate. The demonstration of the system impressed the Council and it was noted there was depth to the policy content and cross referencing to standards such as ISO27002, PCI and PSN. Protocol Policy Systems were engaged to deliver a new system that could be tailored and branded for Swindon Council and deployed on their intranet.

After completing preliminary details using a simple questionnaire the Council were provided with a "first draft" version of the IT Policy system branded with the council's colour scheme and logos. A consultant from Protocol Policy Systems then attended on site to conduct a two day workshop. During these two days people from HR, finance and IT were involved in the process and provided input.

BENEFITS

The attendee's feedback was that the exercise was in-depth and intense but also very beneficial. Some felt using an external consultant gave them the ability to objectively discuss issues in detail on policy and risk within Council with the CIO and the IT team

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The "final draft" of the IT Policy system was created and delivered to Swindon Council four weeks after the workshop had concluded. This allowed time for the Glyn and his team to make wording changes or edits where necessary to the policy statements.

LEADERSHIP

The council has deployed a comprehensive set of 27 policies that are fully mapped to the ISO 27002 and PSN standards. The process, allowing for downtime, took just 10 weeks from start to finish.

"Information Governance training is mandatory and Swindon Borough Council is keen to improve user awareness of ICT security policies. The policies we received from Protocol are well-written and are supported by policy explanation content. These explanations make the policies easy to understand and this will help with communication to users. With the need to demonstrate compliance with PSN and a need to ensure data protection requirements are understood we will look to use these in conjunction with the in-house training system" – Simon Phillips, Principal Auditor



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