

Sevenoaks District Council improves telephone-based services

Submitted by: Gray Associates

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Sevenoaks District Council improves telephone-based services to local citizens with Macfarlane's CallPlus system

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*Council increases call handling capacity, enabling it to handle a greater number of queries from local citizens *

Sevenoaks District Council in Kent, which provides important local services to more than 109,000 people in West Kent, has improved its customer contact by investing in new telephone technology from Macfarlane Telesystems. The technology, part of the Council's new Customer Contact Centre, will enable the Council to answer more calls from local citizens without current customer service levels being compromised.

The Macfarlane CallPlus system, a stand-alone contact centre system, was selected following a tender involving several telephony system vendors and has already contributed to Sevenoaks' Best Value Performance Plan 2003/04.

The Council has a progressive approach to technology, with Sevenoaks District residents able to pay for a number of services online, and it understands the importance of telephone contact to its residents in order to meet and exceed expectations.

"While we understand the increasing use of the Internet and the need to provide local services online, whether online requests; payments, including Council tax and business rates, or submitting online planning applications, the telephone should never be underestimated - which is why we launched this dedicated contact centre in May 2003," said Amy Wilton, Front Line Team Services Manager, Sevenoaks District Council.

"When we decided to upgrade our call handling system, Macfarlane was chosen because of the technical capabilities of its CallPlus system and due to the company's breadth of experience in local government."

The Contact Centre is key to Sevenoaks District Council's commitment to its commitment to high levels of customer service, reflected in its local performance indicators which includes 80% of all queries to be answered at first point of contact.

As part of this dedication to online government, Sevenoaks District Council is also part of the Kent Connects Partnership (www.kentconnects.com), which involves a total of fourteen local Kent authorities, that have joined services with other public service providers, such as the Kent emergency services, to link up people and public services. The Partnership identifies and removes any barriers to these groups working together and uses IT to

facilitate team working across the region.

"Technology plays a key part in our commitment to continuously improve our its services and ensuring that all services are cost effective; that they meet the needs of local people and service users and that our staff are well trained and motivated," said Louise Thorogood, Customer Services Manager for Sevenoaks District Council.

"This win adds to the existing success we have had with councils such as the Warwickshire On-line Partnership, Somerset Direct Partnership, Maidstone Borough Council, and the London Borough of Lambeth," said Paul Skinner, Sales Director of Macfarlane Telesystems.

About Macfarlane Telesystems

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Founded in 1987, Macfarlane is a UK developer and supplier of communication solutions to service providers, enterprises and public sector organisations. Its CallPlus platform supports a range of applications including contact centre, IVR and unified communications. The company delivers cost-effective, market-focused solutions directly and through strategic partnerships with vendors such as Northgate, Onyx, Sx3 and Deloittes.

Macfarlane has established a strong position in the public sector where it assists central and local government reach e-government targets, providing a citizen-centric approach while working within Best Value practices. Existing customers include more than 30 local councils such as Somerset Direct Partnership, Warwickshire On-line Partnership and the London Borough of Lambeth's corporate contact centre.

More details can be found at www.macfar.co.uk <<http://www.macfar.co.uk>>

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