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Community Safety in Warrington is boosted with a CCTV makeover

It's out with the old and in with the new. Warrington Council needed a major upgrade of their public safety network. Developments in surveillance technologies means councils can create a safer and more informed environment for citizens and visitors. Warrington was on board with what this could offer them.

A conversation about moving the CCTV circuits to a new location within the control room led Warrington's team to recognise the benefits of replacing its legacy system. It was outdated and much less effective than modern IP systems. So we gave the council's system a complete overhaul and expanded its capabilities.

Getting to grips with the move

The command and control system was key to Warrington moving to an integrated IP CCTV system. Not only has it helped Warrington share the control room and surveillance infrastructure, it's laid the foundations that can ultimately help the council transform the town into a 'smart' place.

The new system allows Warrington to have extended camera coverage, view cameras at the Town Hall and safely share video with police and other emergency services. And in future it could even help generate revenue because it takes feeds from third party cameras and Internet of Things (IoT) devices so the council can offer monitoring services too.

We sketched out what a new system could look like: new HD cameras, wireless capabilities, and so on. Once we coloured in the detail with the ideas about bringing two controls rooms into one single, all-seeing room, Warrington Council were convinced: they asked us to completely overhaul and extend its CCTV and community safety surveillance systems.

Enhancing the equipment

While Warrington could use its standalone surveillance system for the usual activities: traffic management, keeping a watchful eye on large scale events, and so on, like many local authorities it also has local challenges to face.

HD cameras

When Warrington Council upgraded its street lighting from traditional sodium lamps to modern LEDs, the reduced light intensity meant its CCTV cameras couldn't capture images as well as before. It proved to be another reason for switching to HD cameras on an IP-based surveillance system.
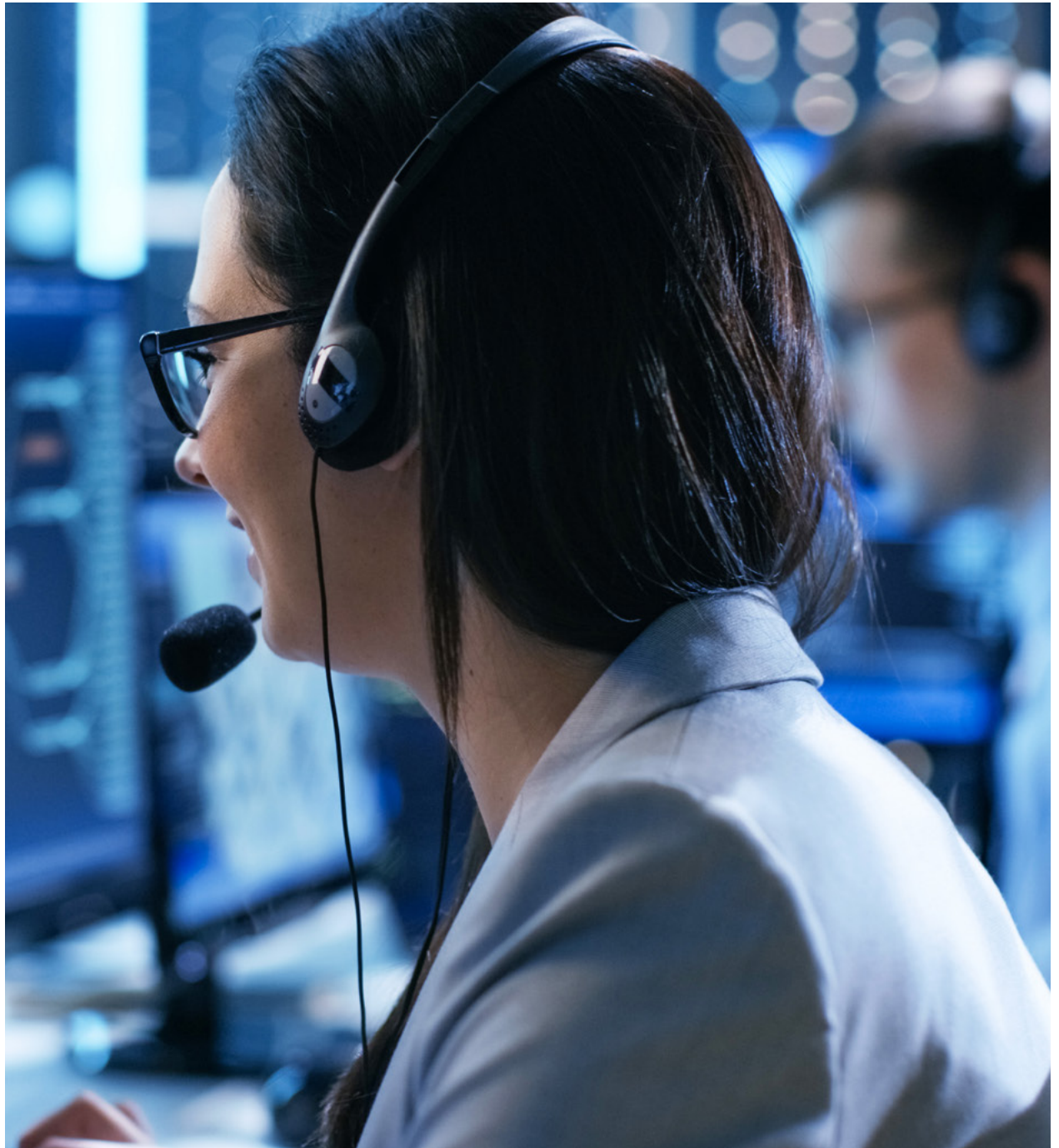
Peppering the town with high-tech cameras is great for surveillance, but the council was concerned it could look out of place on old buildings such as the Town Hall. We agreed. Although the cameras themselves are discreet, we recognised that the brackets supporting them could jar with the historic façade. We work closely with one of our key camera suppliers, 360 Vision, who are local to Warrington and designed bespoke brackets with them that did the job without compromising the character of this listed building.

Control room

With Warrington using two separate control rooms, the running costs, maintenance and resources were too high. It wasn't efficient. So, we created a control room that now has the urban traffic control (UTC) and public space monitoring in one location.

This means the UTC and public space monitoring services have effectively doubled their presence as they can share each other's cameras, in real time, and see what is happening on the new, shared, monitor wall. This could be critical if there's a major incident, traffic gridlock or public disorder.

And of course, this is more efficient. It lets the council do more for less but more importantly it helps keep the citizens of Warrington safer than ever.

Town Hall

The Town Hall hosts lots of events, from local elections and debates to Walking Days and May Day Galas on the lawn. It also houses the Mayoral cars. We provided Warrington with cameras that monitor the Town Hall area along with a nearby car park.

The building's outdated system had very few cameras. And they didn't cover the most vulnerable locations. The new Town Hall system covers blind spots, including the lead roof, which is otherwise vulnerable to thieves who might take their chance removing the valuable cladding.

We replaced the old system in the Town Hall and also provided an IP circuit that runs between the Town Hall and the new control room. We installed a new standalone system that uses the same Milestone technology as the main Control Room. The Town Hall site can now be used as a disaster recovery (DR) site for the main control room. The shared features include:

- video feed alerts
- video storage management
- the capability to retrieve evidence and audit the trail of who's done what
- analytic functions.

The new IP link set Warrington Council up for remote viewing of the Town Hall after hours. Our solution means events can be fully monitored, which wasn't possible before. Councillors, officials and the public attending late evening meetings and election counts know that the team is looking out for their safety.

A team effort

As usual, we managed the entire project from planning to delivery, as well as providing ongoing training for the CCTV teams.

We devoted a local project manager and account team to the job. Our team developed a plan for upgrading the circuits and installing wireless connections as well as the schedule for changing out cameras to new HD ones, some of which had to be taken care of during the night.

The team worked closely with Warrington to plan and install the equipment – from the central command & control system, video wall, and new furniture to the network upgrades, wireless comms and cameras in the street.

And there was no down time for the big move. We provided Warrington with a temporary control room while the new one was being fitted.

Put procurement in the frame

Procurement was straight forward using the RM1045 framework, from Crown Commercial Services. The Framework meant that the procurement process was not only efficient to run but economical too.

In good stead to move ahead

Warrington surveillance capabilities have been transformed. From sharing videos with police to monitoring public spaces and controlling traffic hotspots, the new expanded system gives the council opportunities to grow revenue whilst making the town a better place for residents and visitors.

But it goes beyond surveillance and revenue. The new system brings Warrington into the thick of a digital world. It gives Warrington the possibilities to develop as a 'smart' place. With the arrival of 5G, the town is poised to keep pace with new 'smart' technologies and IoT.

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