



# INAVATE

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In the largest installation to date of this particular system in the UK, specialists in local authority contracting, Sound Advice have completely renovated the media and communications systems of Lincolnshire County Council at their office in Lincoln. Chris Fitzsimmons reports.

## Public viewing



The Council Chamber from the chairman's position. TFT monitors give the officers views of the status of the discussion.



A rural County Council in the UK, such as Lincolnshire, can be responsible for serving a highly dispersed population. This makes serving the needs of its citizen particularly demanding particularly when it comes to involving them in the democratic process. One might have to travel for two or three hours to reach the county town of Lincoln to attend important sessions of the County Council.

However, thanks to web streaming technologies it is now possible for people to observe goings on in the Chamber over the internet, and Lincolnshire has now joined the ranks of local government establishments up and down the country taking advantage of this in order to engage people with the democratic process, and to make it more transparent. The solution was provided by experienced integrators Sound Advice under the leadership of Jon Hunnisett and in partnership with web casting specialists Public-i and RCF UK, who provided the conferencing equipment and software support.

"Our initial one-line brief from the client was that the system had to do everything invisibly," began Jon Hunnisett. A pretty tall order, but not an entirely unusual one from many customers. Lincolnshire had actually been a candidate for an AV systems upgrade for some time. According to IT manager and project co-ordinator Dave Walker of HBS, the Council's facili-

ties management company the previous system installed in the Council Chamber was an analogue system installed in the 1980's.

Identifying Lincolnshire as a potential customer RCF UK had approached the Council executive in 2006 with a proposal for an upgraded solution, and having been successful in their overtures recommended that Sound Advice be invited to tender to carry out the installation work. The company has an excellent track record with similar projects having installed systems for local government up and down the country for the last 20 years. Demonstrations of various possibilities were carried out towards the end of the year, and installation commenced in the spring of a completely new congress, sound reinforcement, presentation and camera system as well as the re-equipping of a number of smaller meeting rooms at the Council's offices.

The heart of the Council Chamber is now RCF's new Forum 9000 digital conference system. Jon Hunnisett explained what he sees as the main strengths of the system: "Firstly, it has excellent sound quality, which was very important to the client." That's something that the Councillors themselves have already commented on as being a real plus, according to Dave Walker. The second bonus is one of flexibility. Hunnisett again: "The system has so much function-



The dome cameras, IR emitters and column speakers are positioned high in the ceiling largely out of sight but still providing good coverage.

► ability that can simply be unlocked with further software purchases. This means that the customer doesn't need to worry too much about what feature they should buy, and whether they can afford them at once. They can get on, buy the hardware and upgrade their solution later on without having to rebuild the system."

RCF ultimately supplied a total of 117 delegate units for the Council Chamber, along with the central control unit one of its FVM 9844 audio / video matrix switchers and three FDC9900 dome cameras. The three cameras are located discretely in the roof of the Council Chamber, and positioned to cover the whole room. Activation of a Councillor's microphone causes a camera to track automatically to his or her position.

The audio and video signals from this activity can then be treated in one of three ways. Firstly, they are fed back into the room. An Eike LCX71 projector with a special long throw lens is provided for the benefit of those in the room and viewing gallery. For sound reinforcement purposes Bosch LA1-UW series column speakers were installed in the chamber, working in tandem with a Sennheiser neck-worn and stethoscope infrared wireless products for the hard of hearing - an important consideration. Amplification for the column speakers comes from a TOA A-Series PA amplifier, and above it in the rack is a pair of wireless microphone receivers also from TOA. These look after a wireless lapel microphone and a handheld microphone, which can be used for guests or other speakers in the Council Chamber.

The camera feeds are switched by the RCF FVM matrix unit and then pass into a Kramer matrix switcher, which delivers to the streaming hardware. Audio inputs are treated likewise.

Further functionality provides a live feed from the Council Chamber, which can be delivered to the Council common room to be displayed on a Panasonic 42" plasma screen.

The final possibility is for proceedings to be

streamed over the internet. Public-i's encoding hardware is installed in the equipment rack, and receives audio and video feeds from the AV matrix. Other inputs available to the Kramer matrix are VGA inputs from laptops on the chamber floor, and the matrix also governs which video signals are sent to the desktop monitors in the chairman position and the touch-screens which currently control the conferencing software.

The RCF conference system will eventually be configured to run in an automatic queuing mode. A Councillor registers their desire to speak by pressing the microphone button on the delegate unit, and they then enter a queue of people waiting to speak. The chairman can see who is waiting to speak on his control monitor.

Media control in the Council Chamber is provided by a Cue touch panel located on the Democratic Services Officer's desk. This operates the projector, projector screen and lighting, as well as acting as a control button for the web-cast in case of an unforeseen circumstance which requires that the stream be quickly cut off.

In addition to the installation of the conference equipment in the main Council Chamber Sound Advice also upgraded the facilities in three small committee rooms and one large meeting room. The smaller rooms were all equipped with Sanyo XU73LMP projectors and 70" interactive whiteboards from Interactive Technologies.

The larger room is equipped with a pair of Panasonic PT LB60NTE 3,200 lumen projectors, ceiling mounted and firing onto two two-metre-wide 4:3 electronic projection screens. The equipment rack contains a Kramer VP 82 video / audio matrix switcher and a VP 413 source scaler. Ceiling mounted speakers complete the set up by covering audio reproduction from either the main Council Chamber feed, or any recorded audio that is being played during a presentation.

Since the installation, the Council has asked for an alteration to the Forum software to better suit its needs. They want to be able to alter the waiting to speak queue, and also would like a second screen for the chairman showing just a schematic overview of the Council chamber that would allow them to invite delegates to speak automatically. Jon Hunnissett: "RCF have been absolutely wonderful about this. They have done a software modification, which is currently up and running in our workshop. It's really intuitive, something that isn't always true of conference software."

Sound Advise prides itself on carrying out all of its own installation work with no subcontractors involved. Something Dave Walker from HBS is very pleased with. He concluded "The engineers from Sound Advice are amongst the most professional I've worked with, they did an excellent job." 

#### Installed by:

Sound Advice:

[www.soundadvice.co.uk](http://www.soundadvice.co.uk)

#### More info from:

[www.boschsecurity.com](http://www.boschsecurity.com)

[www.cue.com](http://www.cue.com)

[www.draper.com](http://www.draper.com)

[www.hbs.uk.com](http://www.hbs.uk.com)

[www.eiki.com](http://www.eiki.com)

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