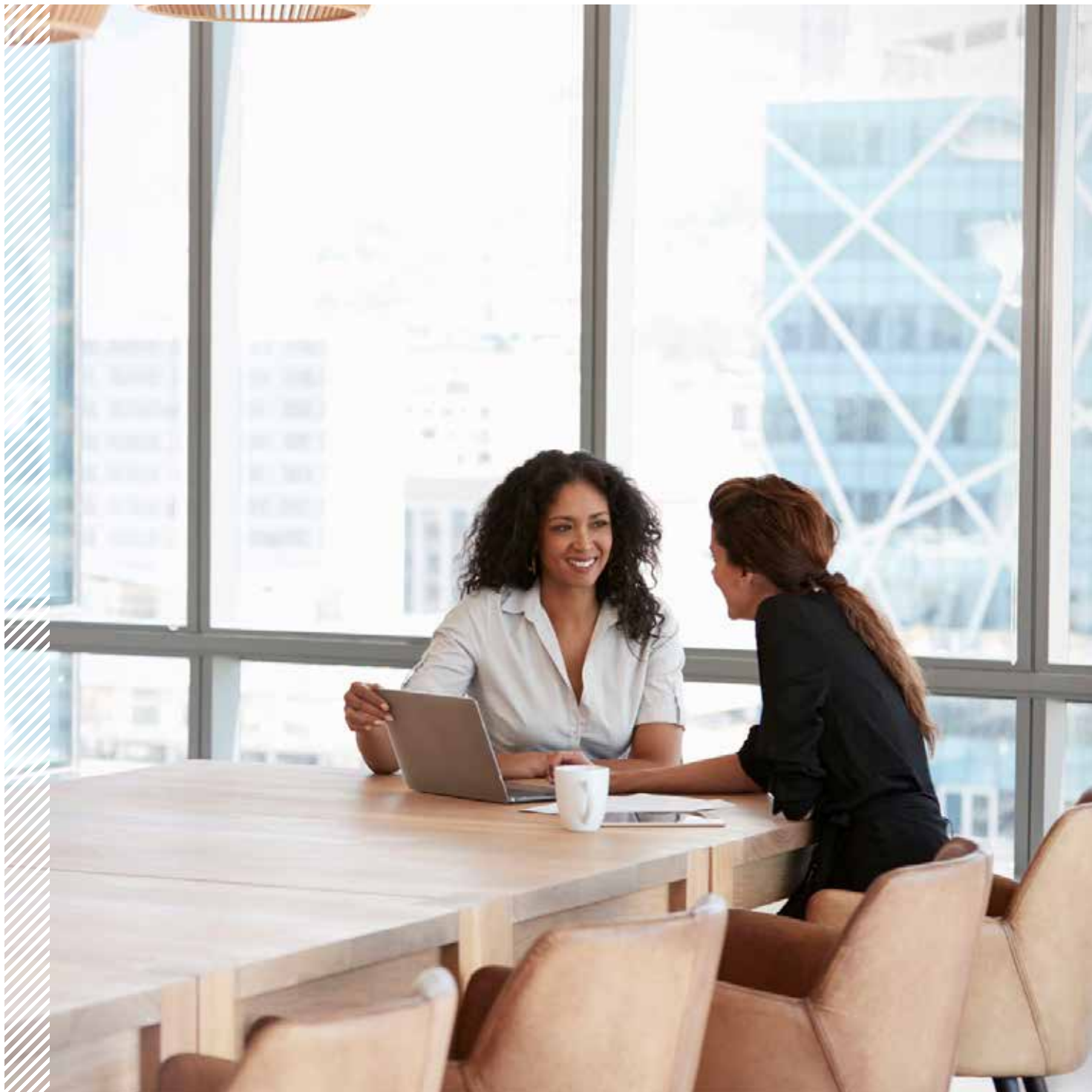




**NFON**  
Cloud Telephone System

# The Local Government Communication Challenge

Enhancing telephony services  
with cloud based technology



# Cloud Telephony

## Leading the conversation in Local Government

Local Authorities are expected to implement the policies of central government and respond to the needs of their citizens efficiently and cost effectively.

In the face of continuing budget cuts, seamless communications are a more important part of that process than ever. Both between departments internally and with suppliers, other agencies and external providers of services such as social care, waste management, educational support and health.

These communications are not always as free flowing as they could be, however. Partly because of the siloed nature of so much local government and the many cultural differences between professions and organisations that continue to hinder service integration. And partly because of the limitations of the legacy PBX telephone systems many authorities are still using to manage enquiries from citizens and to co-ordinate a multi-agency response.

Citizens are entitled to expect more options when it comes contacting their local authority. Employees need up to date, multi channel communication systems to serve them properly. And authorities need to procure within the limits of the public sector purse while maximizing value and efficiency. The answer, in each case, is cloud telephony.

In a nutshell, cloud telephony puts the telephone network wherever the internet is, allowing staff to communicate with each other, and with external agencies and providers, on their mobile device, PC or existing extension. It removes phone systems from the limitations of fixed line networks and physical exchanges by placing everything on remote, secure servers in the cloud, where the power to collaborate over IP voice conferencing networks not only facilitates better communication, but offers significant savings in the costs of travel to and from meetings and of overnight accommodation.

As a way of coping with periods of extra demand, such as council tax payment deadlines or winter flu epidemics, the capacity to add extra extensions for remote and agency workers makes cloud telephony the ideal scalable solution. It also offers a way to extend services to true 24/7 availability, with the option of adding AI (Artificial Intelligence) enhanced CRM systems of the kind already being trialled with the NHS 111 service.

And as part of the wider 'digital transformation' agenda for public service, it represents a huge step towards the goal of delivering world-class digital services and transforming the way local government operates, from front end to back office, in a modern and efficient way.

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# The Opportunities for Cloud Telephony

## Human Resources

For the HR department, the communication challenges facing local government are especially pertinent. The ability to communicate and share information quickly and easily, even over a distance, is fundamental to how well people are able to perform in their role and how fulfilled they feel in their job.

Cloud based telephony facilitates this by decoupling the telephone from a fixed line network and introducing limitless flexibility over where and how employees make and receive calls.

When individuals, teams and whole agencies are no longer limited to where they work by a fixed line, remote and home working become much easier.

And with them come all the productivity benefits that are now widely acknowledged; reduced absence; improved morale and wellbeing; better staff retention; and a higher standard of candidates for new roles.

Another critical benefit of cloud telephony is the flexibility it offers to reconfigure features, workgroups and extensions without the need to physically reroute or add to a fixed line network. Nothing stays the same in local government for long, and when departments are merged, new roles added and staff relocated, new user extensions can be set up quickly and easily by anyone with administrator privileges.

In the same way, systems can be scaled to include additional staff onsite or at remote locations during periods of high demand, such as the financial year end or during the winter when social services are under additional pressure.

## ICT

Cloud telephony offers a clean break from the limitations of fixed line PBX or ISDN systems and an opportunity to modernise local government communications using state of the art 'plug and play' voice applications. It unites existing fixed line terminals, IP phones, mobile devices, DECT phones and conference telephone facilities in a single, unified communications system.

Hosted on secure, multiple redundant servers, cloud telephone networks are updated automatically as new functions become available, doing away with the need for costly maintenance contracts and the requirement for manual, on site 'fixes'.

Because all systems are hosted remotely, multiple sites can be brought together on one exchange, allowing more efficient communication and free calls between offices and departments in the same network. IT staff and administrators can manage multiple sites using a simple online control panel to add or delete extensions, enable remote and home working access or configure the hundreds of intelligent features offered by cloud based platforms.

Compared to updating or replacing a fixed line telephone network, cloud telephony is an extremely low CAPEX investment that offers minimal running and maintenance costs. In a CaaS (Communication as a Service) model, all hardware and software management is handled jointly by the vendor and system provider, with updates and upgrades pushed to The Cloud automatically to guarantee the latest systems are available and the most current security standards in place.

## Financial

Cloud telephony opens up the potential for an extremely low CAPEX investment in local government communication systems, with low ongoing running costs and automatic system upgrades that futureproof networks while maintaining the highest service standards.

By decoupling the telephone from fixed line exchanges, equipment and service costs fall dramatically. System updates and maintenance happen remotely, with costs absorbed by the vendor and software provider rather than being passed on to the end user in the form of fixed maintenance contracts. This also guarantees the latest features and platforms are always available to all users.

With more capacity to promote flexible and home working, cloud telephony can also have an impact on office rental, energy and building management costs; fewer staff onsite manning fixed line extensions means less of a requirement for permanent office space and less demand for heating, lighting, cleaning and security services. All significant lines in the local government budget.

Measured against conventional PBX networks, cloud based telephony delivers much higher pound for pound specification and performance, plus a host of intelligent features to integrate users on a wide range of devices and channels. When procurement success is measured increasingly in the quality of its required outcomes, it offers real, tangible fiscal and social value.



## Property and Estates

The immediate effect of switching to cloud based telephony from an existing PBX or ISDN telephone system is the creation of additional space that was previously given over to exchange switchgear and bulky server cabinets. This allows estates managers to get maximum use from their office space with no additional rental overhead or, if rationalisation is priority, to scale down their permanent office requirement.

By freeing communications from a fixed line and fixed extension network, it also introduces more flexibility into office planning, with the capacity to create new workgroups and conference call facilities without the need for disruptive and costly rewiring.

One of the most significant advantages of cloud telephony, however, is the ease with which it facilitates remote and home working. With more staff working offsite, the need for office space is reduced, along with corresponding equipment, energy, maintenance and building management costs.

Because all the communications systems and software are hosted remotely, cloud based telephony also makes things easier when it's time to move offices or set up temporary premises. No need to disconnect, transport and recommission equipment at the other end – all of which takes time and inevitably leads to service outages. Instead, users simply reconnect to the existing system online at the new site using the 'plug and play' functionality built in to cloud based applications.

## Customer Experience

The digital customer journey is now the most common way for citizens to explore and interact with local government services.

More than that, multi-channel conversations embracing voice, messaging, social media and live chat are an expected part of the experience.

By allowing additional, cloud-based contact centre solutions to be integrated with the telephone network, cloud telephony systems can be enhanced to include multiple communications channels, CRM tools, voice recording and intelligent call handling features that enrich every interaction with your organisation.

This is especially relevant when it comes to requests for information or making payments, where ease, accuracy and speed of service are considered benchmarks for the quality of the customer experience.

Features like CTI (computer and telephone integration) enhance the quality of such services by bringing together customer records and soft telephony on agents' screens, allowing them to access payment records and call history in real time and to personalise call content.

The ability for cloud telephony to upscale contact centre services quickly and easily also makes it a powerful resource for managing customer expectations at periods of high demand such as council tax payment deadlines.

Additional call stations are easily added to the system, either on existing premises or in other locations, and because all agents have access to the relevant data and systems wherever they are, callers never need to know they are being directed elsewhere and the customer experience never has to be compromised.

# Benefits specific to Local Government

## Full integration with Microsoft Teams

NFON's full integration with Microsoft Teams delivers a genuinely unified communications solution that equips you with a feature-rich, enterprise-grade telephone system for enhanced collaboration. Screen sharing and audio conferencing enable better cross-agency working and more effective sharing of resources.

## Contact Centre

A professional cloud contact centre delivers omni-channel presence, allowing you to interact with citizens and communities whenever, wherever and however they choose.

The NFON Cloud Telephone System has the flexibility to precisely meet your particular needs, then easily grow when required.

- › **Future-proofed and flexible**, the NFON Cloud Telephone System is always at the leading edge of technological advancements and scales seamlessly – making it the perfect solution for organisations of all sizes.
- › **Reliability and technical excellence** are ensured through NFON's carrier-grade, enterprise-level service. It enables high-quality voice connections via a central telephone system managed by NFON, in high-availability, geo-redundant data centres.
- › **Internet connectivity** delivers phone calls from anywhere with an internet connection – at work, on the move or at employees' homes.

- › **Same numbers and seamless migration** mean organisations can keep their existing switchboard and extension numbers. The transition is seamless, with zero operational interruption.
- › **Over 150 advanced features** enable smarter working – Advanced functionality is included for workgroups of any size, such as mobile phone integration, telephone conferencing call control, smart queuing, call routing, multi-office connectivity and call coaching.

# More options, More Value

The extra benefits of the Nfon Cloud Telephone System include many more options, such as:

- › Call recording
- › Mobility
- › Computer telephony integration
- › Call reporting

## GovNewsDirect

This paper was built in partnership with GovNewsDirect. GovNewsDirect specialise in facilitating innovative and engaging partnerships between the private and public sector.



### Nfon features that help you achieve your objectives

- › Integrating mobile workers frees up office space to reduce costs and average working space
- › With everyone on one system, staff effectiveness, collaboration and motivation is improved
- › Microsoft Teams integration supports inter-department collaboration that improves resource utilisation and decision making
- › Enterprise-grade telephony system with enhanced features – including omni-channel contact centres – improves customer service experience
- › Technology upgrades improve efficiency without capex outlay

**Nfon has been approved by HM Government as a supplier under the auspices of its G-Cloud procurement initiative. Its award-winning solutions are now available to the UK public sector through the government's digital marketplace. Nfon provides clear, integrated, communications through the cloud for the public sector.**

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