

Upgrading for secure & supported ITSM

Client	Bracknell Forest Council
In Brief	Upgrading InfraEnterprise to vFire v9.1 to ensure security, provide access to new and improved features and maintain ongoing support and development of ITSM software.
Business	Local government
Location	Bracknell and Sandhurst, Berkshire, UK
Reach	Supporting more than 1,800 users and 1,600 devices across all services in operational and remote-working locations.
Software	vFire 9.1

Benefits

- Compliance with PSN standards for security and ongoing maintenance and support
- Enhanced screen designer for easy customization of forms
- Automation of procurement approval processes to reduce Service Desk workload

Bracknell Forest is a unitary authority area within Berkshire in Southern England. The borough encompasses Bracknell and Sandhurst, as well as the surrounding villages Crowthorne and Binfield. Bracknell Forest Council delivers local services, including education, transport and planning, to 113,500 residents in the borough.

A team of 78 IT professionals provide support and guidance to Bracknell Forest Council's 1,800 employees and more than 1,600 devices. The Council had been a long term user of InfraEnterprise products and was already working with Alemba as the maintenance support provider for its ITSM software, InfraEnterprise v8. The team had built a good relationship with the Council, understanding its responsibilities for running a secure and reliable service for its users, residents and local businesses.

As a committed member of the Public Services Network (PSN), the Council's IT division keeps a close watch on its policies and practices for data sharing and security. When Alemba gave its commitment to the ongoing maintenance, support and development of vFire v9.1, the Council's IT managers knew that this would satisfy PSN's stringent compliance standards in its next audit.

“The upgrade was painless and very smoothly done. From our point of view it couldn’t have gone any better and it has given us an opportunity to improve on the support we offer to our customers.”

The timing of the PSN audit process was the principal driver in setting the schedule for a prompt and smooth upgrade. As part of the Council’s audit preparations, it would also migrate to MS Active Directory.

At the same time, the IT division would also be supporting the Council through a series of office moves. With a planned office relocation in sight, the IT division wanted to minimise the need to move legacy, outdated systems and sought to upgrade its resources and systems in readiness for the move.

The Council identified Alemba’s ITSM support as part of its improvement strategy. Alemba would ensure the ongoing development of the Council’s ITSM strategy in its new location.

Security and self-service

The Council’s upgrade to vFire v9.1 principally satisfied PSN requirements for security and ongoing maintenance and support. It was also important to the IT team that Alemba would deliver the upgrade after the migration to MS Active Directory and in advance of the office relocation programme and the PSN audit.

Robin Brown, Desktop Services Manager, confirmed, “Alemba’s project team kept us informed at every stage and was available for queries. They were flexible in getting the project ready around our Microsoft migration commitments.”

vFire v9.1 would also provide the Council with the ability to control and expand its ITSM activities, with full support and ongoing development by Alemba:

- **enhanced screen designer**, removing most requirements to customise and increasing control for the IT team
- **asset management module**, for managing software licensing
- **procurement process**, a powerful workflow builder to manage the allocation and purchase of new assets with the automatic creation of configuration items when they are delivered
- **automated problem management**, analytics to identify problems, resolve faults and improve the reliability of IT services to the Council
- **financial management**, applying costs to IT services for budgeting and cost control
- **workflow engine improvements**, removing the need for customisation and making workflow creation much simpler
- **service catalogue**, creating an IT ‘shop window’ for end users to request services and strengthening the IT division’s connection to the Council’s wider activities

For Bracknell Forest Council, the most notable feature of vFire v9.1. was the enhanced screen designer. The IT team had found it challenging to amend and customise forms in InfraEnterprise v8. The team found vFire 9.1 was more intuitive and reliable and have moved quickly to customise and personalise outgoing help desk emails, all of which is contributing to an improved IT service and better response levels from customers.

Another key enhancement was in the procurement process. Alemba made a valuable connection with the Council’s payroll system to capture the Council’s organisational structure.

This frees up the IT team from chasing approvals and instead puts vFire v9.1 to work in sending approval requests directly to the relevant line manager.

No ordinary upgrade

The Council wanted to maintain and build on the IT team's expertise with InfraEnterprise. Choosing vFire v9.1 enabled the team to roll out the upgrade with 'like for like' delivery giving them access to all the functionality that they were familiar with. With Alemba's support and training, the team would develop its use of the enhanced ITSM software.

Alemba's team regarded two phases of the upgrade as critical to the overall success of the upgrade:

- **Testing**

Alemba created a test environment for the IT team and Alemba's project team to work together in rigorously checking every aspect of vFire v9.1: new features, new layouts, incident management workflow, change management processes and regressive testing of tasks undertaken in earlier versions.

Alemba's positive response to feedback and liaison with the project team ensured that testing delivered the 'like for like' and customised features that the Council required.

- **Training**

vFire v9.1 extended the Council's ITSM capabilities in a number of ways. As well as enhancing its integration with other applications, it also put the IT team in the driving seat for developing the look and feel of its upgraded software.

Alemba's training proved itself to be effective and engaging in developing the IT team's ability to access and develop all of vFire's new and enhanced features:

- Service desk administrators and operators
- Workflow administrators and template design
- Core and advanced configuration management
- Knowledge Bank
- Managing requests and tasks
- Screen designer and report designer

Results to raise expectations

The Council's IT team had already experienced Alemba's reliable, committed and high quality approach to maintenance support. Alemba's vFire upgrade demonstrated a rigorous, professional approach to testing, training and delivering the successful project on time and on budget.

The quality of Alemba's support throughout the upgrade means that the Council's ITSM team of almost 80 people are confident users of vFire's enhanced range of features.

Robin Brown, recalls, *"We went live over a weekend. There weren't any major problems, everything worked. Once we enabled email, we were away and running with calls that had been forwarded over. The upgrade was painless and very smoothly done. From our point of view, it couldn't have gone any better and it has given us an opportunity to improve on the support we offer to our customers."*

Future developments

With vFire v9.1 in place, the IT team continues to extend its self service, helpdesk capabilities.

Targeting the IT users who were most comfortable with online services, the Council now plans to deploy vFire Portal and improve usage levels for logging calls and service requests.