

Oxford City Council

Enhancing public safety with a unified view



Name

Oxford City Council

Industry

Public Safety

Location

Oxford, United Kingdom

Products

Security Center, Omnicast, Federation

Partners

RJH Technical Consultancy



Oxford City Council transforms public safety with Genetec Security Center

Internationally renowned as one of the UK's most picturesque cities, Oxford welcomes around 7 million tourists every year. The city is home to over 150,000 residents, with 33,430 students enrolled for full-time studies across two universities. While Oxford has always been thriving, its public safety infrastructure was lagging far behind.

Evaluating new public safety technologies

Oxford City Council's (OCC) legacy analogue CCTV system had outlived its purpose and was proving expensive to maintain. Alongside several faults in the video management system, more than 50% of cameras in public spaces were down. The older technology could not support high-definition cameras and sourcing compatible hardware was becoming increasingly difficult. These limitations hampered the city's ability to assist the emergency services team during incident response.

Gwen Devine, Community Safety Officer at OCC knew it was time to move to a new physical security platform that could evolve in line with her Directorate's needs. She called in public safety consultancy RJH Technical Consultancy to specify a new system that could meet OCC's requirements.

The immediate priority was to add better quality camera coverage within some of OCC's existing managed housing estates. The OCC also wanted to be able to extend monitoring

to new locations as needed. Given the financial constraints, OCC needed to invest in a core system that could support a phased rollout and deployment.

"We were still using a system that was purchased 20 years ago," explains Roger Hardiman, RJH Technical Consultancy. "We needed to change everything because there was no point staying with analogue technology. We needed digital cameras, analytics, everything."

Investing in a unified security platform for increased visibility

Following consultation with surrounding local authorities, OCC identified Genetec™ Security Center as the best fit for its needs. The unified security platform not only combines video surveillance, access control, analytics, and other systems in one intuitive solution, but its open architecture allows organisations to freely expand and add technologies at their own pace. Knowing all this, the scope of the project quickly escalated as other Council departments bought into the modernisation plans.

Beyond the planned deployment in housing estates, the OCC expanded the use of Security Center to monitor the Oxford Indoor Market and all cameras within the public realm. OCC could also now deploy a range of panoramic and 360-degree cameras, easily viewing them through a single intuitive interface.

Later on, should the need arise, the team could further add functionality such as automatic number plate recognition or video analytics.

By choosing Genetec Security Center, OCC is reaping the benefits of a unified solution. Since security operators no longer have to move between computers or remember different system passwords to monitor various areas of the city, they are saving significant time and costs. They have also been able to reduce blind spots and achieve greater visibility over city operations.

Taking advantage of built-in bandwidth-saving features within Security Center, the OCC has been able to keep transferring video feeds from some housing estates to the control centre over existing broadband connections. This has eliminated the costs associated with having to install new fibre optic cables as part of the upgrade.

Discussions are also taking place to begin viewing video feeds using Security Center Web Client. This would increase resilience at the OCC, allowing the team to reallocate monitoring tasks to another control room should one be understaffed or taken offline.

“Genetec was the catalyst for all these changes” explains Gwen Devine. “Now that we have a platform that can link all these technologies, you can bring them all into one centralized view. That’s a huge step forward for an organisation such as ours.”

Supporting successful prosecution with better evidence

Deploying modern public safety technology has had a direct impact on OCC’s ability to respond to serious threats and catch criminals. Clearer images and streamlined processes for viewing, analysing, and sharing digital evidence have increased the chances for successful prosecutions.

In one case, the image quality was so clear that an accomplice to a violent crime was caught when trying to dispose of the weapon. Using Security Center, a skilled operator was able to track the individual as they departed the scene and bookmark the moment when they subtly dropped a knife to the floor.

“Genetec has helped to transform our operations and has given us a solid foundation from which to build,” says Gwen Devine. “A number of other Directorates and Services within OCC have already taken note and inspiration from what we’ve achieved.”



Making plans for increased county-wide collaboration

For the first time, Oxford has a public safety system that can continue to grow as needs change. One option that has been proposed to increase collaboration in the wider Oxfordshire area is deploying Genetec Federation™. This feature allows cities to get additional support by seamlessly sharing video feeds with another city’s control room.

Oxford is not the only one interested in seeing Security Center deployed in the surrounding areas. Moving forward, there is a desire to align the four big CCTV systems in Oxfordshire. The vision is to have a single control room, a hub for all CCTV operations in the county. This will further enhance efficiency by pooling staff to make the team greater than the sum of its parts.

If it goes ahead, operators would use the Genetec unified security platform to manage public safety across the entire county from one location, further simplifying operations, breaking down siloes, and reducing costs.

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