

# Connected councils: The age of the integrated platform



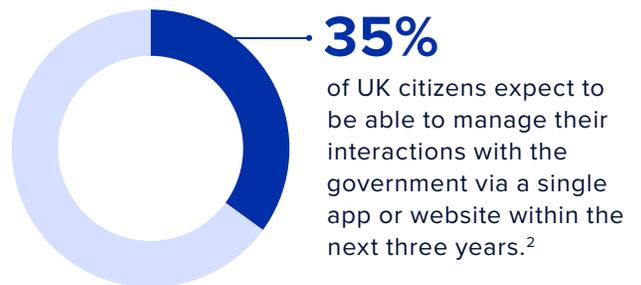
Why it pays for local authorities to deploy  
an integrated cloud phone and contact  
centre solution from a single vendor

# Introduction

Our local authorities have some tough decisions to make. Challenges with COVID-19 have led to substantial budget cuts in a time of much-needed support. Councils face scaling back services or shutting them down completely.

Despite budget pressures, local authorities remain focused on delivering better outcomes for residents, businesses, and communities. For example, some councils have improved accessibility to online services in the last five years. However, like the wider public sector, local authorities still have a long way to go. To challenge this head on, digital change must first be seen internally.

If you recently banked online, used WhatsApp, or checked your Gmail, you are a user of cloud technology. UK enterprises are adopting the cloud at a rapid pace through tools like Salesforce, Office 365, and Google Drive. By next year, 27% of global businesses will be using 2–9 cloud apps in conjunction.<sup>1</sup>



An IDC study found that **64%** of total global IT spending will be on cloud applications or cloud infrastructure by 2024.<sup>3</sup>

1. [RingCentral, Blueprint for Service Provider's UCaaS Strategy](#)

2. [Atos, Demanding Digital: Central Government in focus](#)

3. [IDC, Spending on Public Cloud IT](#)

## TOP REASONS FOR MOVING TO THE CLOUD

Among UK public sector organisations, the top reasons for moving to the cloud are:



**Improve business continuity (54%)**



**Enable remote working (45%)**



**Ease budget pressures (37%)**

“As local UK authorities realise the speed, flexibility, and cost savings offered by cloud technology, they have begun to move key business infrastructure into the cloud. It’s not surprising that cloud voice over IP (VoIP) phone systems and unified communications as a service (UCaaS) are experiencing phenomenal growth as well.” says Gareth Johns, Industry Principal, Public Sector, RingCentral UK.

The obvious benefit of UCaaS adoption is eliminating on-premises hardware. But that’s the tip of the iceberg. Beyond the obvious costs of hardware and monthly bills, it’s easy to overlook the hidden costs of a conventional phone system.

**The cloud optimises your council budgets and saves costs over on-premises phone systems—both obvious and hidden.**

- PBX hardware and initial software licence
- New phones
- PBX licensing and maintenance contracts, software/firmware/hardware upgrades
- PBX replacement and upgrade parts
- Telco connectivity: Voice PRI, Data Voice PRIs, SIP circuits
- Multi-location connectivity: MPLS, PSTN
- Telecom charges: mobile, national, international
- Standalone business services: internet fax, audio conferencing, etc.

These costs can exceed the large initial capital expense of hardware. The most significant hidden costs of an on-premises phone system include:

- **PBX upgrades and maintenance:** Network upgrades, licence fees, installation, and wiring add up quickly. Support personnel and upgrades are an additional expense.
- **Large telecom costs:** In addition to bonded T1s or other trunk lines to connect the PBX in your building to the local telco, you must add local, long distance, and 800 calling. More deeply hidden costs include the price of overprovisioning phone lines, and then continuing to pay for them.
- **Stand-alone services:** Separate bills for conference calling, video conferencing, web meetings, and internet fax through third-party vendors compound into high cost.
- **Cost and complexity of connecting locations:** Maintaining MPLS and associated hardware, PSTN, or other business exchange lines to meet the demands of bandwidth strains IT budgets.
- **Unpredictable cost and availability of future capabilities:** Each feature, service, or maintenance agreement can become an added cost to be negotiated and require risky manual upgrades.



Migrating to the RingCentral cloud can save from 30–70% on your total cost of ownership of your communications system.<sup>4</sup>

Moving PBX functionality to the cloud eliminates several costs of a business phone system.

For example, for organisations with multiple locations, a cloud phone system eliminates the need for costly trunk lines, PRIs, or bonded T1s from each business location to the telco.

Switching to an integrated vendor means the organisation no longer needs to pay for and manage multiple services, support providers, and telco relationships. It can also do away with stockpiles of spare line cards, media boards, and handsets at every location.

A cloud solution eliminates the need for trained staff at each location. Any IT person can add, move, or change lines and users without specific hardware or telephony know-how. All it takes is a smartphone to make selections on a simple browser-based interface.

For UK local authorities, **these cost savings can amount to 30% to 70%** or even more compared to a premises-based PBX system. [Read this Forrester study that illustrates how customers moving from on-premises PBX systems to the RingCentral cloud are saving an average of 42%.](#)

4. [Forrester: Total Economic Impact™ \(TEI\) of RingCentral](#)

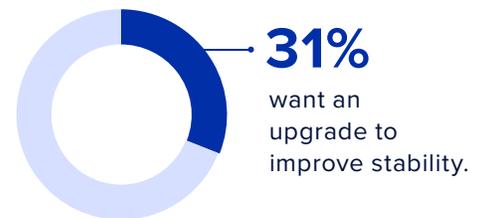
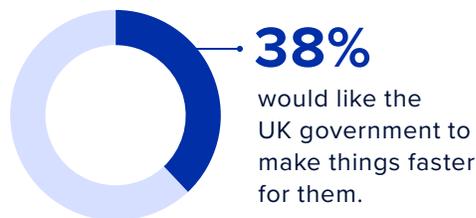
# Communications needs of today's local authorities

The proliferation of smartphones, tablets, and bring your own device (BYOD) has pushed legacy PBX systems beyond their capabilities.

**77%** of respondents in a Frost & Sullivan study cited support for their mobile workforces as a strong driver for adopting a hosted cloud communications solution.<sup>5</sup>

The cloud unifies a distributed workforce by making remote and mobile workers as effective as in-house staff. It also links workers at multiple locations by making it easy to provide capabilities such as direct extension dialling, transfers, and access to the company directory. Since all workers share the same virtual PBX, they all share the same phone system features and capabilities regardless of location.

## WHAT DO CITIZENS WANT FROM UK GOVERNMENT DIGITAL SERVICES?<sup>6</sup>



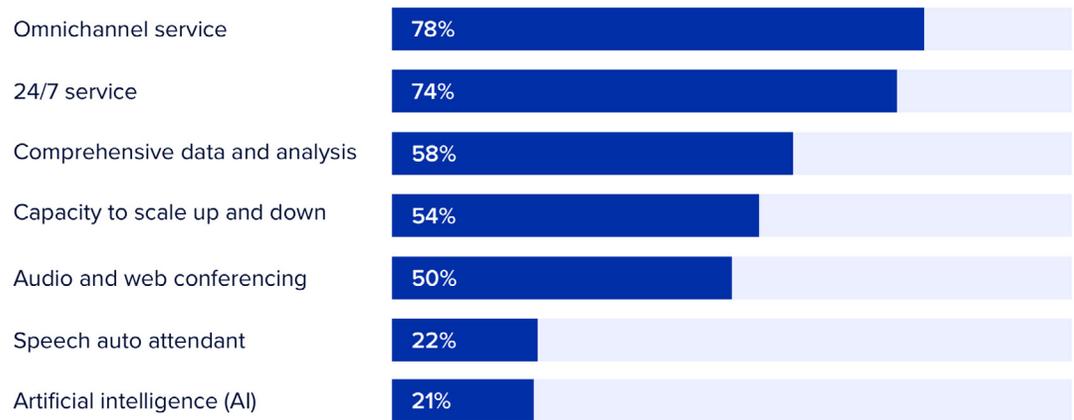
**44% of UK citizens are willing to try a new digital service from the UK government.<sup>7</sup>**

5. [RingCentral, Frost and Sullivan UCaaS Radar](#)

6. [Atos, Demanding Digital](#)

7. [Atos, Ibid](#)

**Which of the following factors are important in ensuring good customer service?<sup>8</sup>**



## **AN ALL-INCLUSIVE CLOUD SERVICE ELIMINATES THE COST AND COMPLEXITY OF STAND-ALONE SERVICES**

A cloud enterprise communications system further unifies voice, web, voice and video conferencing, fax, and text into a single platform. A careful comparison of an all-inclusive cloud solution

with an on-premises system could reveal the cost savings on stand-alone services like conferencing and web meetings may literally pay for the basic cloud phone service.

**38% of citizens expect to vote for a political party online in the next three years.<sup>9</sup>**

## **THE CLOUD OFFLOADS CURRENT AND FUTURE MANAGEMENT HEADACHES AND TECHNOLOGY RISKS FOR YOUR COUNCIL**

Hosted communications solutions not only move PBX functionality into the cloud but also its current and future management. According to Frost & Sullivan, “Hosted IP telephony offers enterprises access to converged telephony infrastructure at a lower cost, with the technology risk borne

by the service provider.”<sup>10</sup> In a well-designed hosted model, experts in secure data centers manage all systems and take care of all upgrades as well as availability, security, and compliance concerns. Users don’t have to benefit from the latest features as they are updated automatically and without cost.

## **THE CLOUD AUTOMATICALLY FAILS OVER TO REMOTE DATA CENTERS DURING A DISASTER**

The cloud’s remote data center model is superior for ensuring rapid disaster recovery and business continuity. Should a disaster strike one of your locations—think fire, flood, or a broken cable—the phones will keep ringing. Whether by

necessity or by choice, remote working employees can access the full functionality of the business phone system from anywhere with an internet connection.

8. [Opus, Unified Communications in the Public Sector](#)

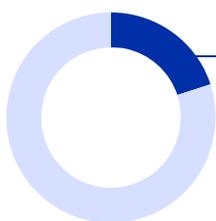
9. [Atos, Creating citizen-centric public services](#)

10. [Business BT, Why it pays to move your phone and contact centre system to the cloud](#)

# Integrated contact centre capabilities

When it comes to a contact centre experience, citizens have never been more impatient or more demanding. Today's digitally and socially wired residents also have the capability at their fingertips to instantly share a bad support experience with their friends or the entire country, which can cause widespread negative PR and media coverage.

## REASONS BUSINESSES MOVE OFF LEGACY SYSTEMS TO CLOUD CONTACT CENTRES<sup>11</sup>



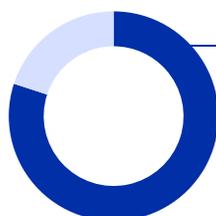
**20%**

First contact resolution is 20% improved when you migrate to a cloud contact centre.<sup>11</sup>

- Cost optimisation
- Decreased customer churn
- Increased CX
- Driving omnichannel strategy
- 3.2% improvement on compliance<sup>11</sup>

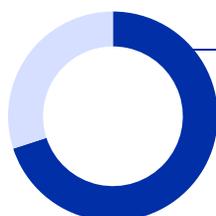
## CLOUD CONTACT CENTRES ARE BUILT WITH CX AND THE AGE OF INFORMATION IN MIND<sup>11</sup>

Businesses are:



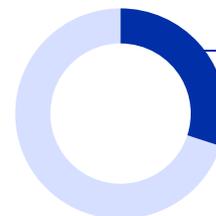
**80%**

more likely to use custom reporting when on a cloud contact centre.



**70%**

more likely to have integrations with their CRM when on a cloud contact centre.



**30%**

more likely to store activity information in a centralised data repository when on the cloud.

## QUANTIFIABLE BENEFITS OF CLOUD CONTACT CENTRE

- Decreased average handle time of calls
- Decreased customer churn
- Decreased amount of CX downtime
- Avoided wasted spend in ensuring peak capacity
- Avoided costs of old disaster recovery process

The critical need to keep pace with rising customer expectations explains why so many local councils are modernising their contact centres by moving to the cloud.

As with a cloud communications system, the cloud model eliminates steep upfront investments in on-premises hardware, software, and licences. It also speeds deployment and streamlines management and training. More importantly for IT—as well as IT budgets—it eliminates the cost and hair-pulling frustration of dealing with the complexity of SIP trunking, MPLS, and other telco connections. A cloud solution also makes it easier to scale up or down based on call flow, seasonality, or service expansion.

<sup>11</sup>. [Aberdeen, Creating Citizen-Centric Public Services](#)

## According to Gartner's recent Magic Quadrant for the Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) landscape, by 2022, CCaaS will be the preferred model of adoption for 50% of all contact centres.<sup>12</sup>

Legacy contact centre systems can't handle the latest multichannel engagement tools and tight integrations with clouds apps. This means organisations still running legacy systems struggle to keep up with customers' omnichannel communications expectations.



**53% of consumers would prefer to use online chat before calling a company on the phone.<sup>13</sup>**

Combining cloud contact centre and cloud phone from a single vendor provides multiple advantages:

### **TRANSFORMS SERVICE DELIVERY IN LOCAL COUNCILS**

While voice is still important, today's residents want to engage with council employees using the channels of their choice, including chat, email, and social media. Although many contact centre providers claim to enable this multichannel or omnichannel experience, it can be hard to deliver. Integrating a cloud contact centre and a cloud phone platform not only enables a seamless multichannel experience but also gives administrators visibility into how agents engage with customers over these various channels.

### **PROVIDES TRUE MOBILITY AND UBIQUITY**

A virtual PBX in the cloud is inherently superior for supporting mobile and distributed workers.

For UK councils seeking to control costs and attract the best talent, this means the choice of agents is no longer confined to specific locations. The benefits of this approach include:

- Talent sourcing in locations with lower costs of living
- Easier support for multiple languages
- Follow-the-sun support
- Ability to quickly and easily deploy virtual contact centre teams

12. [Gartner 2020 CCaaS predications](#)

13. [ICMI, The Stats Behind Chat: It's Popular And Growing](#)

## STREAMLINES MANAGEMENT AND REDUCES OPERATIONAL OVERHEAD

Deploying a cloud communications system that integrates contact centre capabilities offers huge advantages for your IT department. Systems engineered to work together across a single cloud architecture are less likely to fail. In the event of problems, you can go direct to your single communications

platform vendor for support. Upgrading to an integrated solution eliminates the risk of downtime due to the incompatibility of an upgrade from any of the various vendors that are typically cobbled together in a conventional approach.

## IMPROVES AGENT EFFICIENCY AND HELPS MANAGERS MEET SLAS

A single communications system provides a unified desktop that connects to internal knowledge systems, empowering agents to resolve calls quicker and increase customer satisfaction and service delivery. The single solution can also integrate multiple modes of communication; from a customer support call, an agent could initiate a web meeting via the cloud phone system to share screens to help resolve a query.

The mobility and flexibility provided by the cloud allows managers to structure contact centre workflows around their business needs—rather than vice versa. An integrated solution allows simple direct-dial transfers between departments in different geographic areas. The manager or team leader has a view of which agents are available to take calls, which helps to avoid missed calls or calls going directly to voicemail, reducing frustration for callers.

## LOWERS OPEX AND CAPEX—UPFRONT COST SAVINGS

As with a cloud phone system, eliminating the need for on-premises call centre hardware, software, and licences—as well as maintenance, repair, and updates—is often cited as a key benefit of cloud solutions for local authorities. Deploying a cloud contact centre on top of a cloud phone system offers a number of additional cost savings:

- **Hot-desking without investment in additional hardware:** A combined cloud contact centre and cloud phone system allows employees to either log in to a shared phone or simply plug in a phone from another location. That mobility saves the cost of office space without the need to invest in additional hardware.
- **Elasticity:** Combining a scalable phone system and a scalable contact centre makes it easy to cover temporary demand. It allows you to quickly add or subtract agents to accommodate service growth, specific campaigns, or seasonal variation. With a cloud contact centre based on a subscription model, the council pays only for what it uses. This offers users a more predictable cost structure and avoids investments in phones or other equipment to meet short-term needs.
- **BYOD:** A secure enterprise-class mobile app that transforms a smartphone into a business phone allows local authorities to safely piggyback employee devices. For councils deploying virtual agents, this makes it possible to eliminate the cost of paying for a phone line or providing a council-owned mobile phone to a remote agent. Meanwhile, IT maintains control over all data associated with mobile endpoints, even employee-owned devices.
- **Softphones:** Agents can simply plug a headset into a desktop computer or laptop and make and receive calls with the click of a mouse. As with using a mobile app on a smartphone, this capability can save significantly on the costs of phone equipment required to support agents.
- **Superior business continuity and disaster recovery:** Being able to support mobile and distributed workforces must be a key component of any post-pandemic strategy. A cloud-based communications platform provides remote access and facilitates productivity through integrations with other business applications like CRM and project management tools.

# Conclusion

Connected councils harness the power of the cloud and drive operational efficiencies by doing so.

Residents' expectations of their local councils have soared. People are familiar with the use of smartphones and tablets to perform tasks and communicate, and they expect local councils to keep pace. Ian Finley, Managing Vice President at Gartner, estimates that by harnessing mobile apps, local authorities could reach more than 90% of citizens, compared to 30–40% with web-based applications.<sup>14</sup>

Benefits like cost savings, flexibility, and superior disaster recovery—to name a few—are driving the widespread adoption of cloud communications and cloud contact centre solutions across local authorities. Outdated premises-based PBX hardware can no longer adequately serve the communications needs of remote and distributed workforces. Likewise, legacy

premises-based call centre systems lack seamless support for today's must-have capabilities such as multichannel communications.

Combining the best of both clouds offers local UK councils a number of advantages, from deploying remote contact centre agents to saving costs through consolidation. Combining these critical business functions in an integrated cloud solution from a single vendor can streamline management and support new features and capabilities. It also allows IT leaders, contact centre operators, and line managers to focus on priorities such as workforce management and service delivery.



**Combining these functions in an integrated cloud solution from a single vendor can streamline management and support new features and capabilities.**

14. [PressReader, How mobile apps are helping the public sector](#)

# About RingCentral

Our expertise is more than just cloud. RingCentral can strengthen the link between local government, small businesses, and UK residents to allow for greater collaboration, problem solving, and benefit sharing between all three. RingCentral is a 5x Leader in the UCaaS Gartner Magic Quadrant, recognised for our industry-leading technology, manageability, and reliability. We have over 20 years' experience implementing, managing, and improving mission-critical cloud communications for customers across all sectors and have helped over 400,000 customers and millions of users migrate to the cloud.

RingCentral integrates with your already familiar apps and services such as Microsoft Office, Outlook, Teams, Google Workspace, Google Chrome, Jira, and more. Our celebrated customer onboarding and end-to-end migration support is notable to our success in the UK. RingCentral has the cloud migration expertise to help define a viable path to the cloud for your government applications and data. We are on the G-Cloud framework and RM3808 (Network Services 2) certified and can offer UK data localisation as well.

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For more information, please contact a sales representative. Visit [ringcentral.co.uk](https://ringcentral.co.uk) or call 0800 098 8136.

RingCentral, Inc. (NYSE: RNG) is a leading provider of unified communications (message, video, phone), customer engagement, and contact centre solutions for businesses worldwide. More flexible and cost-effective than legacy on-premises PBX and video conferencing systems that it replaces, RingCentral empowers modern mobile and distributed workforces to communicate, collaborate, and connect via any mode, any device, and any location. RingCentral's open platform integrates with leading third-party business applications and enables customers to easily customise business workflows. RingCentral is headquartered in Belmont, California, and has offices around the world.