A competitive public sector tender and multisite network optimisation

ARO case study

About ARO

ARO is a reseller and MSP (Managed Service Provider) that delivers sustainable IT solutions through cloud technology.

Known for its technical innovations, the company has a long history of public sector and local authority work, building complex cloud and network solutions served from its tier-three data centres.

ARO's headquarters are in Liverpool, with eight more offices across the UK.

The project

ARO competed for a complex local government project in a metropolitan borough in the north of England.

Having won the tender, the company faced a complex set of challenges in the process of replacing and optimising the client's network.

This was the first collaboration between Virgin Media Business Wholesale and ARO.

Virgin Media Business Wholesale collaborated with ARO from early in the tender, not only providing a high-quality network but engaged and strategic partnership.

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> **Virgin Media Business Wholesale provided a dedicated team that delivered solutions, provided expert support and kept us informed. That was invaluable to us – they were available and on hand at every stage of the project, and our companies collaborated like one team. I believe that was the ultimate reason we won the tender.**
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> Chris Appleton,
> Senior Business Development Manager, ARO.

The challenge: serving complex optimisation to a busy borough council

A large northern metropolitan borough council, whose cloud services deployed from ARO's data centre, wished to optimise their ageing IPVPN (Internet Protocol Virtual Private Network). The organisation needed security, ease of deployment and lower future costs.

Three major factors pushed the council to act swiftly:

- Repair works were scheduled on their existing IPVPN.

- The organisation was about to shift from on-premises data storage to cloud.

- ARO had become convinced of the advantages of moving to SD-WAN (Software-Defined Wide Area Network).

In 2024, the council decided to replace their IPVPN network with SD-WAN and released a formal tender through a government framework.
Many companies competed for the project, including the incumbent.

Commercial and technical elements were crucial to winning the tender, as were strong pitch materials and effective collaboration between ARO and Virgin Media Business Wholesale.

When ARO won the tender, the challenges of the project shifted:

- ARO needed to manage a complex network optimisation, replacing IPVPN with SD-WAN and introducing new hardware

- A change in contract partners inevitably raises the risk of delivery challenges

- ARO needed to shift the client from on-premises data storage to cloud as part of the project

- All of this had to be done with minimal disruption to the busy council

A final challenge was the speed of the project, as ARO needed to transition the council off their end-of-life IPVPN as quickly as possible.

The solution: leveraging mutual strengths

ARO partnered with Virgin Media Business Wholesale at the start of the tender.

Their primary reasons were pragmatic; we had network ready in the area, a product that matched the client's requirements for security with scalability and speeds of 100-500Mbps.

However, they soon realised that our collaborative, hands-on approach was the greatest asset to this project.

We designed a bespoke commercial framework and service wrap, provided strong digital expertise and collaborated along with ARO and SD-WAN provider Fortinet on writing the bid.

We also attended client meetings and conducted impact assessments at the client's POP (Point of Presence).

Alongside ARO, we pitched a full replacement of the client's IPVPN network. The new network would deliver to 48 sites with wires-only SD-WAN and DIA (Dedicated Internet Access).

Once ARO won the tender, we supported the network optimisation with a dedicated team responsible for tracking progress, ensuring timely delivery and providing updates at every stage of the process.

The results: a powerful tender, a well-run project

Working together closely, ARO, Fortinet and Virgin Media Business Wholesale created a powerful tender bid, meeting the borough council's ambitions for security, speed, scalability, and cost-saving, as well as their social and community goals.

ARO proposed a new dedicated converged infrastructure within their new data centre, so the client could avoid the cost of expensive new hardware. The solution was designed to be co-managed, and it incorporated a new SD-WAN setup supported by Fortinet.

The pitch was a success, and the council awarded the project to ARO. The reseller had beat out numerous larger competitors.

Because we provided competitive pricing and churn allowance, ARO was able to keep costs down and maintain control of finances, benefitting the business and its ability to invest in growth.

ARO reported that undertaking a project of this magnitude in the public sector created increased opportunities and reputational benefits for their company.

ARO and Virgin Media Business Wholesale are planning to work on new projects together in the future, using this one as a blueprint.

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We couldn't have hoped for a better project partner than Virgin Media Business Wholesale. The team were collaborative, experienced, capable and developed deep knowledge about our business.

This job wasn't just a success for ARO, it opened new doors in terms of access to valuable large-scale public service projects.

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Matt Johnson,
Technical Director (Specialist Data Centre Services), ARO.