



# CASE STUDY

## WOLVERHAMPTON HOMES UPGRADES RESIDENT SERVICES

Founded in 2005, Wolverhampton Homes is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) which manages and maintains more than 23,500 properties on behalf of The City of Wolverhampton Council. The organisation is responsible for letting the homes, collecting rent and other charges, repairing the properties and delivering the Government's 'Decent Homes' programme. Wolverhampton Homes was one of the first ALMOs in the country to be given a three-star 'excellent' company rating (Audit Commission, 2010) and the Stonewall Top 100 employers in 2017.

### The Challenge

In order to provide an even higher level of service for residents, Wolverhampton Homes wanted to centralise the concierge services that were currently dispersed across the city. This would require the connection of all high and low rise tower blocks to a new centralised control room at Stowlawn from where a more efficient service could be provided.

In addition, the organisation wanted to improve security by standardising on the latest access control systems and deploying CCTV in strategic locations at these properties. There was also a requirement to reduce ongoing costs by moving away from the high cost fibre optic leased lines and install a future-proofed infrastructure that would accommodate all its needs, both now and in the future

### The Solution

OpenView proposed the installation of an IP-based wireless backbone to connect the properties to the Stowlawn control room and enable Wolverhampton Homes to make significant savings by eliminating the high monthly



costs of leased lines from BT. Openview deployed multiple teams to handle the different aspects of the project to ensure that it was completed on a timely basis.

One of the teams installed roof-based hardware, bracketry and cabling to equipment rooms located in each property. This included Siklu mmWave EH-500TX and EH-2500TX radios that provide up to 2Gbps full duplex point-to-point wireless Ethernet connectivity, enabling the delivery of a highly scalable and resilient network infrastructure with fibre-like performance.

A second team fitted out the interiors of each property including all door furniture and glass. GDX Indigo door entry systems were installed to provide secure resident and visitor access management. These systems were connected to the IP infrastructure at each location enabling immediate communications with the central control room. Each door panel featured an integrated camera to transmit clear visitor images to this central facility even in low light levels and an inbuilt proximity reader enabled residents to be issued with key fobs to enhance access.

CCTV cameras, both static and PTZ, were installed in strategic locations including main entrances and exits, lifts, stairwells and corridors. Each camera was equipped with an encoder enabling it to transmit images over the new IP network.

OpenView also built an equipment room at each tower block location where all required communications equipment, including Cisco SG200 switches and Synectics Synergy Pro digital video recording (DVR) systems, were installed. IP-based smoke detectors, Honeywell Galaxy intruder alarms and CCTV cameras were added to protect each of the rooms.

### **Control Room**

The third team built and equipped the new control room at Stowlawn from the ground up to meet design plans drawn up by an independent consultant employed by Wolverhampton Homes. This included furniture, carpeting, lighting, electrics, air conditioning and security.

At the heart of the control room was a Synectics SynergyPro video management system which provided a centralised command and control console and management suite offering high levels of integration with third party products.

A video wall was also installed comprising twenty eight screens and five workstations to monitor over 850 locations across Wolverhampton. Operators at each of these workstations were equipped with three screens, one for the concierge service, one for the GDX door entry and access control platform and another to access the council's Northgate Portal to log tenant job requests. An additional workstation was provided to manage the telecare service provided to vulnerable residents.

### **Proactive Approach**

OpenView delivers a consistently high level of response to every request for assistance and works closely in partnership with Wolverhampton Homes. For example, the company designed a cost effective solution to resolve an issue with a water tank room at the top of one of the tower blocks which had a tendency to overflow causing flooding to the floors below. OpenView installed water sensors in the tank room that sent alerts to the central control room in the event of an overflow. Using the wireless network, relays were also installed in the pump room located around 200 metres to automatically stop the flow of water when an alert was received from the tank room sensors.

More recently, Wolverhampton Homes wanted to find a better way to communicate with residents than manual leaflet drops which were both costly and time consuming in terms of manpower resources. OpenView suggested the installation of a new breed of digital noticeboards which can display essential information including maintenance, weather forecasts, events, meetings and local news. The noticeboards use GSM technology eliminating the need to connect to the IP backbone and can be updated remotely in real-time using any internet-enabled device.

### **Ongoing Upgrades**

The network infrastructure has not stood still since it was first installed in 2012 and there has been an ongoing upgrade programme to ensure that it continues to meet Wolverhampton Homes' evolving needs. The IP-based wireless backbone has been upgraded to 2 GB to ensure sufficient bandwidth to handle the increasing transmission requirements and provide capacity for future growth.

The control room has also been upgraded to the latest Synergy 3 video management system which provides Wolverhampton Homes with higher levels of resilience, compliance and future proofing with lower running costs. OpenView has also upgraded the CCTV network to the latest ONVIF-compliant Synectics HD IP cameras.

Andy Ward, Director of Sales at OpenView, commented: "This ongoing project demonstrates our proactive approach to embracing the latest technologies and providing the housing sector with turnkey solutions that enable the delivery of a higher level of services to residents."

OpenView also provides comprehensive levels of ongoing support including planned and preventative maintenance and emergency cover for the IT infrastructure and all installed systems, including doors and door furniture, in around 800 low rise blocks. The company delivers the highest level of ongoing support, achieving over 98% of KPIs which include a four-hour response for all urgent calls.