

People First, Technology Second

A human-centred approach to transformation readiness in local government

Conwy County Borough Council • APSE & Socitm Digital Futures Forum (APSE Wales AGM)



Conwy - Sir flaengar sy'n creu cyfleoedd

Conwy - a progressive County creating opportunity

About this session

Conwy County Borough Council's Transformation Discovery Programme — what it is, and what it isn't

1

What

Structured, evidence-led conversations with every Head of Service across the council — twelve in total.

2

Why

Not a technology audit. A human-centred look at pain points, friction, and readiness to change, before we talk about tools.

3

Today

How we ran it, what showed up almost everywhere, and where it points next — the approach, not a scorecard.

Technology is not the starting point

“Transformation is not a technology programme. It is a commitment to redesign services around people.

Removing friction, unlocking better decisions, and focusing on what truly matters. Done well, it creates services that are not only more efficient, but more human: responsive, intuitive, and built to continuously improve.”

Transformation Discovery Programme



The approach

1

Structured discovery sessions

One-to-one conversations with every Head of Service. Evidence-led, not survey-led.

2

A dual framework

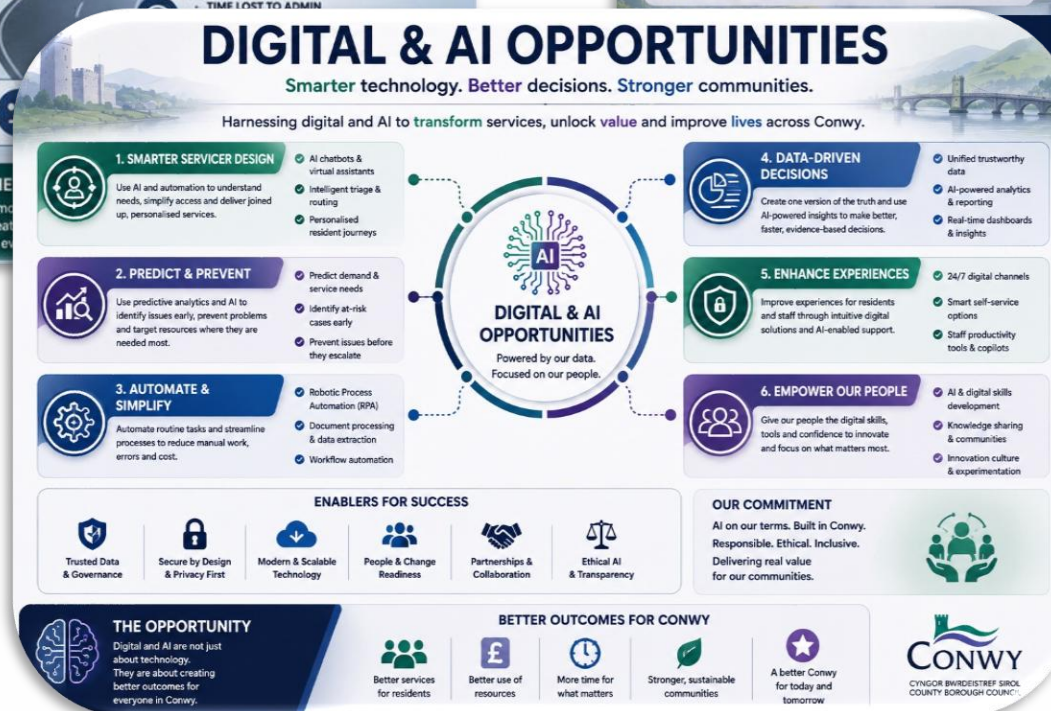
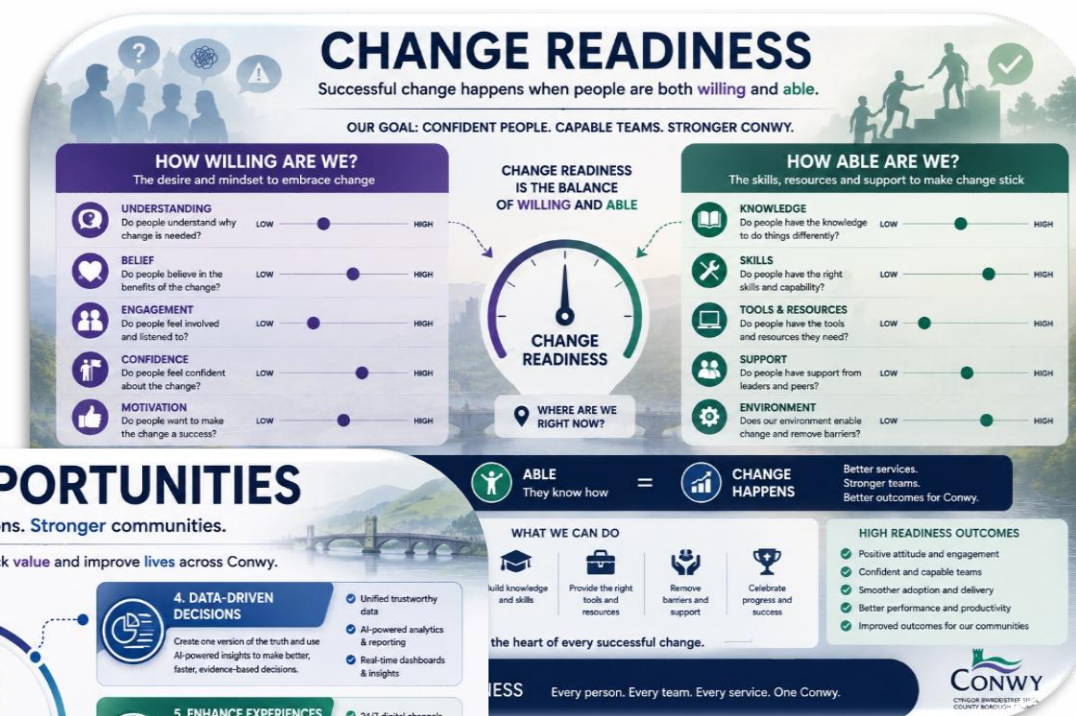
Findings mapped through human-centred design alongside a PESTLE scan of the wider operating context.

3

Synthesis, not scorecards

Patterns that recur across services are treated as organisational issues, not individual service failings.

Three questions



Barriers to digital transformation

None of these are unique to one authority — they can show up almost anywhere you look

1

Fragmented systems

Many services, many systems, none of them talking to each other.

2

Reactive capacity

Day-to-day demand leaves little room for improvement work.

3

Data culture

Data protection is often a default to caution, not a genuine legal block.

4

Governance lagging adoption

Enthusiasm for AI is outpacing the frameworks meant to guide it.

Spotlight: fragmentation and data culture

Systems that don't talk

Multiple line-of-business systems across services, none sharing a common integration layer.

Manual re-keying and individually built workarounds fill the gaps — and become single points of failure.

GDPR

Data protection law is cited far more often than it actually blocks activity.

Usually reflects caution and precedent, not a genuine legal constraint. Unblocking it is a leadership task, not just a compliance one.

Spotlight: capacity and pace

Reactive work crowds out strategic work

Across services, the bulk of officer time goes into keeping the lights on, not improving how things work.

Willingness to change is rarely the constraint, capacity to act is.

Governance racing to catch up

AI tools are already in use, often ahead of any formalised organisation-wide governance framework.

The goal isn't to slow adoption, it's to make it safe, consistent, and accountable.

Innovation focus areas: a shared framework

Six themes that consistently organise the opportunities we found — individually useful, and designed to work as a set



Focus areas: contact, assets, and data

1

Every Resident, the Right Door

An AI-assisted triage model that routes routine enquiries automatically, general queries to a trained officer, and complex matters to the right specialist.



UNLOCKS

Frontline capacity shifts from repetitive contact-handling to complex, resident-facing casework.

2

Fixing It Before It Breaks

Predictive, condition-based maintenance for roads, buildings and other assets. Predictive modelling for housing and social care to predict demand. All using data the council already holds.



UNLOCKS

Lower emergency spend, and engineering time freed for planned improvement work.

3

One Version of the Truth

A shared data and integration layer connecting systems that currently don't talk to each other, replacing fragmented, manual reporting.



UNLOCKS

A common, trustworthy data foundation that every other focus area depends on.

Focus areas: AI, capability, and capacity

1

AI on Our Terms

An AI governance framework built ahead of scaled adoption — human verification before any consequential decision.



UNLOCKS

Faster, more confident AI adoption, without the legal and reputational risk of ungoverned use.

2

Built In Conwy

Backing and formalising the council's own tool-building capability, rather than defaulting to external procurement.



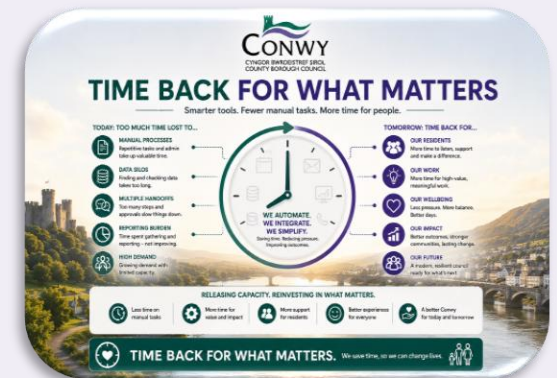
UNLOCKS

Cheaper, faster, more controllable delivery — capability that compounds with every tool built.

3

Time Back for What Matters

Systematically automating the highest-volume, lowest-value administrative tasks that consume officer time.



UNLOCKS

The capacity dividend that funds every other focus area — without cutting headcount.

Together, they compound



Not six separate projects — a wheel where each spoke strengthens the next, and each turn moves forward

Diolch - Any questions?