



Telford & Wrekin  
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest  
to create a better borough

# ‘Ask Tom’

## Applying digital solutions efficiently & effectively

Gemma Hancox

Customer Contact Group Manager



# Why...

- Recognition that residents and businesses need and expect 24/7 access to services
- Successful introduction of web chat
- Launched our My Telford app
- Extensive digital platform with over 250 intuitive web forms
- Where next....

# How....

- Products available
- Demo's
- Spoke with other Local Authorities
- Project/turnaround
- The name!



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# How...

- Sign posting for website
- Common questions made into hint cards
- Phone messaging
- My Telford
- Social Media



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# Success...

- 13,500 queries
- Live in over 16 services and adding all the time
- 4 new services into the contact centre at no extra cost
- 33% out of hours contact
- 99% Customer Satisfaction
- Ability to add knowledge easily and quickly (Flooding, Council tax Rebate)
- Longest wait time's reduced by 20%



# Success...

18/19 – 22/23

21% reduction in total call volumes

➤ Resulting in 4 new services

42% reduction in Neighbourhood Services calls

➤ 25% increase in reports online

22% reduction in Highways calls

➤ 56% increase in reports online

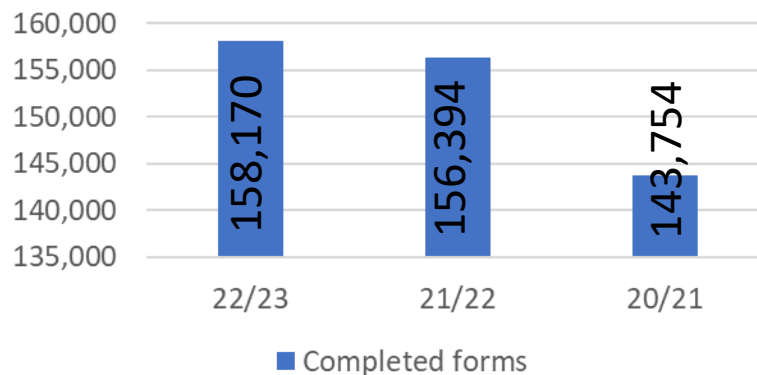
50% reduction in HB and CTR calls

24% reduction in Switchboard calls

38% increase in Change of Address reporting online

69% Reduction in webchat

Top 10 completed web forms



# The Future...

- Assistant led automation
- Voice digital assistant
- Generative AI
- 43% deflection of inbound calls



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# Power of Digital

Understanding new technology in local government





# The purpose of the report

## *Problems:*

- Training staff to be proficient with new technology
- Accessibility and inclusivity for residents
- Procurement routes
- Cyber security
- Performance monitoring



# The purpose of the report

## *Objectives:*

1. Paint an accurate picture of the challenges and opportunities facing local authorities on the issue of technological and digital adaptation.
2. Showcase examples of best practice across the sector.
3. Make recommendations on what councils should consider when designing digital strategies.
4. Develop an A-Z List of digital and technology terms you need to know.



## Methodology

- APSE conducted two online roundtables of our local authority members.
- Ran an online survey.
- Data used to inform this state of the market has been collected from 121 individual members of the UK local government workforce, across more than twenty different service areas, representing 90 UK local authorities.



## Results at a glance

### What do you see as the barriers to improving your digital/new technology capacity?

Funding	83%
Lack of skills	61%
Councillors are resistant because they don't want to exclude groups such as older people	26%

### How well do you think the technology works for your frontline service?

Good / OK	67%
Could be improved	32%

### Thinking about your use of data, how is this collected and used?

(agree / agree somewhat)

Data is collected at a service level	91%
Data is collected corporately	58%

### Thinking about cyber risks, how do you feel about risk to your service/organisation?

(High / medium risk)

Misinformation	46%
Malware	38%

### How has your workforce adapted to digital/new technologies?

(agree / agree somewhat)

Some of our traditional workers have struggled to adapt	85%
Our workforce feels life is made easier by the changes	72%

## Case studies in excellence



### Digital Inclusion Programme Bradford Council

As part of its Digital Strategy 2022-27, Bradford Council conducted a needs assessment to identify the specific needs and challenges of more vulnerable citizens, including those who are elderly, disabled, or economically disadvantaged. A team of Digital Inclusion Officers has been created to help deliver on the targets of the Council's Programme.



### Land Audit Management System (LAMS) APSE Performance Networks

LAMS is a quality inspection system to monitor grounds maintenance and/or street cleansing. The app allows frontline service teams to measure the quality of their own localities, and at the same time benchmark their data against other local authorities. Used by 62 authorities across the UK. Telford and Wrekin Council has described the System as *"Easy to use and a lot quicker than paper... you get the exact location and pictures to back the grading up."*



### Helpdesk staff help tackle skills shortage Walsall Council

Walsall Council is tackling skills shortages by hiring service desk staff who have transferrable skills, providing them with training then encouraging them to apply for bigger jobs. In 2022, Walsall saw 22 of its digital and technology service team successfully applying for new roles, with three-quarters of those moving having started on the service desk.



### Using machine learning to support business rates collection Belfast City Council

During a two-week trial, two companies used machine learning to identify previously uncollected business rates for the Council to the value of approximately £500,000. The technology identified properties listed as vacant but occupied, new businesses that have just opened, as well as domestic properties operating as non-domestic.



### Halving bin visits by using 'fill-level' sensor technology Derby City Council

This technology monitors how fast the bin is filling and provides an alert when the bin needs emptying. By cutting out these unnecessary trips and emptying bins only when they were needed, the Council reduced the number of visits to bins by 53%. *See page 42 for more information.*

## Five recommendations

### Recommendation 1

Leadership teams in local government, both officers and elected members, need to recognise that the 'Power of Digital' is reflected at a corporate and service level, embedding a culture of embracing new technologies to support service improvements.



## Five recommendations

### Recommendation 2

Our research finds that the use of new technology and the 'Power of Digital' is embraced when it is viewed through the prism of supporting people to do their jobs better, rather than a threat to the overall workforce.



## Five recommendations

### Recommendation 3

Local councils provide services across a broad spectrum of the local population. Digital solutions should always enhance accessibility in an inclusive way and should be tested to ensure people at a local level are not excluded from service access by untested technologies and systems. Test, test and test again.





## Five recommendations

### Recommendation 4

Invest to save. As highlighted in our research case studies, the right technology can improve services, create efficiencies and improve productivity. Investing in the 'Power of Digital' should not be viewed as a drain on resources but a means to future-proof services, generate improvements in productivity and service standards, and enhance the customer experience for local residents.



## Five recommendations

### Recommendation 5

Local councils should make use of local networks within APSE and Socitm to share best practice at an operational and corporate level and engage with suppliers for demonstrator sessions so that new technologies can be tested, and refined before heavy investments are made. Consider collaborating with other local authorities on digital solutions.



## Next steps...

Both APSE and Socitm hope this report is the first in a series of many, and will open up further opportunities to share best practice amongst our local government peers.



# Thank you for your time!

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Organisation  
Platinum

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## The Power of Digital

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