



## Digital Experts Programme

### Providing smart phone and tablet access to e-forms at Cannock Chase and Stafford Borough Councils – case study update

#### Background to the project

Stafford Borough Council and Cannock Chase Council were seeking to provide their residents with a more cost-efficient and convenient means of carrying out their business with their councils by offering them the ability to make service requests via online forms and smartphone Apps, rather than having to phone or make a visit.

This reflected Cannock Chase's findings in 2015 that 56 per cent of people accessing the council's website did so via tablet devices and smartphones – a rapid rise in recent years and an indication that the local populations seemed more than ready to carry out their business with the councils using Apps.

Building on their existing shared services arrangements, which covered functions such as IT, HR, Revenues and Finance, the two councils put in a joint bid for funding from the LGA's Digital Experts programme to replicate in Cannock Chase Council the e-forms software Stafford Borough Council was already using. The new software included an option to offer these e-forms in the shape of a smartphone App available on Android, Apple and Blackberry platforms.

The project funding purchased the software for Cannock Chase and also paid for the conversion of their existing online forms into the new hosted solution that offered the ability to offer the forms as an App for smartphones and tablets. A final tranche of the funding was to pay for the integration of e-payments functionality into the forms at both Stafford Borough and Cannock Chase Councils.

## The position in Spring 2016

The software was purchased in May 2015 and by July 2015 the list of e-forms at Cannock Chase that would be converted had been agreed and prioritized. By September, 32 forms covering 65 different service requests had been completed and tested. The formal launch of the forms took place later that month to coincide with the relaunch of the council's website.

The next step was to make the forms available in the form of an App for smartphones and tablets. Testing took place in December and the App became available on Android in February 2016 and on Apple platforms in March 2016. The councils chose not to release the App on Blackberry devices because of limited volumes. The e-payments element of the project was delayed as a result of county-wide discussion with the current service provider.

In the first 5 months after the release of the e-forms in Cannock Chase, there were a total of 468 service reports/requests made via the e-forms system on the website.

		Sept 2015 - Feb 2016
e-Forms via PC / – web browser	Report It	345
	Request It	123
e-Forms via Apple OS App	Report It	5
	Request It	
e-Forms via Android OS App	Report It	
	Request It	
e-Forms via Apple OS – web browser	Report It	5
	Request It	
e-Forms via Android OS – web browser	Report It	
	Request It	

Although these numbers were small, they did represent a six-fold increase in the number of forms submitted via the Cannock Chase website. If we assume that each completed form replaced a call to the contact centre, this produced an estimated saving of around £1,250 by the time of the initial case study.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Socitm has estimated the cost of each telephone call at £2.83 and each online transaction at £0.15

Our original case study and vox pops can be found at  
[http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/productivity/-/journal\\_content/56/10180/6357119/ARTICLE](http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/productivity/-/journal_content/56/10180/6357119/ARTICLE)

## The position in Autumn 2016

By the time of this update, the two councils were in a position to demonstrate potential cost savings through reduced or avoided contact of around £30,000, plus a further £20,000 to £25,000 of annual efficiencies. These figures are broken down as follows:

### *Online contact at Cannock Chase*

Activity around the e-forms at Cannock Chase has continued to increase, as the table below illustrates.

Channel	Service	Sept 15 – Feb 16	Mar 2016	Apr 2016	May 2016	Jun 2016	Jul 2016	Aug 2016	Sep 2016	Oct 2016
e-Forms via PC / – web browser	Report It	345	94	68	97	83	52	54	48	40
	Request It	123	51	29	35	35	47	33	34	42
	Waste Services	-	-	-	815	958	768	733	816	1074
e-Forms via Apple OS App	Report It	5	7	3	6	0	0	0	1	3
	Request It		1	2	2	0	2	0	2	2
	Waste services						0	2	1	1
e-Forms via Android OS App	Report It		6	1	13	2	1	2	1	1
	Request It		1	0	27	0	2	3	5	2
	Waste services						0	0	0	0
e-Forms via Apple OS – web browser	Report It	5	7	3	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Request It		0	2	2	0	0	0	0	1
	Waste services						0	0	0	0
e-Forms via Android OS – web browser	Report It		6	1	17	2	4	0	1	6
	Request It		1	0	14	7	4	23	12	5
	Waste services						3	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>478</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>1028</b>	<b>1087</b>	<b>884</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>1177</b>

In particular, the use of e-forms for waste services has taken off dramatically since May 2016. The use of mobile and tablet devices to report issues or request services remains relatively limited for the Apple platform but is showing more activity on Android devices.

By applying the same financial assumptions as in the original case study, and including reports and requests received from mobile or tablet devices, the period from September 2015 to October 2016 inclusive, the councils had avoided 6704 contacts via other channels, creating an estimated saving of just under £18,000.

#### *Online contact at Stafford*

There has been a similar impact in Stafford from the continuing use of e-forms and the introduction of the App.

Telephone contact volumes through the CRM during 2015 totalled 14594. During 2016 the level of telephone contact reduced to 13325, a decrease of 1359. Applying the standard Socitm cost models, this suggests a saving of over £3,500.

Meanwhile, 7196 contacts came via the App in 2016. Even if we assume the full reduction in telephone calls (1359) had shifted across to the App, this still gives us an increased contact volume of 5837. If only half of this increased volume had come in via telephone, the additional cost avoided by deploying the App is in the region of £8,000.

Overall, then, the council has potentially benefited from cost savings or avoidance of around £11,500.

#### *Mobile working at Stafford*

Stafford is a mainly rural area with two large conurbations of Stafford and Stone. Utilising functionality within the new system, and working with the supplier, Stafford introduced an integrated mobile worker module to their StreetScene service. This allows the service to deal with requests, such as fly tipping, in the field without any additional front or back-office interventions.

Requests are automatically routed to the most appropriate team based on the location of the incident. They can also be raised, actioned and closed by operatives if they see an unreported incident.

The module is integrated with the CRM and Civica back-office systems. This accommodates requests raised through any of the customer contact channels including the App.

A substantial benefit has been achieved by using this module including:

- An estimated saving of between £10,000 to £15,000 per annum on the purchase and running of a back-office application
- Greater efficiency in responding to customers' requests
- Operatives are able to spend more time in the field
- Reduced travel time
- Some channel shift reducing calls to the contact centre
- More accurate reporting of service workload and effort.

It is intended to share this module with Cannock Chase.

### *Waste Management at Cannock Chase*

As a result of outsourcing its waste management services, Cannock Chase needed to procure a back-office system to manage the client side of the service.

The investment secured via the Digital Experts programme helped to provide the means to develop a module which delivers service request capture, case management and reporting functions. Customers can request a service across all access channels and be kept informed of its progress automatically.

This has made an estimated ongoing annual saving of £10,000 which would have been needed for a new back-office system.

## The future

As for the future, the two councils are continuing to integrate their e-forms into their back-office systems and those of their partners (for instance, their waste contractor).

Cannock Chase has carried out a broad marketing exercise for the App and featured it in the council's autumn 2016 citizens' newsletter which went to every property in the district. Stafford has advertising on all refuse and Streetscene vehicles.

Meanwhile, the e-payments element of the project had now entered a test phase with the target of going live in mid-December 2016.

## Contact for further information

For further information on this project, please contact:

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