

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR

It's all connected: a story about how software can connect people, things, and processes to serve the wellbeing of our communities

Most people in Scotland who pay Council tax, either as homeowners or tenants, are very conscious of the value of the pounds they hand over to their local authority every year. They have a base expectation that core services will be met effectively within annual budgets. They also expect authorities to provide leadership, addressing economic, social and environmental issues in the communities they serve.

By the same token, local authorities are acutely aware of the needs of their residents, the cost of providing the necessary levels of service and support, and the limited resources they have their disposal to meet these needs. Once local authorities have met their 'core business' obligations there is often very little left in the pot to direct toward projects that might fall outside of this category.

Both residents and local authorities want to see resources put to the best possible use in order to make public funds go as far as possible. A lot of public debate takes place about the merits or pitfalls of proposed projects and the tone is often negative. Planning and policy consultation processes are often dominated by zero-sum arguments – because resources are scarce, people assume it's 'us vs. them' or project A vs. project B. This approach to decision making can make it incredibly difficult to bring people together to find solutions to challenges, or pool resources to achieve outcomes that will benefit the entire community. This can even be a challenge within Councils, when different departments act as though they are pitted against one another, fighting for resources, mandate or the attention of leadership.

A change is required if communities are going to remain resilient in the face of global economic and environmental

pressures that will continue to drive the cost of providing services to our communities higher. Many authorities have made great progress towards the implementation of e-government services and digitisation, but the journey is only just beginning.

Given the speed at which the technological revolution is now moving, we need to direct more of our resources towards digital transformation with a view to increasing efficiency and promoting technological innovation. Data-driven decision-making is about optimising the performance of local government, and if we can achieve this we'll create efficiencies that free up valuable resources which can be put to use in the areas it is needed most. This data-driven approach requires a new way of thinking – it requires us to stop separating workflows, assets, people and resources into separate categories, but instead seek to connect them. The same applies to the various departments within a Council – instead of taking a siloed approach to asset management and service delivery, we should be looking for synergy and alignment.

If we go back to the example of an individual resident, we can illustrate the difference this approach would make in the life of one person. Their Council may have interactions with them in multiple aspects of their life and all of these interactions create data about this person, their needs, their consumption and their vulnerabilities. Many residents are Council tenants, and if this is the case there is rent to be collected which typically involves the Housing Department, and its internal information management system. The Housing Department may also facilitate assistance with 'Energy Poverty' support applications in accordance with Scottish Government schemes to protect the vulnerable. There is likely to be a library account administered on another system which is used to issue the resident books, or to facilitate internet access for those who don't have it at home.

The resident may have children enrolled at the local school, and children have their own needs and entitlements that are recorded and processed largely through the school's information management systems. There are rubbish and recycling collection services this resident will use on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, and this service is facilitated in yet another Council information management system. There may be Council tax to be paid and this will be collected by the finance department using an accounting software system. The list goes on - in addition to the services just mentioned, there are also roads to be maintained, green spaces to be kept, public events and venues to be managed, planning and building consents to be facilitated and much more.

It's obvious that a single digital view of a resident from one Council-wide asset, maintenance and services management platform would radically alter the way that Council was able to interact with that resident and the standard of service they would be able to offer. It would also alter the way they viewed specific groups of residents and the issues that were relevant to them. One Council tenant struggling to pay monthly power bills might indicate they need some additional support - but a number of tenants in the same estate struggling might indicate there is a larger issue with the efficiency of the building or its assets. When you integrate datasets you are able to see all the connections - the vulnerabilities and risks, the successes, the consequences (both intended and unintended) of policy and investment decisions and much more.

Yotta created its connected asset and environmental service management platform Alloy in response to this challenge. It is a product of, and a product for local government in the digital age. It represents a new way of thinking about how we manage assets and provide services to our communities, and how we communicate with residents and each other.

Legacy applications that are used by local authorities to manage and monitor assets and coordinate the provision of services just cannot cut it in the digital world due to antiquated architectures and slow performance. Alloy is the only system with a technology footprint that can embrace the rapid rate of digital transformation demanded by society, but more importantly it is a system that was designed to reflect Yotta's data-driven approach to decision making.

One of Yotta's core principles with respect to data collection and analysis is that big data, in and of itself, is not necessarily a useful thing - it's what you do with the data that counts. The sheer quantity of data that can be generated by local authorities in the digital age is overwhelming, but how do you structure the systems that capture this data to weed out the information that is not useful? How do you avoid unnecessary complexity without losing important parts of the picture? How do you cross-reference datasets from various systems? With over two decades of experience collecting and analysing asset data, Yotta has a unique understanding of how to translate data into insight that can be used to drive operational efficiency. That experience has been distilled into Alloy - a platform that has the ability to connect a range of systems and apps, as well as IoT connected assets, resulting in a fully-digitised asset management and environmental service delivery platform. Alloy gives users at every level of your organisation the insight they need to make better decisions, and ultimately, when your people make better decisions, they improve the lives of people within your community.

Alloy is a world-leading connected asset management platform by Yotta, created in response to the digital revolution and designed to sit at the heart of your organisation's digital transformation strategy. For more information about how Yotta can support the digital transformation of your organisation, visit weareyotta.com.

Alloy - the driving force behind digital transformation for local authorities.

YOTTA - FROM DATA TO DECISIONS

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