# How Stafford Borough Council's Streetscene saved time and money and improved efficiency through implementation of My Council Services Mobile Worker Module.

## What is My Council Services?

My Council Services provides public sector organisations with innovative smartphone and web applications that enable self-service customer access and mobile working. The My Council Services platform is unique. It is the only fully synchronised, dynamically configurable and integrated multi-channel customer self-service and mobile working platform. The combination of innovative, cost-effective technology and made-to-measure professional services ensures clients realise rapid returns on their investments.

## About Stafford Borough Council and Streetscene

Stafford Borough Council serves approximately 130,000 residents in 55,000 homes in the borough who rely on the many services it provides. Streetscene is part of Stafford Borough Council's Environmental & Health Service. It looks after Stafford Borough's public spaces, providing a range of services from cleaning public areas, removing fly tips, cleaning up graffiti and removing dead animals through to litter picking, road sweeping and grass cutting, all with the aim of keeping the Borough's environment clean and tidy.

**Stafford**
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## Key drivers of My Council Services implementation at Staffordshire Council

Historically Streetscene managed job service requests through its corporate CRM system. Members of the public would report incidents by phone to the Streetscene call centre at which point call centre staff would enter details of the job onto the back office system. Senior supervisors would then print out paper copies of each day's job sheets and pass them to the appropriate team to do the work. If operatives noticed additional tasks that needed doing whilst they were out on their rounds they would record them using a paper-based system of referral sheets. Streetscene required a system which would solve a number of problems that were caused by the paper-based system:

- The existing system relied on operatives completing the paperwork correctly and returning it at the end of each day so that the job could be signed off on the system. From time to time paperwork would disappear meaning jobs remained open on the system long after they had actually been completed.

- The paper-based system did not encourage any ownership of tasks and responsibilities and relied on senior supervisors to remember to whom they had allocated each job in order to be able to chase up missing paperwork and incomplete tasks.

- Supervisors would print off jobs first thing in the morning and then pass to operatives to work on through the day. No further jobs received that day would be passed to officers. Because of this there was a minimum of 24 hours delay between a member of the public reporting an incident and the time that it could be dealt with by Streetscene.

- The system relied heavily on a great many phone calls between the management teams, supervisors and operatives in the field. Staff from the contact centre were phoning jobs through to managers, who would then phone through to field operatives to carry out the work, meaning that there was no formal record of the work having been requested or done.

- Field operatives regularly came across other jobs that needed doing whilst they were out in the field. For example they might come across an animal carcass whilst out on a litter pick. In this situation they would pick up the animal carcass and then complete a paper referral sheet to record the task as an additional item of work done for that day. The paper referral sheets were then passed to the contact centre who entered the jobs onto the system and then immediately closed it off to prevent it coming through as a repeat job. This was a time consuming and unreliable process and meant that tasks were often dealt with in the field but then not recorded on the system until sometime later, or even not at all.

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In 2012 Streetscene engaged consultants to review its performance and identify areas for improvement. The issue of how jobs were handled via the CRM system was identified as key. The department wanted to find ways to cut down the time between a job being reported and being dealt with and to make the whole process much leaner using some kind of electronic automation. They identified a number of companies that could deliver such an electronic solution to replace their paper-based system, of which Abavus was one. After a due diligence phase Abavus was appointed to install its My Council Services mobile worker module in the Streetscene department.

*"The main thing for us was that Abavus had done this before and had obviously been doing it for quite a while, and well. They gave us referral sites, we spoke to the other sites and all the feedback from them was positive. Abavus offered a proven solution and they were willing to work with us and develop with us and not just offer an off the peg solution. The scope of the project has expanded considerably over time and the fact that Abavus were willing to go "yes, fine, no problem" was absolutely vital to us. It's made our lives a lot easier – nothing's ever been too much trouble. To be honest, Abavus have absolutely bent over backwards to do stuff for us and to get us to the position we're currently in and we're more than grateful for that."*

Spencer Cooper – Information Systems and Technical Support Team Leader

## Details of the project

### Phase one

The project began in January 2014. Teams from Abavus and Stafford Borough Council worked together to enable Abavus to fully understand Stafford Borough Council's process and requirements. Work also began on developing a piece of 'middleware' which would enable the My Council Services product to be integrated with the Council's existing Lagan CRM system in order to create an end-to-end process. Work then began on creating a mobile app and back office system with Stafford's branding and processes embedded within it. Abavus trained a core team of 'super users' within the Streetscene team who would act as ambassadors for the project, as well as rolling out training to all the operatives who would be using the app.

### Phase two

During February and March 2014 a small team of test users began field testing the product. As a result of this testing some additional requirements were identified, such as the need to overlay geographic boundary data into the app to enable automatic distribution of tasks to the correct location-based team. Thorough testing at this stage ensured that the final product was completely customised to Stafford's needs. After some final user acceptance testing the system was fully deployed to the entire department in June 2014 and was successfully embedded.

## Next steps

The success of the mobile worker launch has acted as a proof of concept and shown that the My Council Services suite of modules can help the Council deliver very significant savings whilst enhancing customer service at the same time.

The next stage of the project is for the Streetscene team to introduce the citizen-facing version of the app. Currently the My Council Services mobile worker module is being used as part of the back office systems however in the next phase the citizen-facing self-service app will be launched, enabling citizens to report incidents and tasks that require the team's attention quickly and simply from their phones (or web browsers) without having to take the time to call the contact centre.

As a result of the success of the mobile worker launch within Streetscene the Council is now looking for other areas of its operation that might benefit from both the mobile worker and public-facing elements of the service and the decision has been made to roll out the Customer Self-Service and Digital Access module through the whole Council.

Spencer Cooper and Phil Bates, key drivers of the project from within Stafford Borough Council, won its annual innovation award for their work in adopting My Council Services Mobile Worker.

# How Stafford Borough Council has benefited from implementing My Council Services

## Quicker and more efficient handling of tasks

*"It's much more efficient and jobs are dealt with in real time now. Before, we had this 24 hour time lag. Unless you had a very good memory you couldn't always remember who you'd given a particular job to, when you'd given it to them and when they were supposed to complete it. My Council Services has all that capability built in so you don't have to remember everything. Everything is automated."*

Phil Bates – Streetscene Area Co-ordinator

*"Before the App, Fly Tip notifications would be raised on our CRM system under the ownership of Environmental Enforcement who would investigate and have to then positively release the request on LAGAN so that it could be removed by Streetscene. With the App we have been able to give Enforcement Officers instant access to any Fly Tip raised either via CRM or through MCS. This has allowed for almost instantaneous transfer of requests to the Enforcement team who can now release the job via the App after reviewing the evidence attached. It's made the whole process really efficient."*

Spencer Cooper – Information Systems and Technical Support Team Leader

## Staff taking more pride in their work

*"There's a real air of responsibility now because the right jobs are going to the right people, and because it's in real time that means that people can deal with tasks within a very short timeframe."*

Phil Bates – Streetscene Area Co-ordinator

*"The operatives have taken pride in using the MCS system. Initially we rolled the system out to just a handful of people to see whether it worked. Now we have 28 devices using it and we get regular requests from operatives who don't yet have phones to be added to the system. The volume of referrals put onto the system by the operatives themselves has been astronomical and they seem much more comfortable with the electronic system than they were with the paper system."*

Spencer Cooper – Information Systems and Technical Support Team Leader

*"Services provided by Streetscene have often gone unnoticed. We don't blow our own trumpets a great deal – we just go out and get the job done. We hope that when we go public with the citizen-facing App it will raise the profile of the Streetscene and the diverse services it provides."*

Phil Bates – Streetscene Area Co-ordinator

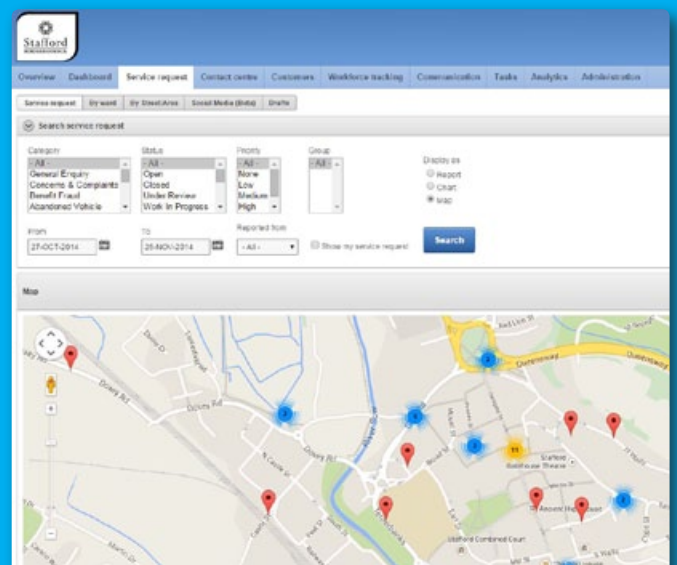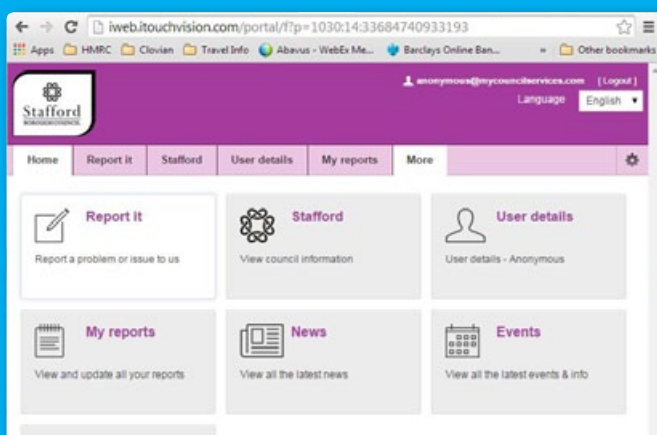## Enhanced performance against key metrics

*"We measure performance figures a number of different key indicators, which include volume of requests via contact centre or referrals raised by Streetscene operatives, and we report on end-to-end times for particular service requests. We can easily see how we're performing with reporting from the App and you can quite clearly see that it's an absolute no brainer in terms of comparison between where we were and where we are now."*

Phil Bates – Streetscene Area Co-ordinator

## Integration with existing systems

*"It's easy for us to roll out the system more widely as we've already got the integration in place between My Council Services and our front end Lagan system. Bringing other elements of My Council Services on board isn't going to be difficult as the integration is already there."*

Spencer Cooper – Information Systems and Technical Support Team Leader

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## Summary of key benefits

- **Less paperwork** – The App has now replaced the paper-based referral system completely. When field operatives come across additional jobs that need doing whilst out on their rounds the App enables them to raise the job electronically via their phones then and there and then immediately close it off without needing to involve the contact centre at all. This proactive approach gave rise to a landmark day where no service requests were raised by the contact centre at all for Streetscene.

- **Quicker and more accurate reporting of jobs** – Prior to the launch of the App field operatives were submitting between 70 and 80 jobs per month via the referral sheets. They are now using the App to log details of between 200 and 250 jobs per month. Details of jobs are entered onto the system at the point at which the operative spots what needs doing rather than waiting until the end of the day or the next day to be entered onto the system by the contact centre. This means that there are no more duplicate tasks as jobs are entered onto the system in real time.

- **Automatic allocation of tasks to the right team** – Streetscene uses area-based working with particular teams of operatives focusing on their own dedicated areas. By using the MCS mobile worker App, incoming tasks can be automatically allocated to the correct geographic team and sent out to them via their mobile devices in real time.

- **More information about tasks and less duplicated effort** – The MCS system includes mapping functionality so that the geographic location of an incident can be automatically recorded. This means that if an incident is logged by a field operative and then at some later point a member of the public alerts the contact centre to the same incident, the contact centre operators can see by looking at a map that the incident is already on the system. Under the old system two separate jobs relating to the same incident would have been logged, leading to duplication of time and effort.

- **Issues being dealt with before they are noticed by the public** – More and more jobs are being put onto the system by operatives rather than being called into the contact centre by members of the public. Increasingly, when a citizen calls in to report an issue they are told that the council is already dealing with it. Issues are being dealt with much more quickly than was previously the case and communication between the council and its citizens has hugely improved.

## About Abavus Ltd and My Council Services

**Abavus is a partner to iTouch Vision and the exclusive certified partner for My Council Services. Over the last 5 years Abavus has delivered operational consultancy alongside accredited training and development to UK public sector organisations. During that time Abavus has also been involved with the implementation and set up of IT platforms.**

**iTouch Vision is a leading innovator in the development of technology applications focused on increasing efficiency and improving the customer experience for both public sector and commercial organisations.**

**My Council Services is the flagship of its current development activity.**

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## For more information about My Council Services and to book your free demo:

**Visit** www.abavus.co.uk
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