

How Maidstone Borough Council's Environmental Services Department 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 Maidstone Borough Council's Environmental Services Department

Maidstone Borough Council serves approximately 155,000 residents in 67,000 homes in the borough who rely on the many services it provides. The Environmental Services team look after Maidstone'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.

Key drivers of My Council Services implementation at Maidstone Borough Council

In common with many other local authorities, Maidstone Borough Council's Environmental Services Department used to operate on a primarily paper-based system. Members of the public would ring into the contact centre with reports of fly tipping, abandoned vehicles and other such incidents. Contact centre staff would enter the details of the incident onto a CRM system. All the incidents added during a day would be stored on this system until 6am the following day, when paper copies of each job request were printed out and distributed manually amongst the department's operatives. Once the operatives had completed their day's work they would return to base and the jobs would be manually closed down on the CRM system.

Maidstone required a mobile working solution that would help them address the following issues:-

- The old system was extremely labour-intensive in terms of call centre resource, operatives on the streets and management time.
- The information being collected from members of the public was of poor quality, meaning that operatives would go into the field without all the information that they needed in order to complete the job. Because of this, dealing with a single incident could require several trips.
- The time lag between the team receiving a report of an incident and the incident being dealt with could be several days.
- There was no way of communicating back to customers when their incidents had been dealt with so the team were getting complaints from customers who did not know the status of their incidents, leading to more calls into the contact centre and repeat visits to the site from operatives to check that the job really had been completed.
- The quality of the data collected from the operatives dealing with incidents tended to be poor as the paper-based system meant there was no way for them to accurately capture details of the incidents they were dealing with, quickly and efficiently whilst out in the field.



“The customer experience was probably the most important driver of the project. We were getting a lot of the same complaints – not knowing when the job was done, saying that it hadn’t been done meaning we would have to send someone out to have a look. The quality of the information wasn’t great so about two and a half years ago we decided to go out and start to look at some companies that could provide us with a mobile worker system.”

John Edwards, Maidstone Borough Council Street Scene and Waste Officer

Details of the project

In 2012 the Environmental Services Department began investigating ways in which technology could help them address the inefficiencies in the reporting and workforce management system. They considered various options as part of a comprehensive due diligence process before appointing Abavus to install its My Council Services Mobile Worker system.

“We appointed Abavus on the basis that they did the best demonstration and gave us the impression, which has subsequently come to fruition, that they were happy to work with us in order to develop the system around our specific needs.”

John Edwards, Maidstone Borough Council Street Scene and Waste Officer

The new mobile worker system means that customer incident reports coming in via the contact centre or online can now be dealt with in real-time. Supervisors can automatically distribute tasks to operatives via their mobile devices. The operative immediately gets a map, a photo and a description from the customer of what needs to be done.

Once the operatives have completed the job they are now able to close it on their devices which automatically closes it on the CRM system. Whereas before customers would get an email thanking them for raising this complaint, now they also get an email notifying them as soon as the job has been completed.

Abavus has also helped Maidstone to embed geographical boundary information within the Mobile Worker solution, meaning that the system can now automatically exclude requests which come in from areas within the Borough for which the Council is not responsible, resulting in further savings of time and resource.

Next steps

The Council is keen to develop the use of My Council Services Mobile Worker beyond the Environmental Services Department and is considering how it could be more widely deployed. It is currently under consideration in the Parks Department, who currently operate a paper-based system for important processes such as the legal checks of playground equipment. Within the Environmental Services Department there is scope for the system to be further developed to enable more efficient routing of field operatives around the Borough, to track where vehicles are at any given time and to manage vehicle repairs and maintenance.

“A lot will be realised in the next six to twelve months. This is early days, it’s still in the planning stage but we’re certainly looking to reorganise the structure of our Streetscene and the way the crews work will evolve and become different. There’s opportunity for fuel savings and quite a bit that will come out that we don’t even know about yet.”

John Edwards, Maidstone Borough Council Street Scene and Waste Officer

“We’re currently undertaking a full review of our street cleaning and will introduce a change that people will work seven days a week. With our old way of working we were restricted to a Monday-Friday 6am-2pm system. Mobile Worker has definitely made the wish list of what we wanted more possible.”

John Edwards, Maidstone Borough Council Street Scene and Waste Officer



Summary of key benefits

Better quality of information about incidents

"We've given the public an easier interface to use. Rather than having to type everything in they now have a simple online form and a map-based system which makes it far easier for them to report incidents and gives us all the information that we need."

John Edwards, Maidstone Borough Council Street Scene and Waste Officer

Significantly improved customer experience

"The customer experience now has a beginning and an end which means that I get fewer phone calls and the contact centre gets fewer phone calls. For me it has been a great success that our web team has been able to create a lot of the forms that we require and we can tinker with those forms ourselves to get exactly what we need."

John Edwards, Maidstone Borough Council Street Scene and Waste Officer

Channel shift savings as reporting incidents online is easier and quicker

"We're getting nearly 50% of our fly tipping reporting being done online now. Reporting abandoned vehicles we're getting nearly 80% done online. From a channel shift perspective that really is the sort of thing we want to see. It's shown a healthy increase and I think a lot of that is down to the fact that we have got a better way of customers being able to report incidents to us."

John Edwards, Maidstone Borough Council Street Scene and Waste Officer

Simpler, more efficient work processes for operatives in the field

"It is making their lives easier. They can see the benefits of it and that's the most important bit when you're rolling out projects like this – they have to see the benefits. Not just in terms of themselves but for the man in the street. We've given our operatives a far easier way of reporting problems that they see when they're out and about. Giving them mobile devices and forms they can use to report things as well has certainly increased internal reports from our own crew."

John Edwards, Maidstone Borough Council Street Scene and Waste Officer

Greater efficiency leading to clear resource savings

"I think we've probably got a saving of about 2 FTE which certainly covers the cost of the project but we're expecting going forward that we will be able to make even greater savings from workforce optimisation."

John Edwards, Maidstone Borough Council Street Scene and Waste Officer

Flexible charging model

"I am really impressed with everything even down to the charging model. We haven't had to sign up for a long term deal. A lot of companies want to sign you in to five or three year deals now whereas the more flexible way the Abavus contract was done really suited us."

Paul O'Grady, Digital Transformation Officer

System completely tailored to Maidstone's needs, developed in a short amount of time

"The whole end to end process has been really good. The speed that the work is turned around at has really impressed me. We've helped them develop the system as well – it's a two way street but we almost feel that we've got a bespoke system that we'd never have got from anyone else and I can't speak highly enough of your development team, I really can't."

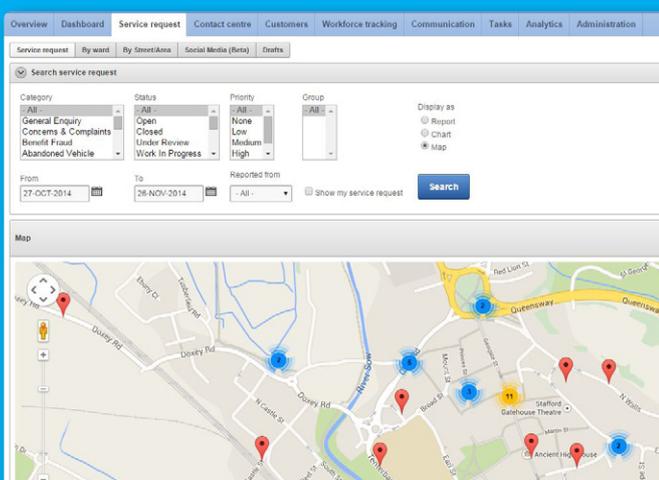
Paul O'Grady, Digital Transformation Officer

"It's been excellent. I can't fault the service. From both sides it's worked well. Maybe the personalities involved meant it was that perfect project but from experience I know these things don't happen by accident, they need a lot of hard work on both sides."

Paul O'Grady, Digital Transformation Officer

"I have found the approach taken by Abavus to be a breath of fresh air compared to a lot of the big boys in the local government systems world that I've had to deal with... I genuinely felt it was a refreshing approach taken by your company and I would certainly work with you again on other projects."

Paul O'Grady, Digital Transformation Officer



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 five 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 setup 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.



myCouncilservices



iTouch Vision

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

Visit www.abavus.co.uk
Email info@abavus.co.uk
Call 020 8530 2505

