

case study

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is the local authority of Southend-on-Sea in Essex, England. It is a unitary authority, having the powers of a non-metropolitan county and district council combined. It is a member of the East of England Local Government Association. The Council is responsible for a population of around 180,000 people.



Key objectives of the My Council Services Waste Management Module implementation

In common with many local authorities, waste management is one of Southend's largest service contract areas, providing recycling, waste collection and street cleansing. In 2015 the Council retendered its waste services and appointed Veolia as its contractor.

Recently Southend has been focusing on an organisation-wide channel shift strategy, with the aim of moving customer transactions online. The appointment of Veolia offered the opportunity to look in depth at the waste management processes to see how they might be further digitised. Citizens were already able to report issues with waste management through online channels, and Veolia had the ability to send such information out to its contractors electronically. What was missing was the ability to get the information from Southend's systems into Veolia's.

"We wanted to run the whole process digitally and automate processes where possible. The goal was to fully integrate Southend's system with Veolia, providing an end-to-end solution. Customers can go online to report a raise of issues against the service, our contract is structured in such a way that the waste provider has specific service levels to respond to. This all happens without needing any back office intervention from the Council. "

Imran Kazalbash, Services Manager, Waste Management and Contracts, Southend Borough Council

Both the Council and Veolia had their own systems for managing these processes. The challenge was getting these systems to speak to each other. The solution developed by Abavus was a series of online reporting forms that were integrated with Veolia's integrated management system and mobile working platform.

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Benefits to Southend Borough Council

Greater efficiency for users

"Citizens can now report issues such as missed collections or undelivered recycling sacks using a series of online forms designed by Abavus and the Council together. The system enables citizens to set up accounts so that their information is stored. This means that they don't have to re-enter their details each time they use the system, and the process of reporting issues is extremely quick."

Significant cost savings achieved through channel shift

"Citizens now have a choice to go online and report issues using 10 different online forms that we designed in partnership with Abavus. Each phone call that is avoided by the contact centre through this process represents a cost saving to the authority."

Better service for end users

"Users can create an account and when they raise an issue – reporting fly tipping, recycling sacks not delivered, requesting a new container and so on – they can go back and check its status, see whether it is open or closed, as well as seeing if other people in the area have reported the same issue. They will also receive automatic alerts to keep them updated."

Efficiency achieved through real time integration

"Abavus offered integration with Veolia. The information is passed direct to them from our systems in real time. Previously Veolia were having to 'manually' take information off our system and load it into theirs, but now the information appears in their system in real time."

Citizens' issues are now dealt with much more quickly

"If you report a missed collection our service level is four hours from reporting to dealing with the problem. This is made achievable as the reports appear in Veolia's task lists almost as soon as they are reported by a customer."

Citizens can report issues whenever they want to

"Now people are able to report issues 24/7 and are not restricted to opening hours of our contact centre."

Managing contractor performance is easier

"The new system gives us the information we need in order to effectively manage the performance of contractors. If they're not doing what they should be then it's much easier for people to report that to us."



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Next steps for Southend Council and Abavus

“The vision for the future is that you’ll log into your account and get one single view of the Council. We’ll know who you are and how you want to be engaged, what you’ve signed up for and so on. At the moment this is done service by service, but in the future you’ll be able to set all your preferences across all Council services in one single place.

We’re also aiming to be much more proactive in terms of pushing information out to people. For example, if we know that you’re interested in planning applications then we’ll be able to automatically show you all of them within a certain radius of your house.

Working with Abavus on this waste project gave us confidence. They went through a robust procurement process and won against other suppliers, and the success of the waste project has meant we’re expanding the relationship into these other areas. There’s a very strong commitment from Abavus to work with us on these projects. We have an ambitious timetable in place in terms of what we want to achieve and Abavus are completely on board. They share our vision and goals.

We’re forming a strong relationship with Abavus, and that’s important because going forward they’ll be maintaining our services. Everything we’ve asked them, they’ve been very open and honest. Mark and his team have the skills and are developing things at a really fast pace. When we come up with ideas, they’re adding value by suggesting ways in which other authorities might use something. They have faith in us which enables us to lead the design process and showcase new ideas.

One common goal is the customer service element, which we want to harmonise across all our workstreams. It’s easy to get trapped in process and design when actually it’s about the customer, and Abavus really get that.

Abavus are always keen to share what’s coming on the horizon, what’s on the roadmap, and we’re keen to hear about that.

The waste contract is a very big contract and the integration between our system and Veolia’s is a very small part of that, so it might have been difficult to get some suppliers motivated to engage with that, but from Abavus’s point of view it was their complete priority.”

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.



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