

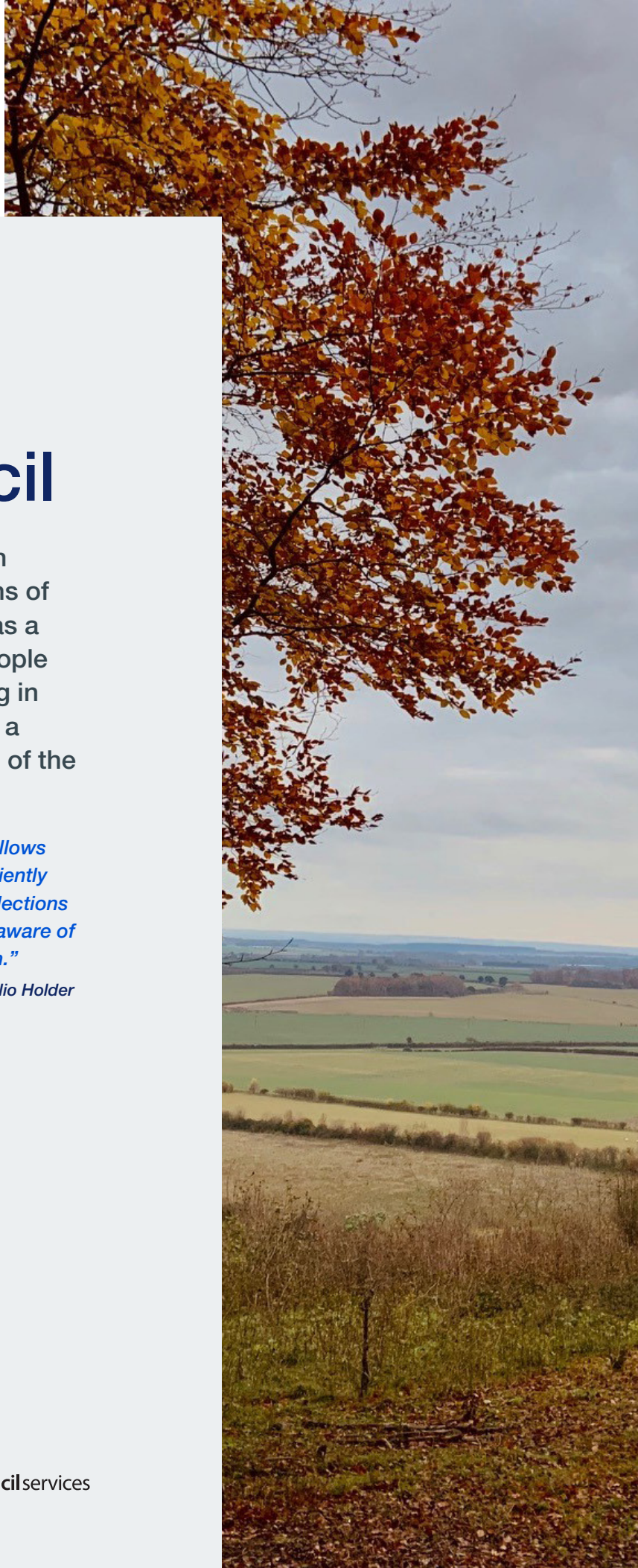
## Case Study

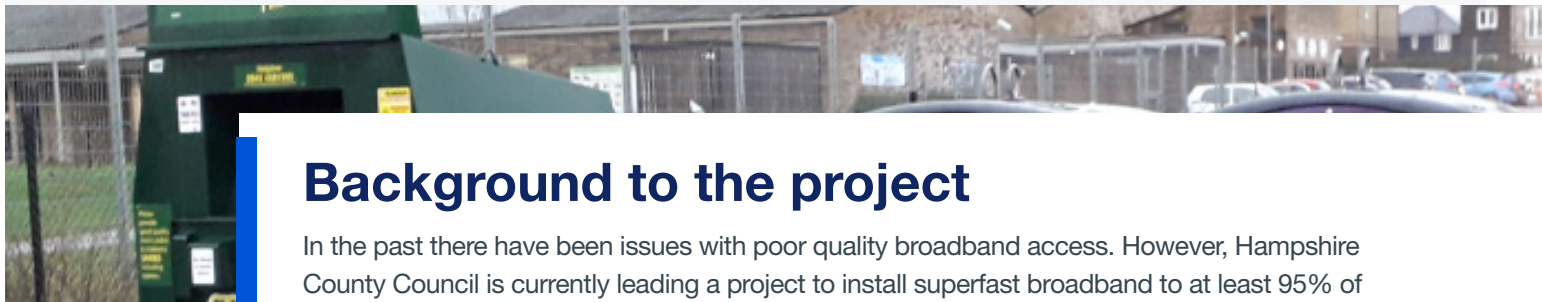
# Test Valley Borough Council

Test Valley Borough Council is located in western Hampshire and covers the towns of Andover, Romsey and Stockbridge. It has a population of approximately 120,000 people with a large proportion of residents living in Andover or Romsey, though there is still a sizeable minority living in the rural areas of the borough.

*“My Test Valley is a modern, user-friendly app that allows residents to contact the Council quickly and conveniently to report matters such as fly-tipping, missed bin collections and overgrown hedges. It means that we are made aware of environmental matters sooner so we can take action.”*

*Cllr Phil North - Alamein Ward member and Corporate Portfolio Holder*





## Background to the project

In the past there have been issues with poor quality broadband access. However, Hampshire County Council is currently leading a project to install superfast broadband to at least 95% of Hampshire by 2019 with the remaining 5% to follow. This has led to a particular focus on getting rural villages online. As a result, internet use in the area is increasing, making it a good time for Test Valley to focus on channel shift and develop use of its online channels.

**Test Valley Borough Council has a joint IT service with Winchester City Council. Where it makes sense to do so, the two organisations generally try to align any new systems that they have. As Winchester had already been using My Council Services happily for some time it made sense for Test Valley to also look at My Council Services and so the decision was taken to run a pilot.**

An initial pilot was set up with four processes, which all came under the Council's Environmental Service. This Service was the focus of the pilot because it generates the greatest number of enquiries from customers (except for the revenues and benefits team which has its own dedicated system). Environmental Service issues were also well suited to the My Council Services pilot because many of the queries that come in are fairly simple such as people wanting to report missed bin collections or requests for shrub and hedge maintenance. These types of enquiries are relatively straightforward and often don't need to be handled by a person at the end of a telephone line. The My Council Services app makes it quicker and easier to report issues like this as customers don't have to call the Customer Services team. The plan was that this would reduce the volume of calls into the contact centre thus enabling the advisors there to focus on more complex issues.

There was a soft launch for the My Council Services pilot. The Council decided not to advertise the new system to external customers but instead to set it up on the website with no formal publicity. The Council was confident that the new system would work well so the decision was taken to switch over completely to My Council Services for the processes being tested rather than run two systems in parallel.

The pilot ran for six months during which time the Council tested My Council Services extensively, checking to see how easy it was to set up new processes, amend existing processes and for the customer service team to deal with requests.

**The My Council Services pilot was successful. Test Valley Borough Council found that the My Council Services system was quick and easy for the advisors to use. They were able to deal with phone calls much more quickly and could get up and running on the new system with only a minimal amount of training. In most cases advisors were able to start using the new system after less than an hour's training.**

During the trial more than 2,000 service requests were processed using My Council Services, around 9% of which came from the public website or the app, showing that customers were starting to make use of the new system. Feedback from the staff was extremely positive and some Councillors also began using the system and reported that they liked it very much.

As a result of the success of the pilot, the decision was taken to continue using My Council Services after the end of the pilot period and to start publicising it more widely as well as to extend the number of processes to be managed through My Council Services.

**Test Valley**  
Borough Council 





## Key objectives of the project

**The decision to adopt My Council Services was driven by a number of considerations.**

1. Ease of use for both customers and staff – It was critical that whatever solution the Council implemented should be simple to use, both for clients and also for Council staff. The Council's services need to adapt and respond to change and so it was important to have a system which enabled staff to adjust existing processes and to set up new ones quickly and easily. Customers also needed to find the system easy and intuitive to use.
2. Growing demand for Test Valley Borough Council's services – A number of new neighbourhoods have been built in Test Valley over the past few years, resulting in more residents moving in to the area. As a result, this has placed a greater demand on the Council's services.
3. Encourage customers to use self-service options wherever possible – With the increasing demand on the Council's Customer Services team, the Council saw an opportunity to encourage channel shift by offering customers a range of self-service processes online. The aim was to enable people to help themselves wherever possible, thus freeing up the Customer Services team to focus on more vulnerable customers, more complex enquiries and those less able to help themselves.
4. Speed and flexibility – A strong driver for this project was the requirement for a flexible system that would give staff the ability to change processes quickly and easily.

# Benefits of the project

## A 'health check' of processes

*"A spin off benefit of this project has been that it has enabled us to take a step back and look at all our processes, taking the time to really look at what other Councils have done and make sure that we implement best practice with our processes."*

*My Test Valley project team member*

## Time saving and channel shift

*"Using My Council Services reduces the number of routine calls to our contact centre and so has freed up our advisors to be able to work with the customers most in need of personal interaction. It's definitely the way we want to go – to give customers more options to contact us. At the end of the day hopefully we will see some efficiency savings but at the moment it's a tool to help us deal with our more vulnerable customers."*

*My Test Valley project team member*

## Ease of use for customers

*"A big benefit of My Council Services is how easy it is for customers to use it when they are out and about. They can send something on their mobile straight away without having to call up to talk to someone about something they can report straight away on an app. It gives people the freedom to do things themselves."*

*My Test Valley project team member*

## More convenient for customers

*"We have a very low unemployment rate and people are in work so can't easily ring in during office hours – if I want to do something I would prefer to do it in the evening online if I could."*

*My Test Valley project team member*

## Better quality of information about issues

*"My Council Services enables better quality information to be collected about issues. There's a huge benefit to receiving a map and a picture when something such as an abandoned vehicle is being reported. Rather than someone trying to describe it over the phone – instead we can show the actual location and see what the customer is looking at, making it much easier for our operatives to deal with."*

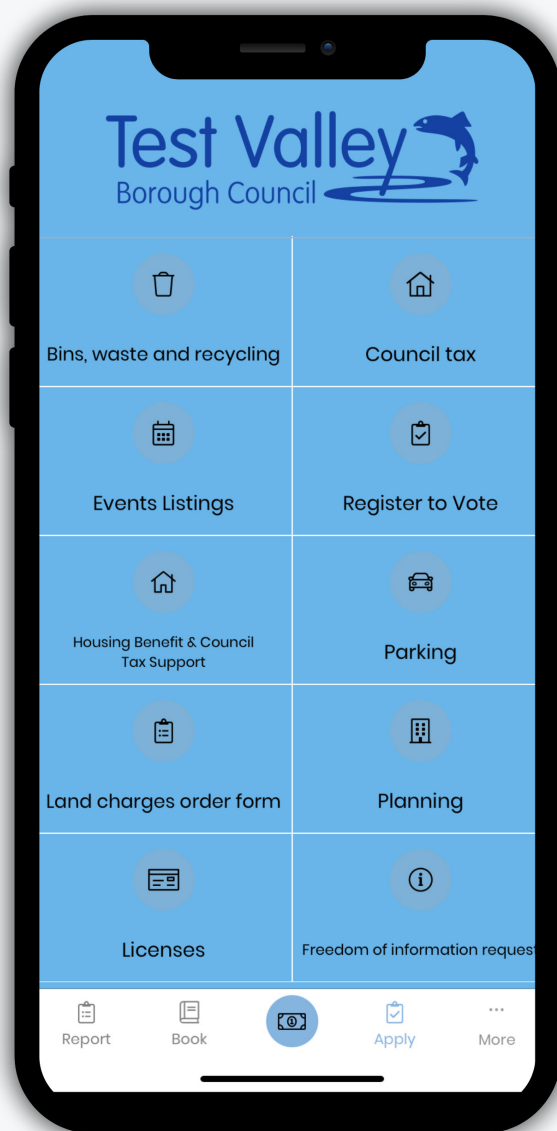
*My Test Valley project team member*

## Quick and responsive service from Abavus

*"Dealing with Abavus has been excellent. We did have a few glitches, as is always the case on projects like this, but the response from Abavus was always excellent. They've worked very closely with us*

*to fix things and there's always been a very prompt turnaround. The whole process has been very quick – from starting the project to actually getting the first transactions coming through only took a few weeks."*

*My Test Valley project team member*





## About Abavus Ltd and My Council Services

Abavus is an established UK-based technology and service provider to the UK public sector. Since 2007 we have been delivering software solutions and consultancy services that underpin and enable transformation and efficiency programmes in local authorities.

At Abavus we work extremely closely with one innovative, independent software house – iTouchVision – who develop the widely used My Council Services enterprise platform. Abavus and iTouchVision have entered into a long-term partnership agreement, whereby Abavus implements and supports My Council Services exclusively in the UK public sector. This allows iTouchVision to invest the maximum resource in its continued research and development activities, whilst Abavus focuses on the delivery and support of the solutions to clients.

Abavus has a customer base of over 50 UK local authorities and government organisations using the My Council Services solutions, as well as a small number of private clients. We are firmly established in the public sector market as a leading provider of innovative, cost-effective information technology solutions, helping public and third sector organisations to save money and make significant efficiency gains.

Abavus has been successfully delivering technology-enabled transformation projects in the testing operating environment that has prevailed following the financial crash of 2007 and the unyielding constraint on funding that this has created. Whilst this has been challenging it has meant we have to keep our projects focused on value and delivery. Our responsive, customer-focused approach has enabled us to thrive in a busy marketplace.

## Consultancy and training

Abavus also provides consulting and training services to ensure that our clients are up and running with the technology solutions we provide as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Drawing upon our extensive knowledge and understanding of public sector organisations and the specialist technical skills within the team, Abavus leads and supports consultancy and training engagements with the focus on driving business transformation and change.




**myCouncilservices**



**For more information about My Council Services and to book your free demo, contact us below:**

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