

# Identifying cost efficiencies, performance improvements and customer outcomes in public service delivery



 **Customer:** Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

 **Department:** Across all public services

In 2021, during a major technology transformation to the cloud, that included the implementation of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, Walsall Council started a pilot programme looking at a small sample of key services and how they were delivered and received, along with financial analysis.

The pilot programme identified the potential for improvements in service efficiencies and performance, as well as improved customer outcomes. This work was part of their much larger PROUD programme, made up of multiple projects to improve customer experience, create internal efficiencies and to make financial savings.

In March 2022, Walsall Council appointed Socitm Advisory as their service design, delivery assurance and governance partner, to review to date and to manage and oversee the full expansion of the programme, across all customer-facing services.

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Socitm Advisory really stood out in a positive way for their very human qualities and their willingness to listen and give us not only what we wanted but what we needed too. Their holistic methodology and approach to service design was fascinating to see and the results speak for themselves!”

David Peate, Walsall Council

## The biggest challenge

There were many challenges common to this type of programme, including understanding Walsall Council's structure, culture and financial restraints, internal stakeholders balancing business-as-usual (BaU) with performance requirements, and interim personnel in key areas moving on mid-project.

However, the biggest challenge was the fact that the Council was in the middle of a major council-wide technology transformation, which, due to its high-ticket value and being core to all BaU tasks, was the main focus for the majority of stakeholders.

## Our brief and project goals

- To perform a health check of all customer-facing services, along with the supporting technology and systems, and identify potential cost efficiencies and opportunities for improvements in performance and customer outcomes
- To successfully handover all key information for recommended activities for Walsall Council to assess, agree and take on

#casestudy 



## Our approach

We began by researching every service, looking at the customer contact areas, the processes, the systems, and the outcomes, to pull together our request for information up front.

We put in place a communications strategy with the heads and subject matter experts (SMEs) in each service area and set up regular contact points and dialogue.

Once our research and information has been gathered, we were able to move on to the discovery and ideation phases of the project, to identify opportunities for cost savings, process and system enhancements and improved customer outcomes.

Continuous engagement with the heads and SMEs in each service area and their delivery teams too, was essential. Staged handovers helped keep these stakeholders involved and motivated, while the Council's bigger technology transformation programme continued.



## Outcomes and benefits

As we approach the end of our involvement in the programme, we have completed a major handover of all key information for our recommendations for each one of the customer-facing services and business areas we've looked at.

Council customers can now access many of the services in a number of ways, and when they want to - 24/7, through digital channels, as well as through the 9-5 customer contact centre.

To make access to the digital channels as accessible as possible for all, we also linked up with Walsall Connected - a network of council-run drop-in centres, which people can visit for support accessing the digital services.

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We created and rolled out a mobile app, which gives residents of Walsall direct message access to the Council via its councillors, when they need it.

In total, we presented more than 400 opportunities across the categories of cost efficiencies, improved process performance and better customer outcomes, across 12 services.

So far just over £650,000 worth of cashable savings have been validated and signed off by the Council's accountants.

In addition, multi-million pounds worth of savings have been identified, which the Council can break down into small deliverable pieces of work over many years to come.

To help the Council identify and realise future opportunities, we upskilled four business analysts within the Council to provide in-house expertise in this area.

## Notable project learnings

- Socitm Advisory's totally independent, unbiased view from not having the conflicting interests of a technology partner gave Walsall Council reassurance that they were receiving the best advice and recommendations
- Our vast range of experience and expansive portfolio of work with other councils is another huge advantage. It enabled us to benchmark and demonstrate other authorities approaches and results for similar pieces of work, which helped inform Walsall Council's decision-making at crucial times
- The project demonstrated the importance of a cross-cutting 'one team' approach, and how challenging, yet critical this is to get right when it comes to delivery. Many learnings were shared at conferences and talks during 2023, to seek wider sector expertise on how to overcome these common design and delivery challenges