

Transforming citizen engagement by shifting to digital channels

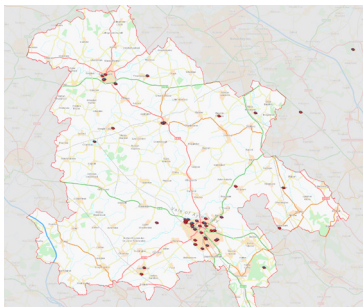
Aylesbury Vale District Council

The Challenge

- Online reporting system in urgent need of improvement
- Lack of resources to create the new solution

The Benefits

- Lower costs – through reduced contact volumes
- Resident's problems resolved more quickly
- Improved citizen engagement
- Greater flexibility – Esri UK expertise avoided need for permanent staff



After reviewing its current reporting system, used by residents to report issues and concerns, Aylesbury Vale District Council utilised Esri UK's professional services expertise to create a new and improved online reporting model. Not only delivering a better service to its citizens but also making vital resource and cost savings.

The Challenge

Engagement with residents to maintain and improve their quality of life is a critical aspect of AVDC's work. ReportIT is a mechanism by which issues or problems can be reported by residents, for action by the council. The system covers a broad range of concerns, from abandoned vehicles and antisocial behaviour to fly tipping and the safety of young people. This important activity was found to be labour-intensive and potentially error-prone. The review of ReportIT identified several factors contributing to inefficiencies:

- Reported problems often lie outside the council's jurisdiction. Residents can be unaware of council structures and responsibilities, so would raise concerns to AVDC that were actually the responsibility of a different council.
- Problems were being reported multiple times. Residents had no indication whether a problem has already been reported, so it would be reported again, causing duplication of effort.
- Contractors resolving problems often attended the wrong location or needed to visit the site repeatedly, leading to wasted time and cost. This was because the reporting form did not capture all the information, including precise location, needed for first time resolution.
- Residents like to be kept informed, but provision of regular updates was time consuming.

As part of its transformation journey, AVDC is adopting a 'New Business Model' which will remove such inefficiencies. The council identified that by shifting the primary contact channel to a new online reporting system it could:

1. Reduce the number of inbound contacts.
2. Reduce the cost of processing each report.
3. Improve feedback to residents.

AVDC had a suitable technology platform - ArcGIS Online from Esri, but cuts had meant that it did not have the resources to create the new solution. Furthermore, cost savings were needed quickly, so time was of the essence.

The Solution

The council contracted an Embedded Product Specialist (EPS) from Esri UK, chosen for their deep knowledge of the capabilities of ArcGIS Online. The EPS used standard templates to quickly create two vital applications:

1. Reporting tool. Esri UK's QuestionWhere Builder enables a questionnaire or survey to be built around location-based questions. The EPS used QuestionWhere Builder to create a suite of forms, one for each type of problem being reported. A built-in map ensures that the location of the problem is correctly identified and that the problem falls within the regional boundaries of AVDC. Each report includes all the information a contractor needs to resolve the problem.
2. Analysis dashboard. AVDC's communities and customer services teams needed a simple, visual way to monitor activity and identify any problems needing action. The EPS created a map-based visualisation that enabled the teams to query by boundary area, class of report and thus identify patterns and resolve issues.

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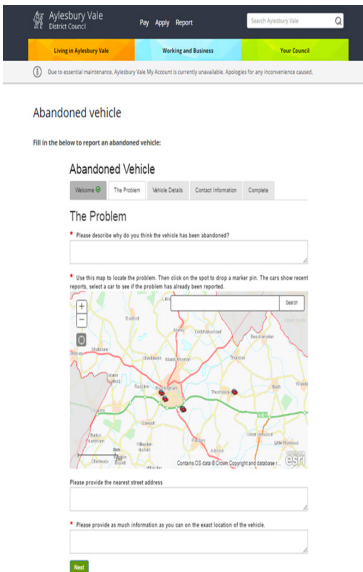
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“ We now have incredibly rapid access to survey data that is complete, accurate and consistent for all the thousands of pipe bridges under our responsibility.” ”

Lawrence Smith, Technical Information Manager, Thames Water



Reporting the precise location of abandoned vehicles

Rather than write an exhaustive specification, the EPS used rapid prototyping techniques to create demonstration versions that gave AVDC a quick view of what was possible. The council provided immediate feedback to the EPS who, based in the council's offices, implemented any changes there and then. This iterative approach kept the project on track and shortened development timescales. The EPS also trained key IT staff from AVDC to use the tools, create new reports, edit existing reports, and maintain and develop the solution going forward. The whole project was completed in just five days.

Benefits

By leveraging the skills and knowledge of the Esri UK Consultant, AVDC was up and running with a new solution rapidly, without the need to hire additional IT staff. Immediately the system went live, multiple benefits began to be delivered:

Speed

The EPS helped AVDC rapidly assimilate the latest technology. Reporting and resolution processes are now smoother and faster as there are fewer queries, errors and wasted trips.

Flexibility

The council's requirements are sure to evolve over time and it is well equipped to change the functionality of the solution as needed in the future. Yet AVDC is not dependent on permanent IT resources for ongoing development and support.

Improved service to residents

Residents can now report problems and track progress at a time of their own choosing. Their concerns and problems are now resolved by AVDC more quickly and with minimum need for discussion.

Reduction in contact volumes

The map-based tool helps residents report correctly – so that AVDC does not have to process reports that are outside its jurisdiction. Costly duplicate reporting is avoided and further questions and clarifications are minimised.

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