



TECH CREATES A COMMON WEALTH

CIVIC BODY USES TECH TO PERSONALIZE
SERVICE FOR ITS RESIDENTS

—

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The background of the bottom half of the page is a photograph of a building's facade covered in a dense, overlapping pattern of light-colored, oval-shaped tiles. The tiles create a strong sense of depth and perspective, curving away into the distance against a clear blue sky.

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The Commonwealth Games will be held in Birmingham in the summer of 2022. These games, in which the nations of the British Commonwealth compete, are considered second only to the Olympic Games for the countries of the Commonwealth. Hosting the Commonwealth Games is a major honor, but any international event is a significant task for a city. For Birmingham City Council, the civic body for the second-largest city in the UK, the adoption of digital and cloud-based services ensures the city can deal with the highs of a sporting event and the lows of a pandemic, reveals Director Digital & Customer Services at Birmingham City Council, Peter Bishop.

With a population of 1.2 million, Birmingham City Council is one of the largest public sector organizations in Europe. The city has a long history and rose to prominence

during the Industrial Revolution, which saw Birmingham become one of the world's most important manufacturing centers in the world. Today Birmingham has a service-oriented economy.

Once the 2022 Commonwealth Games have been completed, Birmingham has announced that it will submit plans to be the host city for the 2026 European Athletics Championships, which would make use of a major stadium in the city that was modernized for this year's Commonwealth Games.

DIGITAL REVOLUTION

"The council took back control of its ICT Strategy back in 2016, but it did not have all the levers to make that strategy a full reality," Bishop says. "In 2019, my core priority was focused on bringing the





control of our outsourced IT services back in-house, enabling the council to deliver on its priorities rather than a third party. That marked the real start of our digital transformation journey to put in place the significant building blocks that have supported our successful service transition and stabilization.

“This has brought the council back onto supported infrastructure and software platforms; providing a modern platform to support services such as in adults and children’s services and delivered a

rationalization and simplification of the council’s application estate, including refreshing all the hardware/software and data center services,” he says.

During 2020, Birmingham City Council moved its technology infrastructure to a hyperconverged environment. Legacy hardware at Birmingham City Council has been migrated to a hybrid cloud infrastructure as part of a partnership between the city and Nutanix. Birmingham City Council has moved to the hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) with

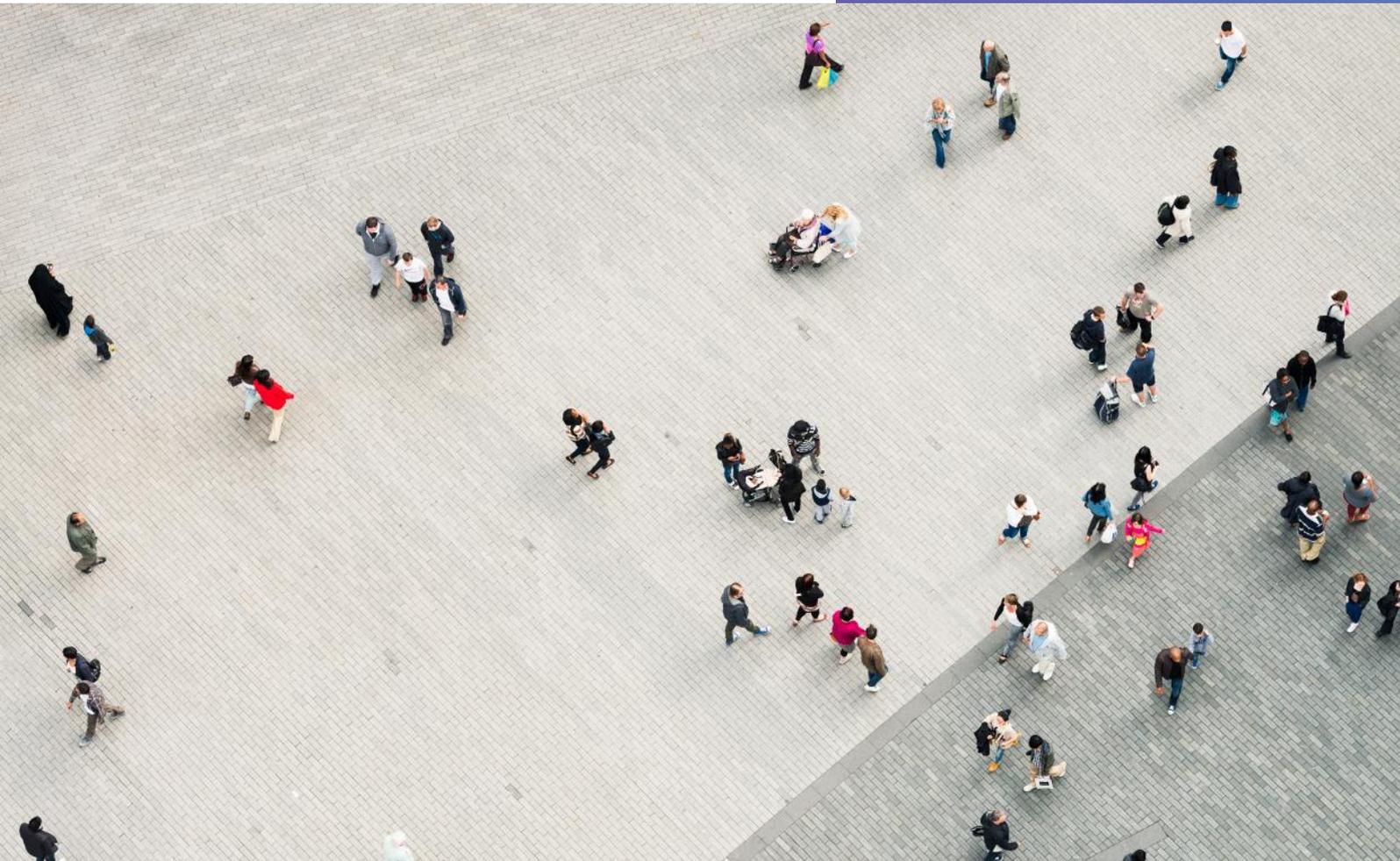
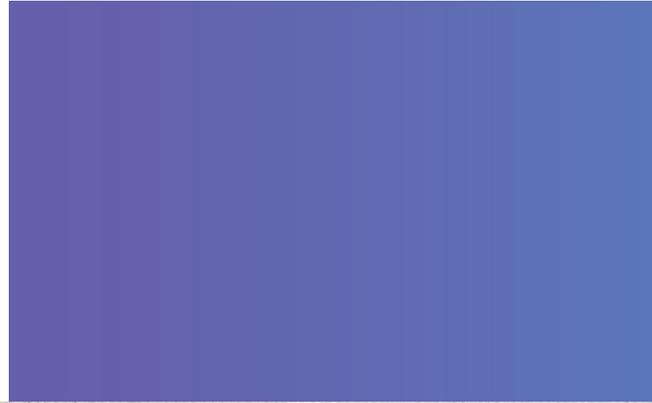
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AHV hypervisor, Prism central management console, as well as the Beam, Calm and Flow cloud management platforms. This has created an end-to-end management platform for cloud based technologies at Birmingham City Council, which has 450 different applications in use, providing everything from waste collection to disability care, education and library services, as well as tax collection and business services. The council employs 11,500, who use 12,500 devices and create 1.3 petabytes of data.

CONNECTING TO CITIZENS

Birmingham City Council has not only modernized the infrastructure technologies that operate the civic body; in 2019, the city was a pioneer in the launch of a single online account for citizens to manage their interactions with the local authority. Dubbed the BRUM account, the online account enabled residents of Birmingham to take control of tax payments, request changes to waste collection, access learning or care resources, or report a problem in their community such as vandalism or road damage that is dangerous.

All forms and payment services that residents require of their local authority are available via the online BRUM account, which connects directly with the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system used by the departments of Birmingham City Council. Residents can do more than just

report an incident; to increase interactions between those that pay local taxation and the body which spends the local taxation, Birmingham City Council has enabled the ability to track a case. Birmingham City Council has over two million customer cases being tracked through the BRUM account and has 2.7 million digital forms being used, which automates processes and reduces the cost base of the local authority. As a result, Birmingham City Council has been able to replace a legacy CRM with a Low Code platform.

Registration and usage of the BRUM account reached 500,000 during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic. “We have been able to deliver more and at pace, so now there is a much closer connection between the city councilors and residents,” says CXO Bishop. “If we had not had the BRUM account, we wouldn’t have been able to distribute the enormous amounts of business grants that the government asked us to do,” Bishop says of the important role local government plays, especially in emergency situations.

“It also demonstrated what we could achieve when we work differently and as a council responds rapidly to change, collaborating and working closely with our service leads to spin up new digital services quickly,” he says. “Digital transformation is one of the biggest opportunities we have of meeting the significant social, fiscal and political

challenges that face us; the growing demand for our critical services and the raised expectation of citizens and businesses.”

Bishop and Birmingham City Council is digitizing not in preparation for life-changing events like a pandemic but because local government has to keep in step with the pace of change in society, Bishop says. “The pandemic has turbocharged the online world, and we want to exploit the functionality that we already had to help that turbocharging of the council’s ambitions for how IT services its needs,” he says. “We

want to create a shift in how we think about and interact with you so that you are at the center of everything we do,” Birmingham City Council says on its site.

International sporting events create brief, glorious community moments. Long-term community benefit requires continued investment and assessment. Bishop and Birmingham City Council demonstrate that the latest generation of enterprise cloud computing technologies enables a civic body to control more of its technology destiny, but also deliver more for its citizens.





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