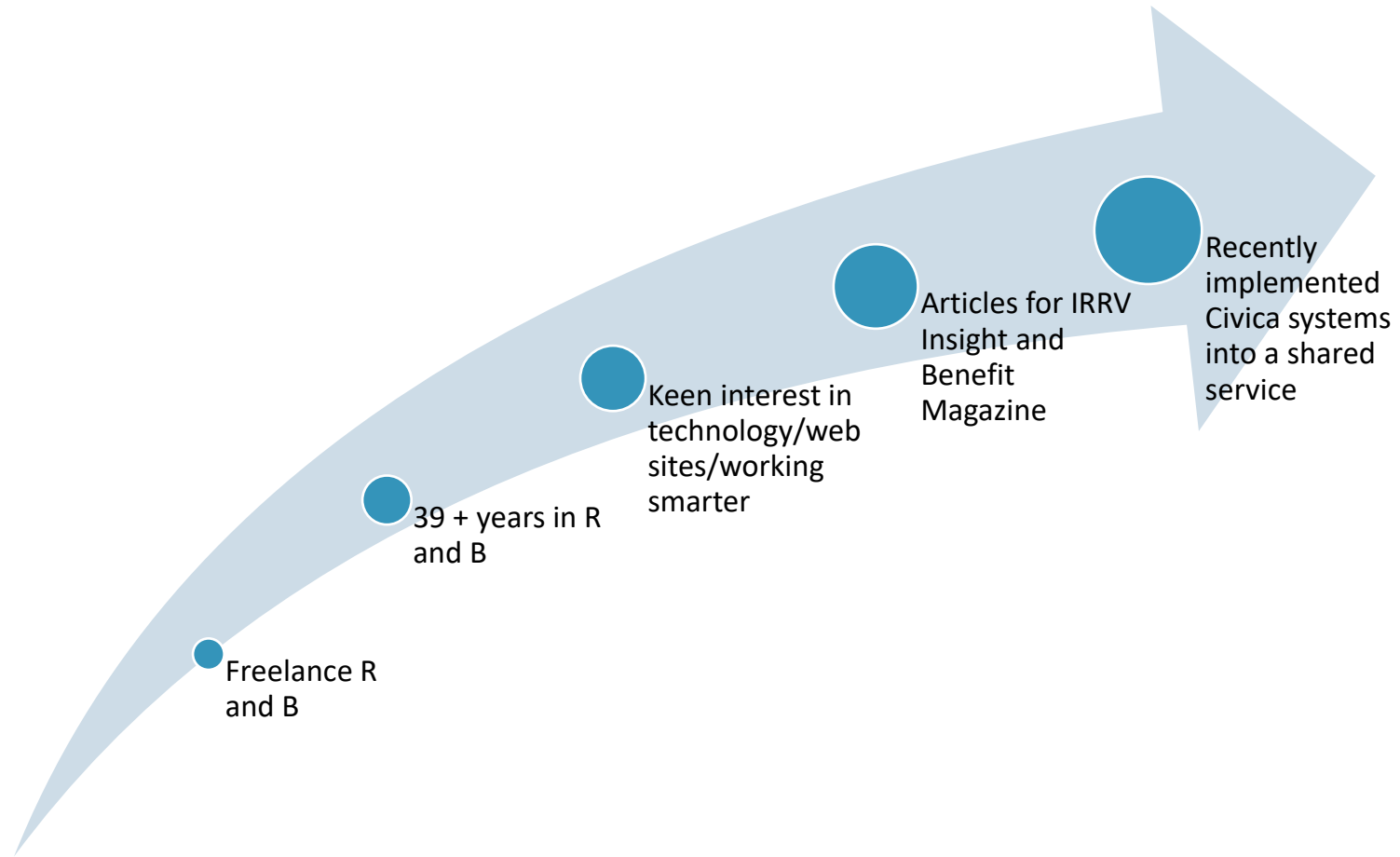


# Then, now and the future of digital R&B services

Simon Bailey IRRV (Hons)

Freelance Revenues and Benefits Consultant and Interim Manager

# About Me



# The Then

# The Then



Interest in the Internet and World Wide Web is growing. Around 40 million people throughout the world are reported to be linking up to this massive data store — the information super highway.

Its growth has been phenomenal. Only a few years ago the Web was in its infancy, with connection and usability difficult. But with the advent of user friendly browsers, such as Netscape's Navigator and Microsoft's Explorer, it has become easy to access and a powerful multi-media delivery platform.

More than 100 local authorities are exploiting it. The information they place on the net is held on a Web page or site.

Many multi-national companies search the Web for information on areas where they may wish to locate.

So what is the benefit of the Internet for revenues and benefits departments? The answer is: anything you wish. The possibility is there to exploit any data you want to provide and any you wish to obtain.

It is surprising how many local tax payers and claimants have PCs, word processors and fax machines, and e-mail addresses are proliferating. These technology conscious customers are likely to be connecting to the Internet in the near future. In addition, libraries, council offices and advice centres coming on line may offer clients the ability to access data.

Local authorities have a duty to disseminate

*The Internet could be a useful tool for revenues and benefits departments to communicate with their customers, says Simon Bailey*

#### INFORMATION THAT COULD BE PROVIDED ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

##### Council tax:

Liability, hierarchy, valuation banding and their effect on the amount payable

Discounts, exemptions, the situation for disabled persons

Payment methods and facilities, and due dates

Performance indicators and unit cost of the service

Contacts to discuss payment arrangements or alternative methods

Valuation Tribunal hearings, dates and matters to be heard

Useful contacts, such as the Valuation Office Agency

##### Benefits:

Types of benefits available, criteria for entitlement, such as the route through income support or means testing

Information on rent restrictions and indicative rents

Details for landlords — payment cycles, methods

Useful contacts such as DSS local offices, rent officer, Citizens Advice Bureaux.

##### Business rates:

Contact points for liability details

Advice on reliefs available — the defined rural areas

The valuation list.

information to their customers. The Internet is a cheap and productive method of doing that.

Information can travel both ways. Claimants might visit a site to enquire or they could leave requests for information via e-mail. They could notify a change of address or make a more complicated claim for housing benefit.

A benefit calculation service could be made available to potential claimants via a home page.

Payments may be obtained via the Internet. People can buy goods via the Web, like their weekly

shopping or CDs, so there is no reason why council tax or business rates could not be paid in the same way.

Credit card security has always been an issue, but the net is no greater risk than using the telephone or giving your card number to the local pizza delivery service.

Trust in new technology is growing, as is shown by the many people who do not request a paper transaction confirmation when withdrawing money from their bank's cash machine.

Once established on the net, local authorities should explore ways to use the

largest database in the world. One site worth a visit is LGCNet, which has up-to-date information on parliamentary and local authority news within minutes of press releases being issued. The DoE has also established a presence: <http://www.local.doe.gov.uk>. This provides text of DoE information letters and other local government issues.

Information can be obtained on CCT via the Internet or via an intranet (access to a private internet service to interrogate a database). Such services will provide information on benchmarking, news of latest contracts and the competition. This forms an important part of market intelligence.

How do potential customers find your Web site? The authority should publish its existence by placing the address of the site and e-mail on all outgoing correspondence, adverts, public notices and council tax demand notices. The site may also be registered with search engines — a site where users visit and enter key words to find matches.

With more services being provided and an increasing number of private users and authorities linking to the World Wide Web, the opportunities for information dissemination or gathering are limited only by the user's vision.

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te  
ries etc.

# When was this said?

- “New technology offers opportunities and choice. It can give us access to services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It will make our lives easier. Government intends to be at the head of these developments”
- Labour – 1999 – 18 years ago !!!





# It's Nothing New

<p>R10 Online facilities to be available to allow payments to the council in ways that engender public trust and confidence in local government electronic payment solutions (e.g. email receipting/proof of payment, supply of automatic transaction ID numbers).</p>	Green	Green	Green
	31/03/2005	31/03/2005	31/03/2005
<p><b>Comment:</b> The Council has online payments facilities for transactions and has mediated telephone payment for all services. All methods provide a receipt or reference number as proof of payment.</p>			

**E-GOVERNMENT**

## Online services deadline will be met but will public be won over?

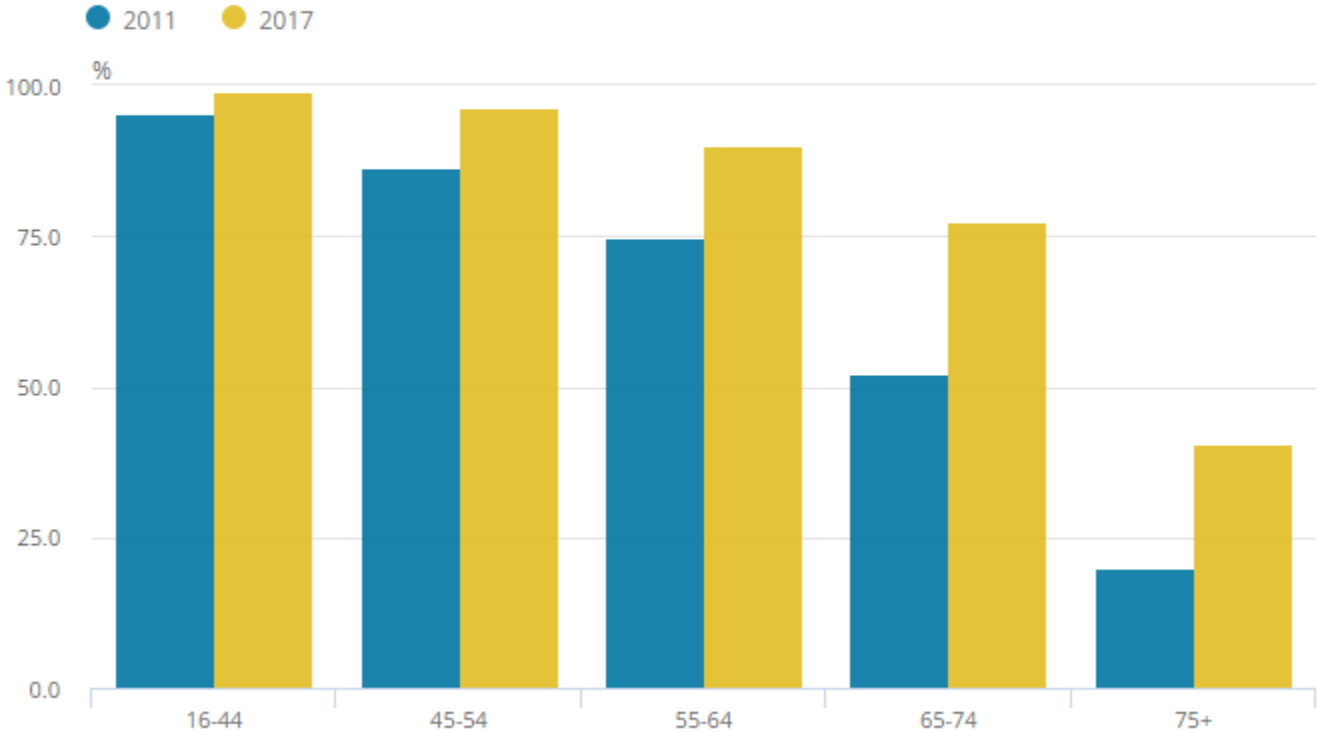
Collecting revenue:	87%	0	1	1	1	1
Total types of interaction e-enabled		0	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Providing benefits & grants:	78%	0	1	1	1	11
Total types of interaction e-enabled		0	9.09	9.09	9.09	100.00

**Comment:** We have investigated the module provided by our application provider. We are looking at the business case for this and alternative options to achieve this outcome.

# The Now

# Now - ONS Internet users in the UK: 2017

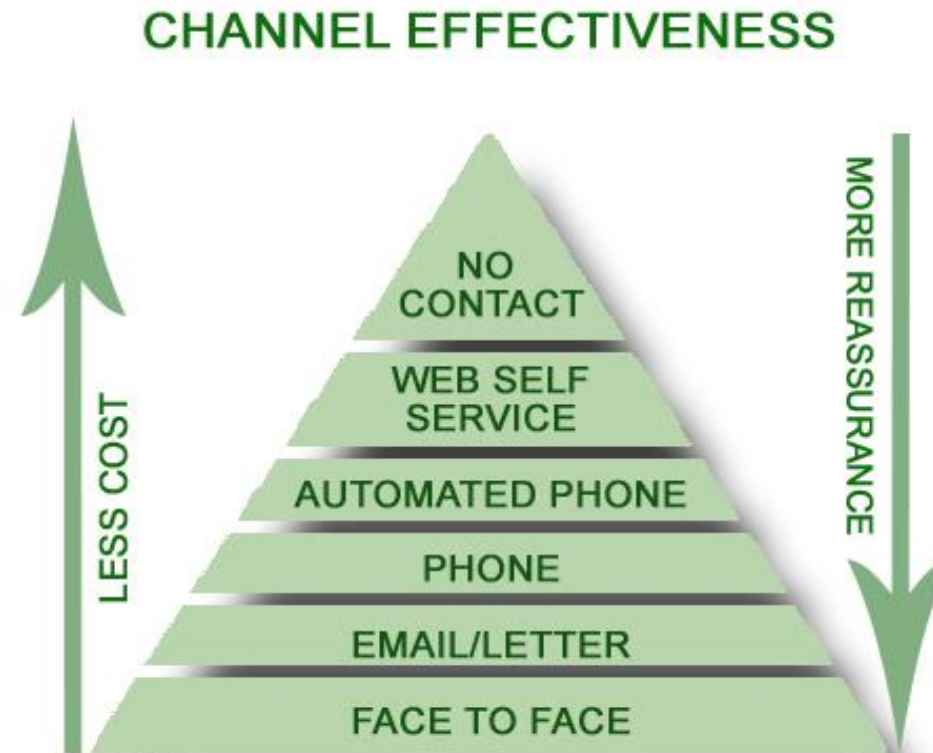
Figure 2: Recent internet use in 2011 and 2017 by age group, UK



Source: Office for National Statistics

# “We need to be digital by default”

- Its not going to happen –Let’s be pragmatic



# We Serve Our Customers

- Therefore services must be
  - Easily Accessible
    - 24/7 – not hidden away
  - Simple to Use
    - No hoops to jump through
  - Streamlined
    - The easiest route for the customers journey
    - No-one is ever going to move to a channel or service that is harder to use or less beneficial
  - Convenient
    - Available at a time and a place for the customer
  - Cost Effective
    - For the Council
  - Robust
    - Work first time and every time

# How are we doing ?

- Local Authority Web Sites (Socitm 2016)
  - 36 four star sites out of 400+
    - Slight decrease from 2015 (44)
  - Only 52% passed the mobile standard
  - Can forms be used on mobile site?
  - Do we need an App?
  - Terminology can be confusing
    - Discounts/exemptions/Disregards
  - Must be as good as the best
  - Local Authority Front Door

# Web Site - Star rankings 2016-17 and 2015-16

**BetterConnected**  
*sharing the best in local digital services*

Key

- 4 stars (Very Good)
- 3 stars (Good)
- 2 stars (Unsatisfactory)
- 1 star (Poor)

2016-17	No	%	2015-16	No	%
★★★★	36	9	4	44	11
★★★	190	46	3	136	33
★★	144	35	2	146	35
★	46	11	1	88	21
	416	100		416	100

# SOCITM 2017 – Web Site Scores

## Medway

[www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk)

Better connected 2016-17:



About

Country or English region	<b>South East</b>
Type of council	<b>English Unitary</b>
Population	<b>263,925</b>
Households	<b>106,209</b>
Deprivation (England)	<b>136</b>
Likelihood of overall digital exclusion indicator*	<b>2</b>

\*(scale of 1 - 9 where higher figure indicates greater likelihood of exclusion) Source: The Tech Partnership from data provided by the LGA LG Inform Team

\*\* data compiled by Likeaword

\*\*\* data compiled by Jumoo

Mobile standard:



Web/Digital

Website visits (Year to 31 July 2015**)	<b>2,145,281</b>
Web visits per household (Year to July 2015)	<b>20.20</b>
Responsive website	<b>NO</b>
Good practice cited in BC 2015-16	<b>N/A</b>
Schools applications % online (England)	<b>136</b>
Twitter	<b>@medway_council</b>
Twitter followers (May 2016)	<b>14K</b>
Website last redesigned***	<b>N/A</b>

Accessibility:



### Key

- 4 stars (Very Good)
- 3 stars (Good)
- 2 stars (Unsatisfactory)
- 1 star (Poor)

Better connected recent performance

2013



2014



2015



2015-16



# Apply for Single Person Discount -2017

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Is there information or links to information about how 'student' is defined for Ctax discount purposes	59.4%
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Can I apply online for Council Tax single person discount? (downloading a form does not count)	62.8%
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Am I told what information I need to complete the form (online or pdf) before I am linked to it ?	12.6%
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Is there information about how long the council will take to process an application for single person's discount before I complete the form?	4.8%
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Does the council appear to offer a self-service council tax account?	49.3%
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Does a search for the task description return the correct result listed in the first five results?	83.1%
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Does the A to Z list include this task?	63.8%
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Do all of the above routes lead to a consistent destination?	73.9%
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# Apply for Single Person Discount -2017

”It is important that councils make the rules very clear and enable ‘self-service’” - SOCITM

Authority	Score	Councils of same type	All councils
Fareham	★ ★ ★	2.8	2.7
East Hampshire	★ ★ ★	2.8	2.7
Gosport	★ ★	2.8	2.7
Winchester	★ ★ ★	2.8	2.7
Chiltern	★ ★ ★	2.8	2.7

Key

- 4 stars (Very Good)
- 3 stars (Good)
- 2 stars (Unsatisfactory)
- 1 star (Poor)

*Reviewers commented that ‘disregarded persons’ is borderline jargon and if it is felt important to use the phrase, surely it could be explained upfront as meaning ‘does not count’? This is the approach taken by GOV.UK on its council tax pages,*

**ISCAS LTD**

# Web Site Review

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar containing 'www.' followed by a redacted domain. A callout box points to the 'www.' with the text 'No HTTPS'. The page title is 'Council Tax - Change of Address'. The page content includes a search bar, a 'Login' button, and an 'All Services' button. Below the search bar, there is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home / Forms / Council Tax - Change of Address'. The main heading is 'Council Tax - Change of Address'. Below the heading, there is a paragraph of text: 'This authority is under a duty to protect the public funds which it administers, and to this end may use the information held about you for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes. Information may also be used within the Council for address management purposes.' Below the paragraph, there is a text box with the text 'Please enter the details of the person completing this form:'. Below the text box, there is a form field labeled 'Surname \*' with a red asterisk and a question mark icon. Below the form field, there are two links: 'Council tax support hardship policy' and 'Council tax support hardship application form'.

# The Future/Trends

# Proving who you are GOV.UK - Verify



- Work started in 2011 and went Live 2016
- Amount of Fraud increasing
- Used mainly by government departments such as DVLA and Inland Revenue – no private sector using it
- Pledge by the Conservatives to spread Verify to non government services such as banking
- Private companies verify the identity
- Used for Universal Credit by the DWP - will be this where it falls down?
- GDS pledge 25 million users by 2020 but currently only 1.5 million accounts

# GOV.UK - Verify



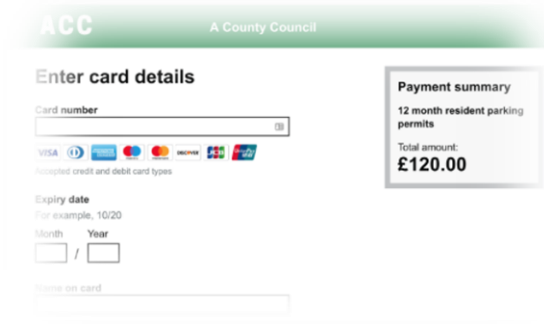
- Verify being used in Local authorities
  - Trials to cover parking permits and travel concession passes
  - 30 local authorities have signed up by half have left the trials
  - Verify was seen as overkill for the trialled services
- Could be used for benefits
- Other countries
  - Estonia - e- ID – since 2002 and has on line voting in general elections
  - Belgium’s “mon dossier” application
  - Sweden – implanted chips

# GOV.UK - Notify



- GOV.UK Notify helps government service teams send text messages, emails or letters to users
- 77 Service departments using
- 14.5m texts and emails sent – and counting
- Integrates into back office systems
- Now being offered to Local Gov. (10<sup>th</sup> August)
  - Initially 20 service teams
- Will it work for Rev and Bens
- Free allowance of messages allowed (250,000)

# GOV.UK Pay



The screenshot shows a payment interface for ACC (A County Council). It features a 'Payment summary' box on the right indicating a total amount of £120.00 for 12 month resident parking permits. The main area is titled 'Enter card details' and includes fields for 'Card number', 'Expiry date' (Month and Year), and 'Name on card'. Below the card number field, there are logos for supported credit and debit card types: VISA, American Express, Mastercard, and others.

- Now being offered to Local Government (12<sup>th</sup> Sept 17)
- ½ Million Payments
- Take online card payments and issue refunds
- Ensure their payment experience meets the [Digital Service Standard](#)
- use payment processes that are fully Payment Card Industry (PCI) compliant
- Custom Branding
- Look and Feel – Trust
- No Charge for site – only payment service providers

# Bitcoin

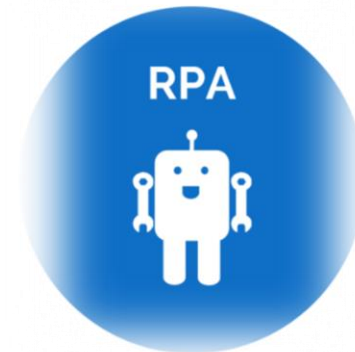


- June 2016 – DWP Trialling use of bitcoin to pay benefits
- 20 to 30 participants who took part were paid their benefits through an app using the blockchain. Able to spend with partners Npower and Barclays.
- Claimants use an app on their phone
- Digital benefit coin could replace welfare payments in sterling
- Transactions are being recorded and can never be deleted
- Concerns that it could be used to control spending
- Data protection principles
- Report due out in 2016 – nothing so far ???

# Chatbots



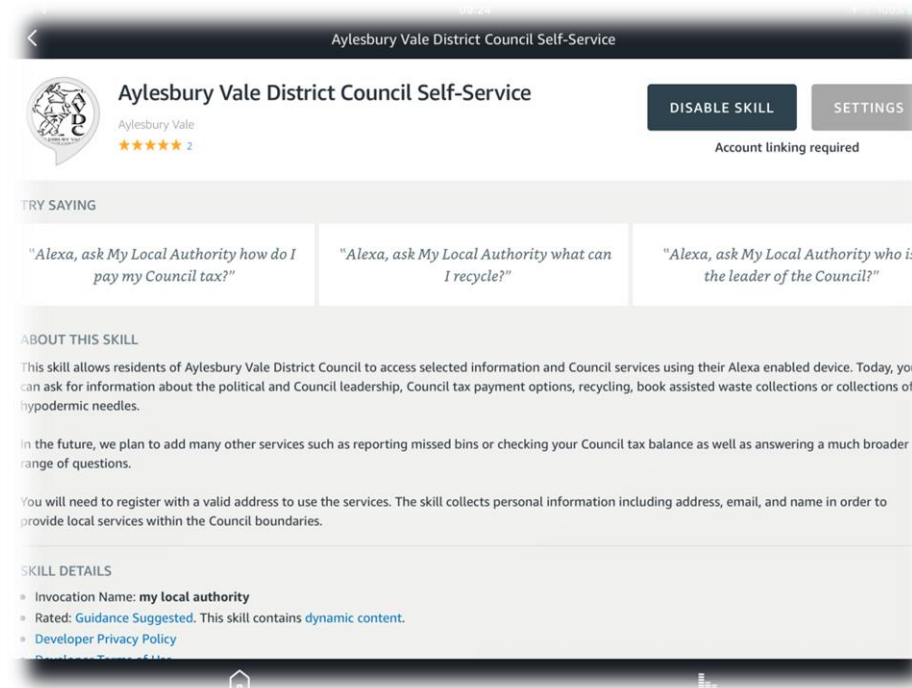
# Robotics



- Authorities are looking at RPA (robotics process automation)
  - On line benefit claims forms
- Robotics good for
  - Structured work
  - Repetitive Tasks
  - Accuracy and Consistency
  - Logical Processing
  - 24/7 operation
- Robotics not good for
  - ambiguity or feeling in the process

# Don't Forget to Ask Alexa

- Aylesbury Vale and Hampshire CC
- Used as a voice prompt to remind
- Helps people navigate a web site
- DVLA have 'skill' which allows customers to check their vehicle tax and MOT status.
- Why not for Council Tax or Benefits
  - What's my balance?
  - When is my next payment due ?
- AVDC – First Local Authority Skill



# Cloud Computing



- What is Cloud Computing?
- Martini Principle – Anytime Anyplace any Anywhere
- Key Advantages
  - reduced costs,
  - increased efficiency
  - greener IT
- Key Disadvantages
  - security of data management
  - loss of organisational control
- [CIPFA - Local authorities are claiming over 30% savings](#)
- UK government has a "cloud-first" policy for procuring IT systems
- [DWP buying a cloud based UC appointment system](#)



- May 2016 – Chromebooks outsell Macs
- Chromebooks are swappable/ disposable
- Authorities embracing Google -[Peterborough](#) - [Manchester](#)
- Features
  - Access Any where
  - Sharing Documents
  - Docs Spreadsheets
  - Use of instant messaging
  - Use of Hangouts

# Data Breaches

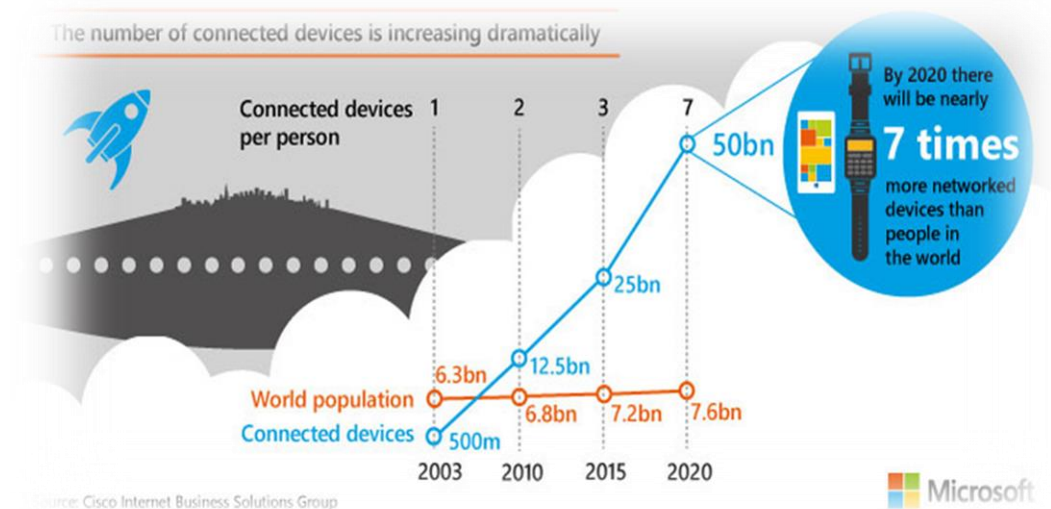
## Will we see more ?



- Unacceptable & inexcusable”: council hit with £70k fine for leaving vulnerable people's info wide open
- data breach that meant customers could see each other’s email addresses.
- Islington Council faces huge fine after massive data breach hit 90,000 people
- Error with car parking app used by councils causes serious data breach
- Cyber Attacks

# Internet of Things (IoT)

- LA's becoming independent from government funding ?
- What is the Internet of Things?
- Machine to Machine
- 5G will enable
- Why is it important?
- A new way to raise revenue
  - Charging for use
    - Roads
    - Schools
    - Bins by weight
    - Links to occupancy
- “New technology offers opportunities and choice. It can give us access to services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It will make our lives easier. Government intends to be at the head of these developments” - 1999
  - What are the trends for the next 15 to 20 years?



# Questions?

# Then, now and the future of digital R&B services

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