NETCALL

A manifesto for local government

Putting the power of digital transformation back into the hands of local authorities to enable their digital autonomy

The context

Local government is responsible for a huge number of vital services across the UK. In fact, there are over 800. These include things like social care, education, housing and planning, waste collection, public realm and business growth.

The Covid 19 pandemic has shown the vital role local government plays in keeping people safe and well, and in building prosperous and resilient localities.

Local authorities are the only democratically elected and accountable institutions delivering to citizens in local areas in the UK. They have a fundamental role in shaping the communities where citizens live, work and play.

> Just over **2 million** people work for the **398** local authorities in the UK. Although this number has reduced significantly and consistently since 1999.

There has been a similar downward trend in **funding** for local government. In England, "local authority 'spending power' – that is, the amount of money local authorities have to spend from government grants, council tax and business rates – has fallen by 16% since 2010". This includes a 37% reduction in core grants from central government.

Netcall has supported local government for over 20 years. We currently help over 100 councils across the UK to transform their services to citizens and become more productive and efficient. Therefore we have a deep understanding of the impact that these reductions in staff and funding are having.

Citizen expectations have not reduced in the same period. If anything, they have increased. Citizens are now, rightly, expecting local government services that are similar in style, quality and speed to those offered by some of the best known digitally enabled businesses. Actually, council staff have also got the same expectations.

Local authorities are, therefore, accelerating their journey to be more **digital**. That is, "applying the culture, processes, business models and technologies of the internet era to respond to people's raised expectations in order to meet these challenges, achieve efficiencies, increase productivity and deliver cashable savings".

The **Local Digital Declaration**, and its call to 'fix the plumbing', recognises the need to address these challenges.

Sadly, much of the local government solutions market is hindering, not helping. This includes providing solutions that are not fit enough or agile enough for the modern digital age. This only serves to maintain legacy technologies, systems, processes and commercial models that create silos.

This is not applying the culture, processes, business models and technologies of the modern internet era to respond to citizen and employee raised expectations.

Local authorities are being let down and their transformation efforts stifled.

This needs to change.

Netcall's mission

We believe passionately in public service. And enabling local government to deliver great citizen-centric digital services. We think there is a better alternative to the legacy stranglehold that continues within local government.

There are, of course, many reasons why digital transformation in local government is held back. Our **research with 100 senior council executives** across the UK, found legacy back-end systems to be a major stumbling block.

The pain of unravelling multiple systems and replacing or rationalising software and suppliers is top of the list. And half of councils said they lack the technical expertise to develop and implement change. This drives reliance on expensive consultants and developers instead of building councils' own skills and expertise.

> Data, and the ability to move it in a friction-free way out of and between different software applications, is the key to unlocking digital transformation.

However, the data is often trapped in councils' legacy applications. This makes the creation of good quality, end-to-end digitally enabled services very difficult to deliver. This frustrates councils as it prevents them from impacting citizens in the way they want to and at the pace they need.

And since every local authority has a huge number of legacy applications supporting citizen services, it's often a complex, lengthy and costly task to untangle this 'legacy spaghetti'.

We think that's just wrong. We want to do what we can to help councils to free themselves from vendors who work like that. And the legacy applications that they provide.

Covid 19 exacerbated the need for councils to accelerate their digital transformation – against a backdrop of staff and budget reductions. It has never been more important for local government to have control of their own digital destiny.

We want to do everything we can to make that a reality for as many councils as we can. This manifesto is a statement of our commitment to local government and will continually guide us on our mission.
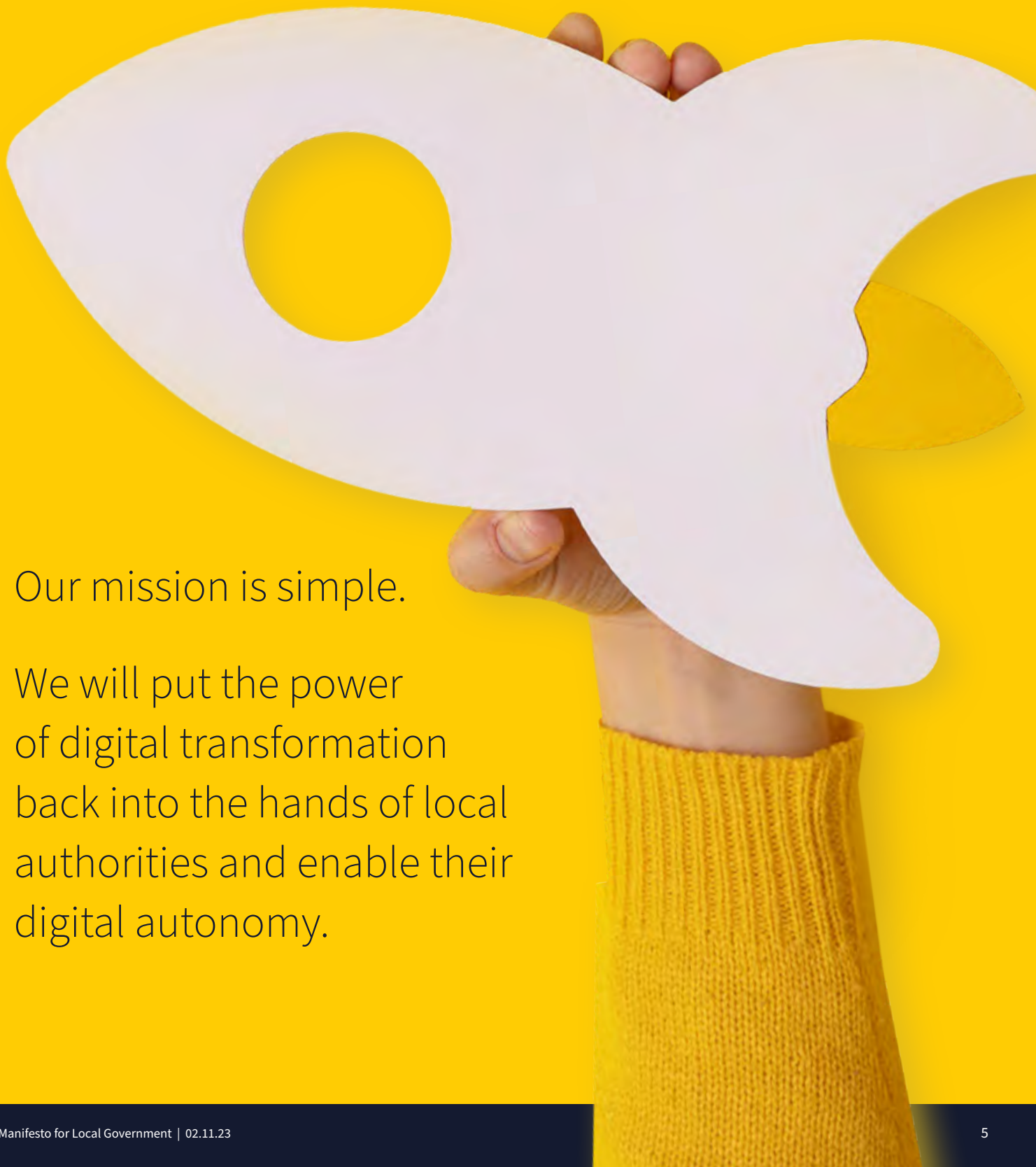
Our mission is simple.

We will put the power
of digital transformation
back into the hands of local
authorities and enable their
digital autonomy.

Netcall's manifesto commitments

Our **eight commitments** describe the things that we will do to contribute to our mission to give local authorities the digital autonomy they need.

These commitments are infused with our **values** and help to keep us grounded and focused.

We will continually review these commitments along with **feedback** from our customers to hold ourselves to account.

This is how we will know if we are on track to **achieve our mission**.

Our Mission

We will put the power of digital transformation back into the hands of local authorities and enable their digital autonomy.

#1
Enabling local government to drive digital transformation how and when they want to.

#2
Supporting local authorities to develop and nurture the talent that already exists within councils.

#3
Encouraging collaboration, sharing and reuse to increase digital transformation speed and cost effectiveness.

#4
Providing afordable solutions with fair and transparent pricing to maximise return on investment.

#5
Building low-code solutions using open standards and making sure that integrations are widely available.

#6
Innovating as standard so local authorities get the latest technological advances as part of their investment.

#7
Listening to our customers and building solutions that meet their ever-changing needs.

#8
Focusing relentlessly on citizen impact and working tirelessly to give council employees the tools needed to realise the value of investments faster.

Netcall's commitments are:

#1 Enabling local government to drive digital transformation how and when they want to by giving them tools that support their digital autonomy.

We think local government deserves to have the best and most intuitive digital tools available, so they can provide services more easily, more quickly and at lower costs. Local authorities should be able to use those tools to build what they need to, using their own skills and resources. Our solutions will always enable councils to develop applications, services and processes using their own internal expertise or by sharing with other users of our solutions. This is an important way to increase the self-sufficiency of councils.

INCREASE SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF COUNCILS

#2 Supporting local government to develop and nurture the talent that already exists within councils.

We believe that the knowledge, talent and skills to transform services are already within councils. They are the people who know what needs to change.

Sadly, these skills often leave the sector as good people are unable to make a difference with legacy applications. With the right digital solutions – like low-code – and the right technology partners, local government can grow the capability and capacity to fix the plumbing itself many times over. We will work hard to support that talent. Through mentoring for digital leaders, peer learning opportunities, recognising excellence through national awards, highlighting and amplifying areas of great practice and by delivering top class learning and development resources for council staff.

WE WILL WORK HARD TO SUPPORT THAT TALENT

#3 Encouraging collaboration, sharing and reuse to increase the speed and cost-effectiveness of digital transformation across local government.

We believe in enabling councils to break free from the constraints of legacy applications and vendors. Collaboration and sharing are important ways to achieve that. We know that diverse ideas lead to better outcomes.

So, an important part of our approach is to facilitate councils to learn from each other, to collaborate and share their developments. It saves time and money as councils can share and consume good digital services that have already been developed and tested. This helps them to accelerate their digital transformation.

Our **AppShare** and our **Community** are how we are very visibly following through on this commitment.

DIVERSE IDEAS LEAD TO BETTER OUTCOMES

#4 Providing affordable solutions with fair, transparent pricing to maximise the return on investment made by local authorities.

Solutions should reduce the total cost of ownership for councils. We will always be open and transparent about our pricing, so there are no surprises. We also think that it should be easy to understand licencing so that councils can have cost certainty – this is not always the case in the current digital solutions market. We guarantee to always have transparent licencing so councils can budget effectively.

Our licencing for Liberty Create, our **low-code** platform, is site based, as we want to encourage councils to use it as widely as possible without constraints so the total cost of ownership reduces with each new application or service that is deployed. Forrester says that low-code platforms – like Liberty Create – can increase software development speeds by up to 10 times that of traditional processes. Faster development means a quicker return on investment.

Delivering value back to the public purse must be a goal of any supplier to local government that claims to be 'passionate about public service'.

PASSIONATE ABOUT PUBLIC SERVICE

#5 Building low-code solutions, using open standards and ensuring integrations are widely available to core local government applications.

We believe that open standards and open integration in our **low-code** platform, Liberty Create, promote innovation and make it easier for local government to link applications and data together. Many legacy applications lock data away but our low-code platform helps unleash that data.

It gives councils access to their data so they can use it to drive service improvements.

Councils should be able to see the benefit where an integration in Liberty Create has already been developed. If another council needs that integration, then it should be available to them. Similarly, if a council has built an application in Liberty Create – like Blue Badge applications – then that should also be available to other councils.

#6 Innovating as standard so local authorities get the latest technological advances as part of their investment without having to pay for them over and over again.

The problem with some legacy suppliers and solutions is they have taken local government for granted. They've often had contracts for years without challenge and councils haven't been able to get more value from their investment. We don't take our customers for granted. We know any investment is a big decision for them and we always want to prove that they made the right call. One of the ways we differentiate ourselves is by delivering ongoing innovation and new product features without additional charge, like the addition of **AI** to Liberty. This substantially improves councils' ability to do more with their investment.

Local government never stands still, so neither should we.

#7 Listening to local government and building solutions that meet the sector's ever-changing needs.

Some solutions in the current digital marketplace are not delivering what customers need because local authority customers' needs are changing at a faster rate than the solutions they are using. This means that customers often have to fit what they need into a solution that might have been suitable once but now constrains those needs. This might be where the customer wants 'full end-to-end transformation' but their solution only helps with part of the journey.

We know they want flexible solutions from responsive suppliers that help them transform across the whole enterprise, not just the front door. We know that because we regularly listen to what our customers are saying. We will continue to listen to what our customers say. And act on it.

CUSTOMER NEEDS ARE CHANGING AT A FASTER RATE
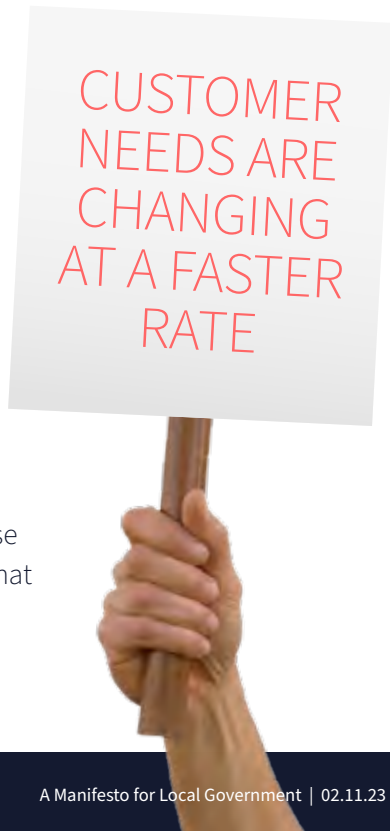
#8 Focusing relentlessly on citizen impact and working tirelessly to help councils cut the time between making an investment and realising value from it.

This commitment is the most important one on this list. As a solutions provider to local government, our key focus is on providing solutions that deliver the greatest positive impact to citizens. Alongside this, we want to ensure that council employees have the tools that they need to help them to do their jobs. That's ultimately why we do what we do. If our solutions don't do that, then we are not being successful. As well as impact, time to value is a really important measure of success. We are constantly looking for ways to reduce the time between a council choosing our solution and getting value from it. Some of the things in this manifesto, particularly sharing and reuse, help with that. But we continue to work in partnership with our council customers to make that time to value as short as possible. The sooner we can do that, then the sooner councils can become digitally autonomous.

PROVIDING
SOLUTIONS
THAT
DELIVER

We make these commitments because we believe that local authorities deserve better from the digital solutions market.

In our 20+ years, we have built a track record of trust within local government. Over 100 councils currently use our products and we have many more customers across the wider public sector.

We believe that the right solutions will help local government unleash their potential to deliver exceptional citizen and staff experiences every day.

Sadly, councils are held back by legacy challenges and a digital solutions market that is too comfortable with the status quo.

We're not comfortable with the status quo. Breaking the legacy stranglehold and giving digital autonomy to local government is our mission and this is our manifesto for how we will achieve it.

Sources

Source: https://www.local.gov.uk/about/what-local-government
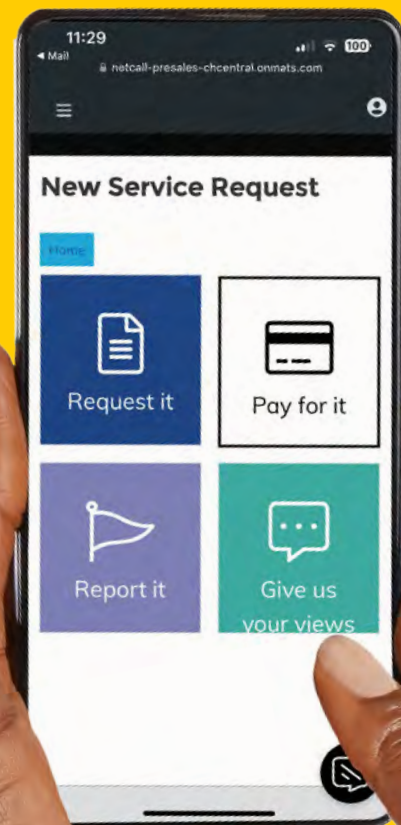
There are 398 principal (unitary, upper and second-tier) councils in the UK, including 333 unitary, upper and second-tier councils in England – 24 county councils, 181 district councils, 128 unitaries. There are around 11,930 local councils in the UK in total, including town, parish, community, neighbourhood and village councils. Source: https://lgiu.org/local-government-facts-and-figures-england/

Between March 1999 and December 2021, the numbers of employees in local government (in millions) reduced from 2.74 to 2.00 whilst numbers in central government increased from 2.31 to 3.52. Source: https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/publicsectorpersonnel/bulletins/publicsectoremployment/december2021

Central government grants – including retained business rates – were cut 37% in real-terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20, from £41.0bn to £26.0bn in 2019/20 prices. Source: https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/local-government-funding-england

This is the most widely accepted definition of 'digital', developed by Tom Loosemore, co-founder of the Government Digital Service (GDS) Source: https://public.digital/definition-of-digital

See: https://www.localdigital.gov.uk/declaration/

See: https://www.netcall.com/resources/future-proofing-cx/

See: https://community.netcall.com/appshare/

See: https://community.netcall.com/

See: https://www.forrester.com/blogs/why-you-need-to-know-about-low-code-even-if-youre-not-responsible-for-software-delivery/