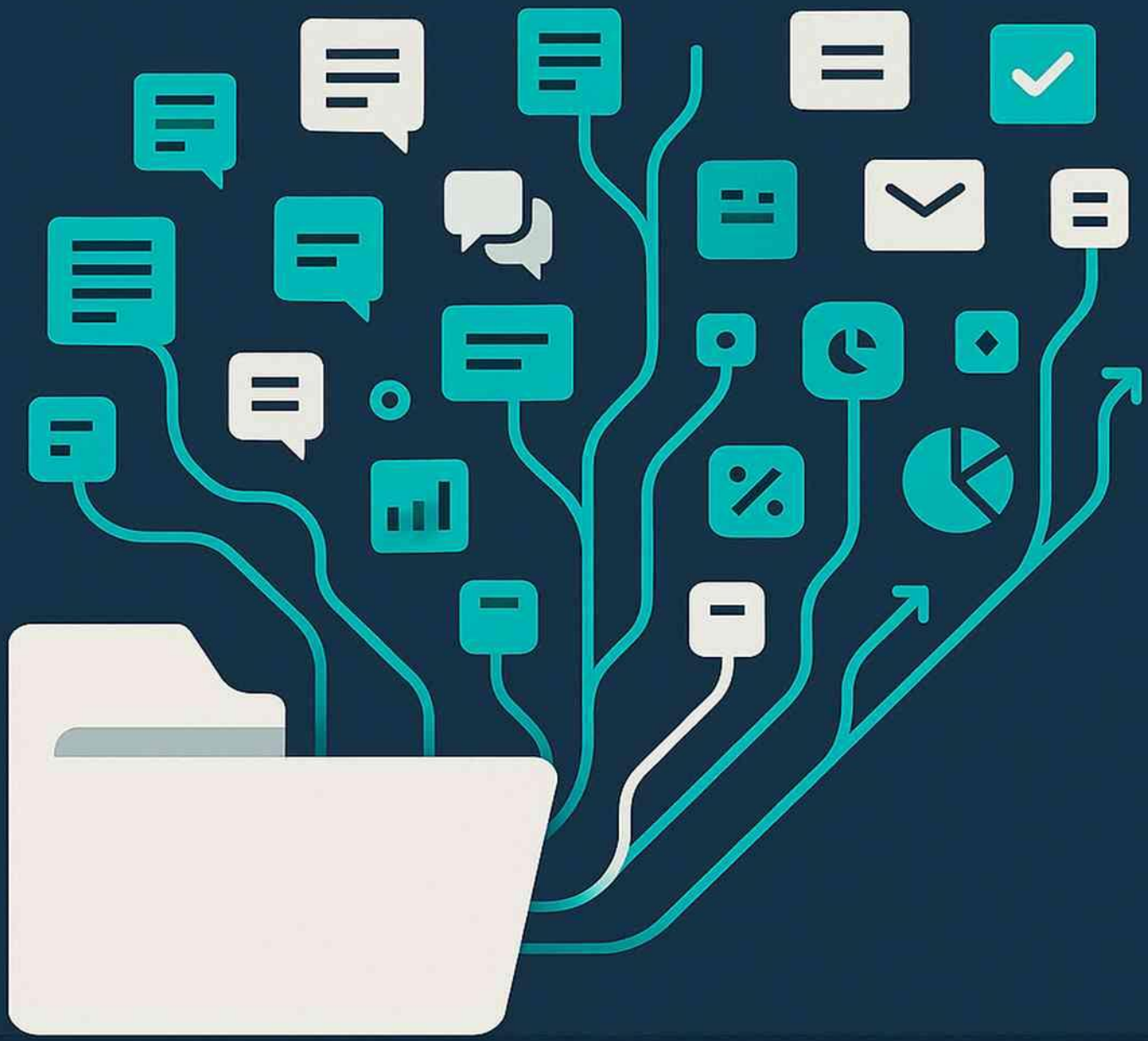
6 GROWING CHALLENGES OF INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

A special report for local government



LGimprove

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Executive Summary

Information is the lifeblood of any local council. It supports sound decisions, smooth operations, and happy citizens. Yet when it comes to effectively managing information, local councils in the UK face six serious challenges:

1. Regulations, compliance, and security
2. The “legacy” of legacy technology
3. An ever-growing landfill of data
4. Poor quality data that undermines decisions
5. Budget constraints that limit IT investments
6. A serious skills gap

Local councils have tried various ways to resolve these, some muddle through without a structured approach, others buy new technology, seek help from tech vendors, and hire large teams of consultants. These seldom address the root causes of the problem.

The most effective solution is to partner with a consulting firm that specialises in solving local councils’ information management headaches. The ideal firm should be experienced, agile, and have a track record of delivering tangible results.

The real solution to information challenges

To truly succeed in modernising how information is managed by a local authority, any project must focus on three vital areas:

1. Implementing sound **policies and processes**
2. Adopting cost-effective **technology** that supports these processes
3. Training and encouraging the council’s **people** to follow the new workflows.

By gaining the support of senior management and then addressing these critical aspects, local councils can overcome their information challenges. They can even begin to transform their data from a liability into a strategic asset.

This will lead to more informed decision-making, improved service delivery, and ultimately, better outcomes for the communities they serve.

The 6 Challenges Facing Local Authorities

In local government, a vast range of functions—from adult social care to tax billing—rely on good data. Any decision that affects citizens and businesses is only as good as the information it's based on.

Despite widespread acceptance of this, information management often ranks lower on the priority list of local councils than many other concerns.

Most proposals don't go far enough

When this area does become a focus—following an audit, data breach, or some other visible failure—funding proposals tend to stress how data underpins everything else the organisation does and how improving it will benefit the whole operation.

But the technical details often leave senior managers confused and non-committal.

Most proposals don't clearly explain how the vast, fragmented, and unstructured data accumulated over decades of piecemeal IT purchasing can be integrated into a cohesive system. And so, the problem remains unsolved.

Covid made information management worse

The pandemic forced many local councils to rapidly deploy tech to support remote work. This worked for the duration. But it ultimately increased the headaches in managing information. More data was scattered across many locations and more ad-hoc processes popped up on an already confused landscape.

For example, one of LGi's clients had over 80 million files of unstructured data in silos; the vast majority had no known owner and no coherent rules for retention. This is common among local councils.

Many organisations have tried without success to resolve issues with policies, technology, workflows, and culture—all combined to make a perfect storm. These problems can seem insurmountable. Sometimes you can't imagine where to start.

Local councils face six major challenges when struggling to manage their data:

1. Regulations, compliance, and security
2. The "legacy" of legacy technology
3. An ever-growing landfill of data
4. Poor quality data that undermines decisions
5. Budget constraints that limit IT investments
6. A serious skills gap

The rest of this section discusses each of these challenges in turn.

Challenge 1: Regulations, compliance, and security

Every public sector organisation must strive mightily to protect the private information of citizens. Yet local councils can be vulnerable to data breaches, malware, and penalties from regulators due to unclear policies, ageing IT infrastructure, and untrained staff.

Regulations must be followed

Local councils must comply with many regulations, such as:

- **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)**
- **Data Protection Act 2018**
- **Public Records Act**
- **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)**
- **Environmental Information Regulations (EIR)**

Any failure to safeguard data can result in fines, legal action, and damage to the reputations of both the individuals and the council involved.

Compliance must be maintained

Compliance means following the rules set by regulators and created by your council.

Every public sector organisation must develop clear policies and procedures for acquiring, generating, sharing, filing, archiving, and deleting data that employees handle every day.

Many executives focus on crafting policies and finding technology to support them. Yet even the most thoughtful processes and cutting-edge tech won't keep your council compliant unless every employee knows what to do.

This is often revealed when **LGi** is called on to analyse the information management of a local council.

LGi asked 70 employees—10% of the workforce—from **Somerset West and Taunton Council** (now part of **Somerset Council**) a straightforward question, as shown in Figure 1: "Are you clear on what you should do with your digital information at the end of its use?"

A full 75% of the staff said "no". Only 3% said "yes". The rest guessed "archive it" or "delete it"—responses that may be correct at times, but not all the time.

True compliance—indeed, every aspect of effective information management—relies on balancing three vital elements: **processes, technology, and people**. If one of those is overlooked, your council risks falling out of compliance.

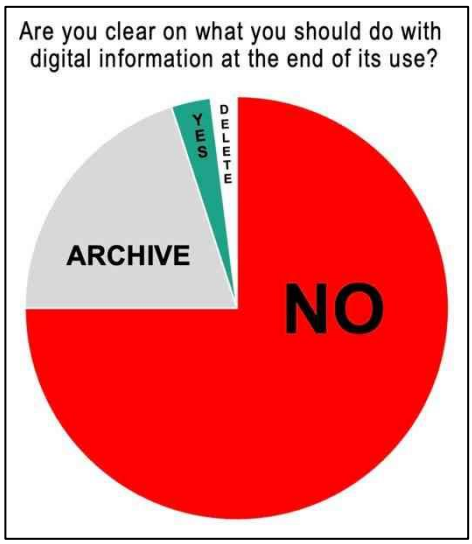


Figure 1: Many Employees Don't Know How to Handle Information

Source: Survey of council employees in 2021, LGi

Security is a constant headache

Maintaining security demands constant vigilance. Every local council has innumerable points of failure, including virtually every employee and contractor with an email address.

Hackers are constantly testing the defenses of every local authority using their favourite strategies of phishing, impersonation, and malware.[1] And these people are not just LOL-seeking teens.

“Highly capable state and state-aligned actors, including from China, Russia and Iran, are using increasingly sophisticated methods to carry out malicious cyber activity,” says a fresh report from the **National Audit Office**. And the prime motivation of these bad actors is “to undermine trust in our democratic system.”[2]

“We defend against 25,000 attacks per day,” says an Executive Director of Place in a recent survey.[3] Local councils like his can fend off 24,999 cyber attacks without anyone hearing about it. But everyone hears about the one time in 25,000 that a hacker broke in.

Non-compliance can cost a council dearly

The **Information Commissioners Office (ICO)** can issue a local authority reprimands, enforcement notices that demand changes, and fines… and it does.

For example, in October 2020, the **London Borough of Hackney** was hit by a major cyber attack that compromised personal data from at least 280,000 people. The attack severely disrupted services, some taking years to recover.

In July 2024, the ICO issued a reprimand to the council, calling out their poor cybersecurity practices, including outdated security patches and weak passwords.[4]

And early in 2023, the ICO sent enforcement notices to both **Lewisham Council** and **Shropshire Council** for failing to handle Freedom of Information (FOI) requests in a reasonable timeframe.

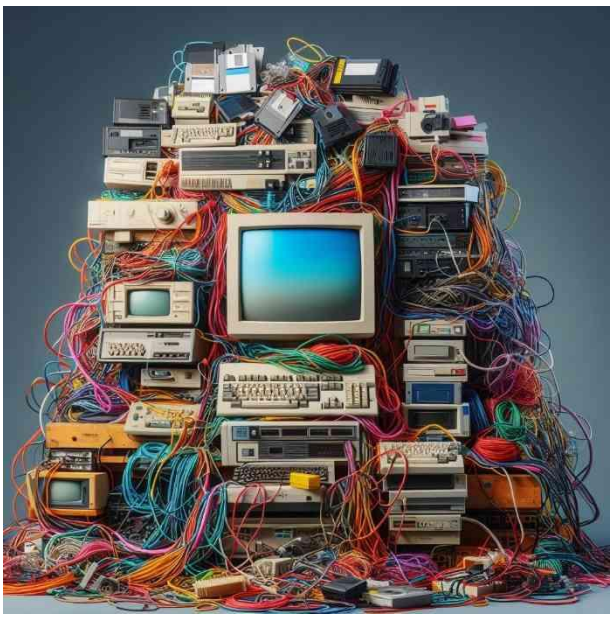
They had a good point: Lewisham had a backlog of 338 unanswered requests, while Shropshire had 143. Both had requests dating back a full two years.

The ICO gave each council 35 days to publish an action plan to fix their FOI handling and six months to clear their backlog.[5,6]

Failures like these grab headlines. They also erode trust in local councils.

And rebuilding damaged systems or clearing backlogs on tight deadlines divert valuable resources from other services.

Challenge 2: The “legacy” of legacy technology



Despite years of IT investments and the promises of countless salespeople, many local councils are still grappling with a sprawling set of legacy systems that can’t easily share data.

How does this happen?

Well, over time, various teams adopt software and hardware to meet their changing needs and priorities. Rush projects demand “workarounds.”

Temporary measures are thrown together in haste. These temporary measures then slowly become permanent.

This creates a patchwork landscape of IT that hinders local councils in everything from strategic planning to delivering services to citizens.

The burden of “technical debt”

The “legacy” of legacy tech can also be called “technical debt”. This debt is created when teams “borrow” against long-term quality by making short-term sacrifices, taking shortcuts, or using workarounds to meet deadlines.

Just like financial debt, technical debt accrues “interest” or extra costs to deal with issues like compatibility, downtime, interconnect, performance, resilience, and security of legacy systems.[7]

Most of the local authorities LGi sees still use at least one piece of software that’s more than 10 years old. Ageing IT is a fact of life for most local councils.

“Government still has a large operational estate of ageing or inflexible services,” confirms a recent report by the **National Audit Office**, “Moreover, many legacy systems in government have been insufficiently maintained over the years.”[8]

Can the cloud save us?

Most organisations are now turning to cloud-based solutions like **Microsoft 365**, which provides new possibilities for integration and connectivity to back-office applications.

But there’s no guarantee that better connectivity will mean better information management.

Remember, technology is only one part of the answer. Local councils must consider policies and people as well as technology, or the burden of legacy tech will persist.

Challenge 3: An ever-growing landfill of data

Local councils are sitting on huge data landfills—vast piles of documents and records accumulated over decades. Without a coordinated effort to clean up this digital waste, it just keeps piling up. That makes it harder for employees to find what they need, slows down operations, and increases the risk of compliance headaches.

The data explosion: A rubbish heap that keeps growing

Councils generate millions of new records every year. But without clear retention or deletion policies, this information quickly becomes unmanageable. According to **IDC**, data in the world's enterprises grows at 23% a year.[9] That means a council's data estate could double in size every three or four years.

Wigan Council estimates that its central repository holds more than 25 million documents, including databases, file shares, and scanned archives.[10] And they're not the biggest. Many councils are dealing with much larger volumes.

As the data piles up, so do related problems like findability and version control. Instead of a strategic asset, all this data becomes a liability—a mess that keeps growing year after year.

Scattered storage: Data dumped everywhere

In many councils, information is scattered across numerous locations. In a discovery session in 2022, LGi asked employees of a district council "Where do you store digital business information?" The responses, ranked by popularity, revealed no less than 16 different locations:

1. Email
2. Shared network drives
3. My desktop
4. My personal drives
5. "My Documents"
6. USB flash drives
7. Enterprise systems
8. SharePoint
9. The cloud
10. Mobile phones
11. OneDrive
12. Spreadsheets
13. Access databases
14. Discs
15. Off-site physical storage
16. OneNote

With records scattered spread across so many places, it's no wonder staff struggle to find information. This disorganised approach to storage wastes time for everyone: staff, management, and citizens.

The hidden crisis: Dark data and orphaned files

While councils generate more and more data, huge portions of it are effectively useless. A 2019 report estimated 55% of all stored information is "dark data"—files with no clear owner, purpose, or use.[11]

Councils face a related issue: orphaned files. Audits of UK councils suggest up to 70% of the data in shared drives has no clear owner, so it's nearly impossible to manage.[12] Rather than being managed or archived, these files remain in the system indefinitely.

The **National Audit Office** put this bluntly: "Government suffers from data which is incomplete, inconsistent, inaccessible, difficult to process, of poor quality, and not easily shareable."[13] This isn't just an IT headache, it's a compliance and governance disaster waiting to happen.

The productivity drain: Digging through the waste

The more data piles up, the harder it gets to find what matters. When **Microsoft** surveyed 31,000 office workers around the world, they found that 62% spend way too much time searching for information.[14]

In local authorities, the records on a single citizen, business, or property might be spread across a dozen different systems. Imagine how much time employees waste tracking down facts, comparing version numbers, and double-checking dates.

And when council management asks for a report, staff often can't quickly pull together an accurate picture because the data is too scattered, inconsistent, or outdated.

A vast amount of council data is DROT

In our experience, 55% to 85% of the data stored in network drives or old **SharePoint** sites is either duplicate, redundant, obsolete, or trivial. Across the councils LGi has worked with since 2020, the average amount of data that is DROT is 70%.

This data is costly to store and difficult to manage. It often turns up in search results, which means it can easily be included in reports. At best, DROT data adds no value. At worst, it's unreliable. Much of it shouldn't be kept at all, according to each council's own retention and disposal schedules.

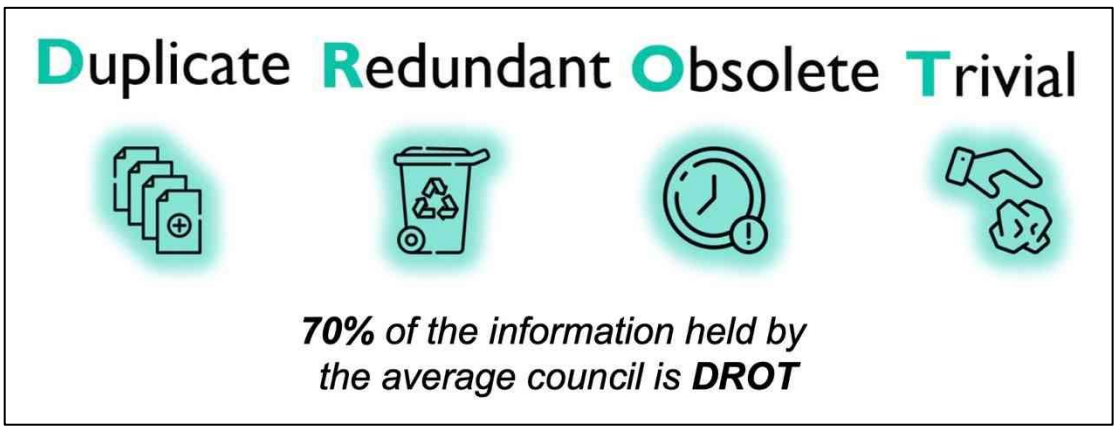


Figure 2: Councils should reduce duplicate, redundant, obsolete, and trivial information

Data landfills will keep growing unless councils act

Without a major clean-up effort, local councils will continue to drown in their own data waste. Like an unchecked landfill, digital clutter grows silently, making it harder and harder to extract anything useful.

Councils that fail to act now will face higher costs, lower productivity, and increased compliance risks in the future.

Challenge 4: Poor quality data that undermines decisions

Local councils rely on accurate data to make informed decisions about budgets, policies, and resources. But when data is incomplete, inconsistent, or outdated, this can easily lead to poor decisions, service failures, and financial risks.

The pandemic made this worse. In the rush to meet public needs, many local councils failed to maintain good data standards. Some are still struggling to recover, as degraded data from years past continues to hinder their operations.

Poor data leads to bad decisions

When councils rely on inaccurate or incomplete data, they risk wasting resources, delivering poor services, and frustrating the public. Decisions can drift from evidence-based reasoning to unfounded opinion, personal influence, or flawed analysis.

A stark example is **Croydon Council**'s financial collapse in 2020. An independent review highlighted how weak controls, ineffective risk management, and poor transparency left senior managers without a clear picture of the council's finances.[15] These failures contributed to serious overspending, a funding crisis, and a request for a £136 million government bailout.[16]

Croydon is not alone. Councils across the UK face inconsistent data, fragmented reporting, and limited data visibility. But without reliable data, decision-making is a guessing game.

Poor data wastes money

The financial cost of bad data can be enormous.

In 2018-19, the UK **Department for Work and Pensions** lost £3 billion pounds due to errors in benefit calculations. Millions of people were overpaid (and underpaid), forcing the department to spend years correcting its mistakes. This wasn't fraud—it was bad data at scale.[17]

Local councils face similar risks. With data scattered across many systems, it's tough to track spending, detect inefficiencies, or channel funds to the right programmes. Duplicate records, missing information, and inconsistent reporting waste time and money.

Poor data management doesn't just drain budgets, it also erodes public trust. When councils make decisions based on faulty data, this undermines their credibility and exposes them to mismanagement scandals.

Local councils need a modern data strategy

Bad data leads to bad decisions and wastes public money. Disorganised, outdated, or incomplete data undermines decisions, increases risk, and damages public trust. Without better data management practices, councils will remain vulnerable to service practices and financial crises.

Challenge 5: Budget constraints that limit IT investments

Local councils operate under severe budget constraints. Since 2010, central government funding has been cut by nearly 50%.[18] Rising costs, inflation, and increasing demand for services put further strain on already tight budgets.

As a result, every pound spent must deliver measurable value. No council can afford to waste money on projects that don't produce clear, tangible benefits—and IT modernisation is no exception.

Funding cuts outpace inflation

Since 2011/12, funding from central governments to local councils has failed to keep pace with inflation. As shown in Figure 3, costs have risen steadily, while real-terms spending power has shrunk. Even with the recent increases, the gap remains. Councils are still forced to do more with less.

"The current financial position of many councils places them at risk of missing invest-to-save opportunities in the digital sphere," concluded a recent survey on using new technology in local government.[19]

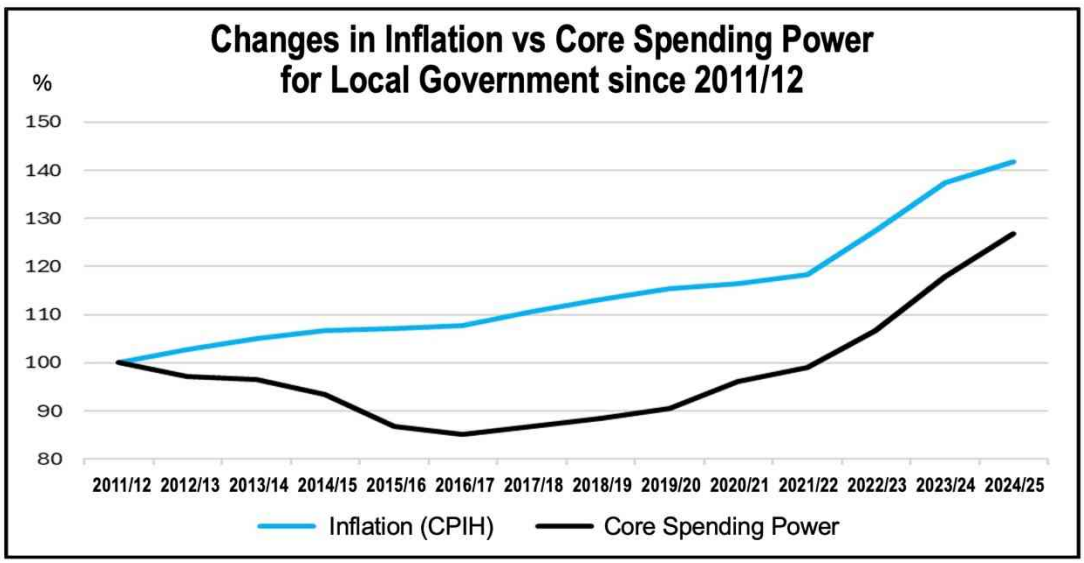


Figure 3: The gap between inflation and core spending power for UK local governments (2011/12 to 2024/25). Sources: LGi research

The struggle to fund information management

Most councils recognise that poor information management leads to inefficiency, higher costs, and duplication of effort. Yet many struggle to justify investments in modern systems.

Why? Building a business case for information management is difficult. Unlike frontline services, the benefits of data governance aren't immediately visible. It's easier to show results from a new road or social programme—but harder to show the financial return on better-organised digital records.

Without a clear, measurable ROI, these vital modernisation projects often fall to the bottom of the priority list.

Challenge 6: A serious skills gap

Many local councils want to streamline processes and modernise services, but they face three big hurdles. And all three relate to missing skills.

The plans aren't ready

Many projects branded as 'digital transformations' are nothing of the sort. Built on unrealistic expectations, lacking clarity and accountability, these may end up costing far more and delivering much less than advertised.

A lack of skills in developing strategies and communicating effectively with stakeholders can contribute to this issue.

The systems aren't ready

Even when a council has well-defined plans, it can struggle with outdated technology. In a recent survey, one quarter (26%) of public sector decision-makers in the UK said their existing technology is hindering their operations.[20]

Any tech update requires staff who can build a compelling proposal, complete with technical details, clear benefits, and projected ROI. This combination of hard and soft skills is hard to find.

The people aren't ready

While solid direction and modern technology are crucial, the success of any project ultimately depends on the people involved.

In the survey mentioned above, decision-makers said only 1 in 6 employees (15%) use digital tools to their full potential. And the UK **Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE)** found 61% of local council leaders say their teams lack the right skills to implement new projects.[21]

This skills gap extends beyond information management to include data literacy, analytics, business processes, and change management.

Among end users, new practices for handling data are often met with resistance. Users are tempted to fall back on their old way of working. Of course, this undermines any fresh initiatives.

All these issues highlight the lack of essential skills in project management, change management, communications, and training. These skills are crucial for helping council employees gain the knowledge and motivation to improve their data handling.

A daunting set of challenges

These six challenges do not stand alone. They are all interconnected, so that compliance soaks up scarce resources, while outdated tech prevents data from being consolidated, and the skills gap limits innovative thinking.

Together, these present a daunting set of obstacles for local authorities trying to modernise processes, extract maximum value from data, and deliver good services. Even knowing where to start is difficult.

Many information managers have the right instincts, seeking to move a whole team or department to Microsoft 365 or SharePoint. But if they don't get explicit buy-in from senior management to make changes across the organisation, these efforts are likely to fail.

What Local Councils Have Tried

Many information managers with local councils are aware of these problems, and they've tried several things to overcome them, including:

- Muddling through without a structured approach
- Buying more technology
- Asking tech vendors for help
- Hiring consultants

Now, let's consider each of these potential solutions in turn.

Muddling through without a structured approach

Every day, more data, more files, and more folders are added to your council's records. If that system is already shaky, every day just makes it worse.

No organisation can plot a course and steer in the proper direction without accurate information. At some point a senior manager will try to access some data that either can't be found or turns out to be incomplete or even misleading. When that day comes, the council's information managers will face a reckoning.

Instead of waiting until then, consider making changes now. If your current approach isn't solving your council's information challenges, try something new.

Buying more technology

It's a natural impulse when facing a tech problem: Why not buy some newer tech to replace your old kit? Sometimes that can deliver a quick fix.

But in this case, buying more tech makes information overwhelm worse. Adding devices does nothing to add discipline. Buying more storage just makes all your existing silos bigger. Setting up a new filing system for one corner of the operation doesn't bring order to the whole council. Throwing more tech at a mess just makes the mess bigger.

Simply bringing in new tech ignores two other areas that are vital for success: improving your information policies and educating your staff to follow them.

Asking tech vendors for help

Asking a hardware or software vendor for help with your information challenges is like asking a fox to defend the chicken coop. After all, helping local councils to rethink how they manage information is not the core business of any tech vendors. They will always recommend buying more of whatever they're selling.

The **National Audit Office** has already flagged this as a problem, saying, "Government must learn from past mistakes in how it has worked with technology suppliers, which has seen taxpayers' money wasted and missed opportunities to modernise."[22] That's because all vendors naturally push their own solutions, even when they do nothing to address the deeper problems a council is facing.

Hiring large teams of consultants

If tech vendors aren't the answer, what about bringing in consultants? After all, they have knowledge and experience your council needs to contend with its information challenges.

The trick is to find a consulting firm that's the right fit: not too big, not too small, with lots of experience serving local councils. But that's not easy.

Some consulting firms are too big

Giant consulting firms tend to rely on a cookie-cutter approach that may not align with your specific needs. The "Big Four" often come to mind when choosing consulting firms: **Deloitte**, **Ernst & Young (EY)**, **KPMG**, and **PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC)**, which have been criticized for delivering generic advice along with eye-popping invoices. In fact, in a recent survey of UK executives, 84% agreed that big consulting firms "are no help at all."[23] Large firms have large overheads, paid for by client fees. They don't just want your information work, but your strategy, transformation and restructuring too.

Some are too small

Consulting firm that are too small may lack the resources or sector-specific knowledge to meet a local council's requirements. They may not understand all the conventions, regulations, and policies that govern your sector.

Unfortunately, when you eliminate every firm that's either too big or too small, you eliminate most of the consultants active in the UK today.

Finding the ideal consulting firm for your council

The key is to choose the right partner—one that's the proper fit for your needs.

An ideal firm is large enough to have a strong team of consultants. Yet they're small enough to offer cost-effective services without the inflated fees of the global giants.

Most of all, they have a proven track record of delivering real value to local councils. Their portfolio of successful projects proves they understand local government operations, regulations, and challenges. They focus only on what they're good at and have no interest in 'landing and expanding' within your council.

By partnering with a firm that combines experience, agility, and a proven track record of delivering tangible results, your council can tap into the expertise to overcome your challenges. And you can truly begin to transform your data from a painful liability into a strategic asset.

The Real Solution to Information Challenges

Fixing information chaos might seem daunting, but a real solution is possible. The key is to have solid backing, a practical strategy, and a set of well-coordinated actions.

As shown in Figure 3, we believe any project to improve a council's information management must attend to three vital parts:

1. **Policies and processes** that adhere to applicable regulations and mirror your council's values and priorities
2. **Technology** that supports those policies and enables your council employees to work effectively
3. **People** who perform the daily operations of the council in support the council's policies making effective use of the available technology.

Notice that tech is only one part of this triad. Neglecting any single part will jeopardise your project's success.

Under each part, we can list several must-do steps, there are 9 in all. And the hub that holds all three parts together is council leadership, with unwavering support for the initiative.

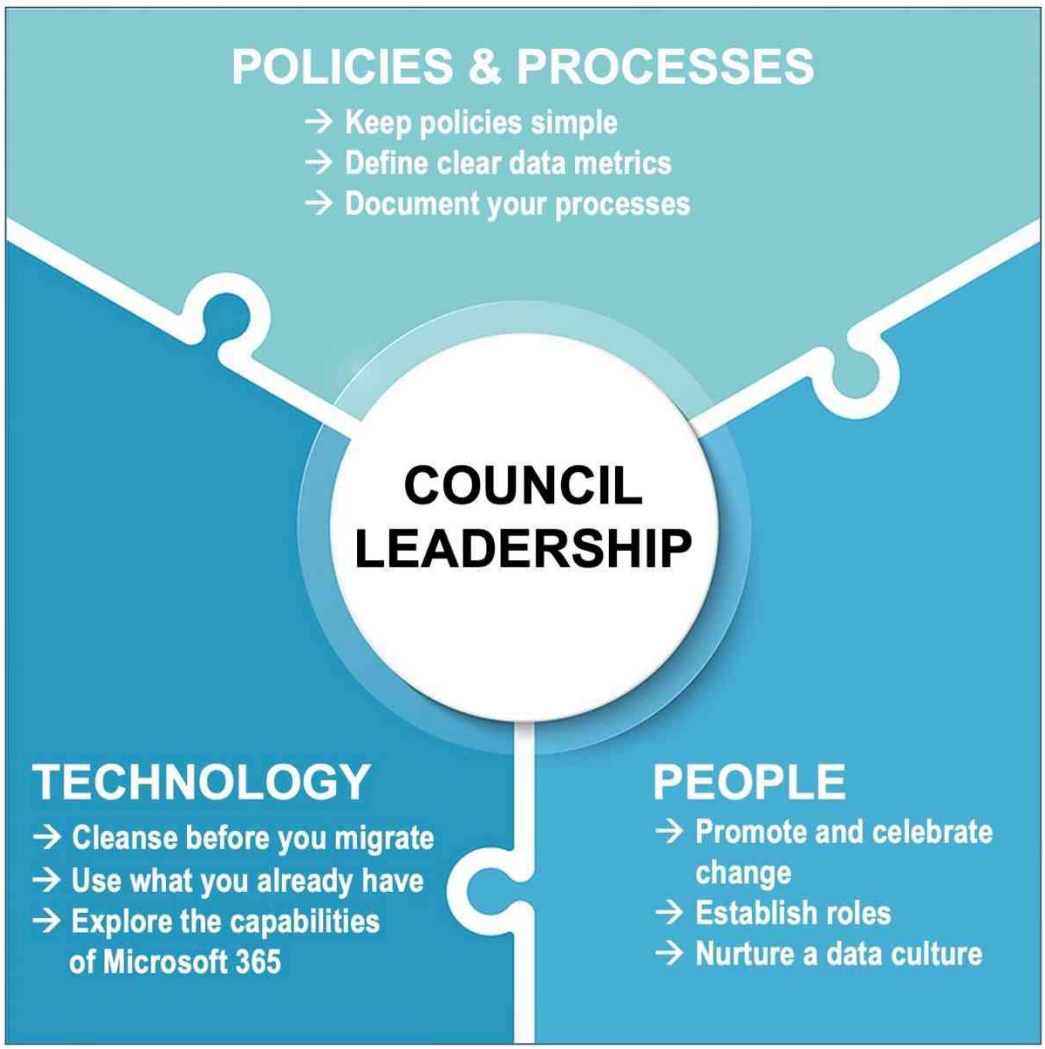


Figure 3: The three interconnected parts of any information management project

Get senior management on board

First, you need the support of your senior management. When your council leadership sponsors a new strategy, that shows everyone that it's a priority.

To gain their buy-in, you must prepare a proposal that goes beyond the typical IT funding request. Keep all the technical details high level. Focus on the many benefits to the organisation and the return on this strategic investment.

Acknowledge other spending priorities but remind management that your council has already invested in the Microsoft stack. This project will maximise the value of that expense. It will also significantly reduce your stored data, saving money and minimising the risk of any fines for non-compliance.

Emphasise that this is a one-time expense to clean up decades of disorganised data. Assure your leadership that you won't be making the same request again. By doing this once, you'll create a solid foundation for all future council programmes.

Part 1: Policies and Processes

After you gain the support of senior management, the next few steps are to develop sensible policies and the appropriate processes to follow them.

Keep policies simple

Any organisation-wide strategies for managing data should be easy to understand. Figure 4 shows different types of information and the best places to store them. Base your new policies on best practices like these.

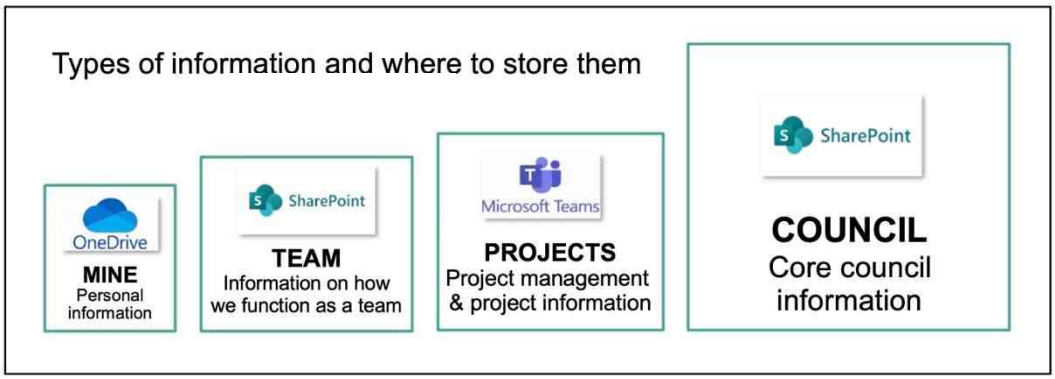


Figure 4: Base your information management policies on best practices like these

Any new framework must follow your council's priorities and adhere to all legal requirements. The single best way to ensure compliance is to embed your policies into your updated data-handling workflows as routine, automated steps.

Define clear data metrics

To effectively manage data, you need to know where you stand. Measure the current state of your repositories and put numbers to key metrics like data quality, security incidents, user satisfaction, and compliance audit findings. This gives you a baseline for measuring improvements and helps build confidence in your council's data.

Document your processes

Record how you perform repeating tasks to make doing them easier in the future. Make sure to cover your protocols for doing data protection impact assessments (DPIAs), managing records throughout their lifecycle from creation to archiving/deletion, monitoring security, and integrating or migrating data.

Part 2: Technology

Armed with clear policies, the next few steps help you embrace the exciting potential of modern cloud platforms. Deploying this technology correctly is the key to overcoming a council's legacy IT, skills gap, and other data challenges.

Microsoft 365 is emerging as the backbone of cloud productivity for the UK's public sector. More than 90% of local councils already use components such as **Windows 11**, **Exchange Online**, and **Microsoft 365**. Yet for many authorities, the powerful information management features of these platforms remain untapped.

In other words, much of what you need is already at your fingertips. The next steps will help you get the technology right.

Cleanse before you migrate

Moving all your data to a new cloud platform is like giving your problems the keys to a new home. When up to 85% of the data in your shared network drives can be duplicate, redundant, obsolete, or trivial, why migrate it? It's always better to cleanse your data first, then migrate.

Use what you already have

Embrace the information management features of your existing platform. SharePoint Online comes with built-in features such as document management, collaboration workspaces, intranets, metadata-driven content services, and search. And all these features integrate seamlessly with apps like **Excel**, **Word**, and **PowerPoint** that many of your staff already use. That lightens your training requirements.

Explore the capabilities of Microsoft 365

Since your council already uses Microsoft 365, explore its built-in capabilities for managing records. Cloud storage with automated lifecycle rules make it easier to sort content into the appropriate classes. Once these rules are set up correctly, they ensure that your council automatically complies with data protection laws and GDPR principles.

Part 3: People

Bringing in new rules will create resistance. Changing workflows will spark pushback. We see this in almost every council we deal with. That's why you can't afford to overlook the people factor. Without the cooperation of your staff, no modernisation project can succeed.

The best way to ensure that everyone follows the new processes is to make them hard to forget and easy to follow: Embed the new rules and policies as routine, automated steps in your updated data-handling workflows.

Promote and celebrate change

Rigorously promote the changes you're making in your processes and technology. Clearly communicate the benefits, involve your stakeholders, and engage users in designing new workflows. Provide lots of interactive training, carefully tailored to reach different audiences and learning styles. Measure your progress and share the wins with everyone.

Establish roles

Everyone needs to play their part in information management, not just managers. Assign some well-chosen people to serve as 'data owners' and 'subject matter experts' responsible for specific systems, compliance functions, and workflows. To help resolve any conflicts, clarify who can make decisions and how to escalate any issues.

Nurture a data culture

Seek to create a mindset across the council to treat data as a valuable asset rather than a heavy burden. Lead this change by encouraging data literacy programs, showcasing high impact use cases, and recognising staffers who use data in innovative ways. All this helps to fosters a data-centric culture.

Taking control of your information yields many benefits

By gaining the support of senior management and focusing on these essential activities, you can take control of your council data and conquer your information challenges. The benefits will soon be apparent.

You should expect all this from a successful information management project:

- ✓ **A cleansed, migrated and organised information estate**
- ✓ **A file plan that follows national standards**
- ✓ **A compliant information structure that satisfies all legislation**
- ✓ **File retention and disposal policies that run automatically**
- ✓ **All your technical and operational people fully trained**
- ✓ **Access to the information you need, when you need it**

Conclusion

Better information management can empower local authorities to make more informed decisions, streamline operations, and achieve better outcomes.

Treating data as a strategic asset rather than a burden can deliver many tangible benefits, including lower costs, better compliance, and less risk.

However, this transformation won't happen overnight. Moving on from archaic manual processes, fractured data siloes, and untrained staff can be challenging.

This requires careful attention to the three vital elements of project success: policies, technology, and people. Any comprehensive strategy must cover process redesign, right-sized technology, and effective change management.

If your council uses Microsoft and faces information management challenges, LGi offers a proven, cost-effective approach that will transform the way data flows through your organisation. Some recent case studies that highlight our results are included in the appendices.

To find out more about how LGi can help your council conquer your information management challenges, visit our website (www.lgimprove.com) or contact us directly at enquiries@lgimprove.com or on 0117 463 6962.

About LG Improve (LGi)

Founded in 2020, **LGi** is a specialist consulting firm based in the **UK** that helps local authorities get the most out of their information. We make sure the data flowing through your operation is structured, accurate, and compliant. And that means greater productivity, better decisions, and improved results.

We use the technology you already have, implement the processes and automation you need, and fully train your people—without any need for buying more systems or hiring large teams of consultants.

Some of our clients include **London Borough of Bexley Council**, **Milton Keynes Council**, **Monmouthshire County Council**, **Rochdale Borough Council**, **Staffordshire County Council**, and **Torfaen County Council**.

If your organisation uses **Microsoft 365** and you're struggling to manage your information, we can help.

About the authors:

Surj Bami, Strategy & Commercial Director and co-founder



Surj has more than 30 years of experience helping organisations solve their most pressing challenges. He has worked in multiple sectors delivering complex solutions, turning around failing programmes, and accelerating results. At LGi, Surj is responsible for the overall direction and commercial performance of the company. He brings a wealth of private-sector experience to his local government work, with a proven track record of delivering strategic information programmes.

Darren Cole, Operations Director and co-founder



Darren has a proven record of leading public sector IT and business change initiatives that align with an organisation's vision. He has successfully driven large-scale technology transformations, moving from legacy systems to modern cloud platforms.

At LGi, Darren leads the Information Management team that helps local councils maximise their existing technology and vastly improve their data integrity and compliance.

Appendix A: The London Borough of Bexley

Located at the southeast corner of Greater London, Bexley has 2,500 employees serving about 250,000 people. Bexley had done a lot of work on Microsoft 365, migrating mailboxes to the cloud and implementing OneDrive. Some data policies and retention periods were in place.

The council had some remaining challenges: using SharePoint Online to manage records, developing a corporate file plan, cleansing data and engaging all staff.

Bexley chose **LGi** to provide records management and SharePoint expertise, develop a new corporate file plan, and deliver a full suite of training.

The file plan was built in SharePoint Online based on Bexley's use of the **Local Government Functional Classification Scheme,** an information framework for local councils.[24] LGi adapted the scheme to suit Bexley's needs.

LGi provided the full cultural change programme, taking all 2,500 staff through the journey and all functions through file plan, mapping and migration workshops.

All duplicated, redundant, obsolete, and trivial data was removed, and the council reduced its total storage by 80% from 33 terabytes down to 7. Automated workflows for retention and disposal were set up. Corporate risk was reduced.

And the council saw a strong return on the investment in Microsoft 365.

Appendix B: Monmouthshire County Council

Monmouthshire County Council were seeking to implement SharePoint Online as their corporate electronic document records management system (EDRMS) solution replacing their network drives and older SharePoint sites.

Through their own data estate analysis, they identified 20TB (16 million files) of unstructured data that had been growing for many years. They knew these files did not comply with their own Information Governance policies, which relied on manual input from users.

The council had invested in Microsoft 365 and wanted to maximise this investment by using the information management, security and compliance functionality that came with their E3 licences. They had 4,500 staff that needed to be taken on a journey to new ways of working, improving productivity and collaboration.

Over an 18-month period, the entire organisation (over 160 teams) were taken through the process of cleansing and migrating their data to an agreed new file plan built within SharePoint Online, with workflow applying retention.

All teams were trained just before they migrated and supported post migration so that they were all working in the new way. The old network drives were changed to read only.

A full 75% of the data was left behind since it was found to be duplicated, redundant, obsolete or trivial. This has vastly improved access to accurate, relevant and compliant data.

The project was completed on time and on budget in December 2024.



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