



DOING MORE WITH LESS: HOW CONNECTED OPERATIONS HELP COUNCILS MEET RISING DEMAND

How Connected Platforms, Automation, and Responsible AI
Can Help Councils Improve Service Outcomes Amid Rising
Demand and Shrinking Resources

The Challenge: Why the Current Model is Under Strain

Citizen expectations of local government have shifted permanently. Residents accustomed to tracking a parcel in real time or querying an insurance claim through an app are no longer prepared to accept a lack of transparency from their council. They expect a comparable level of visibility and responsiveness when reporting a housing repair, querying a benefits payment, or following the progress of a planning application.

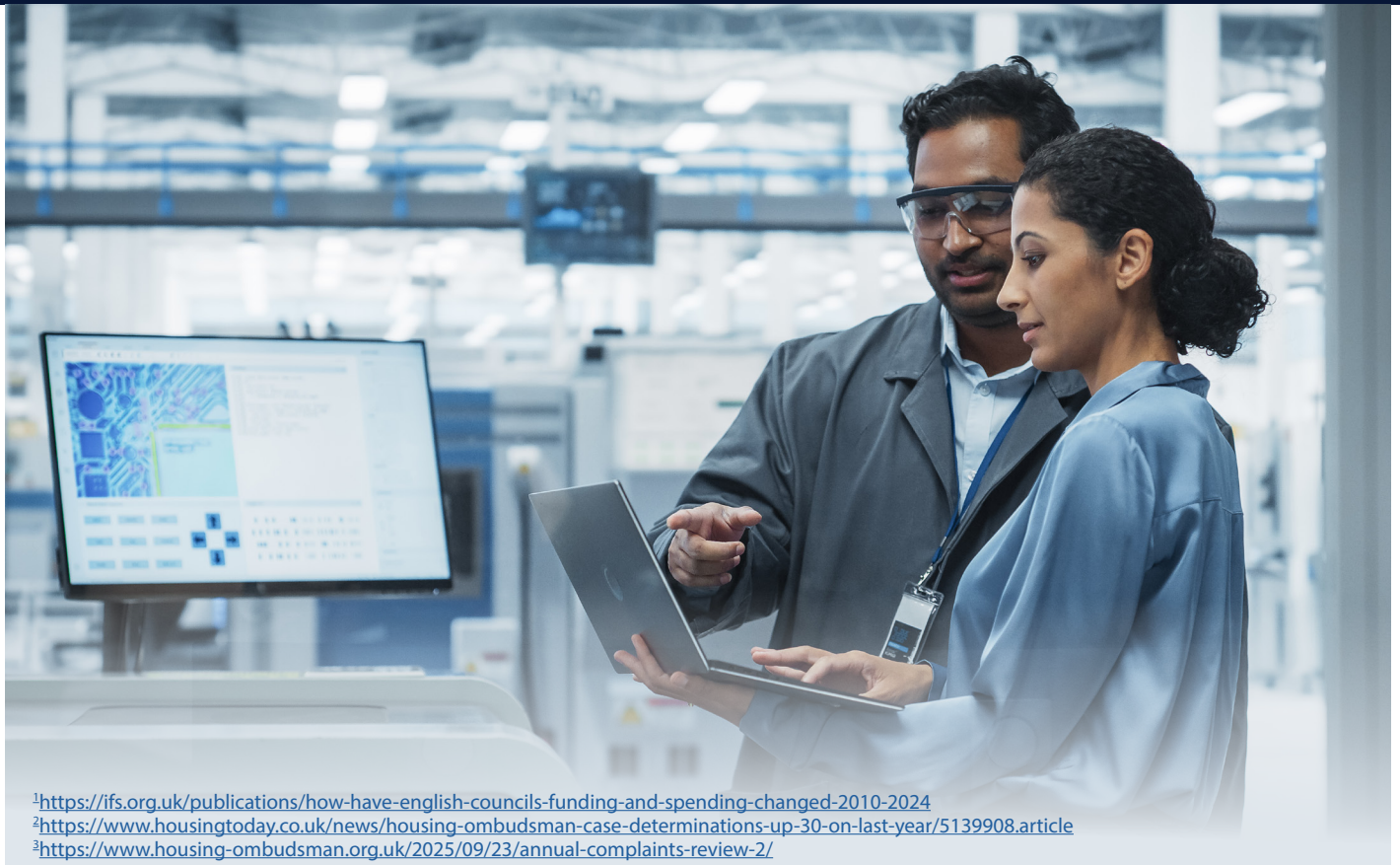
Councils are attempting to meet this expectation with markedly fewer resources than at almost any point in recent memory. Budgets across many local authorities are running almost 20% lower in real terms¹, even as complaint and service-request volumes continue to rise. The Housing Ombudsman's most recent annual complaints review recorded a 30% year-on-year increase in determinations², with 71% of those complaints upheld³. This is not an isolated spike; the trajectory is upward, and every part of the system, from housing to benefits to social care, is absorbing greater demand with fewer staff.

At the same time, the rapid evolution of technologies such as generative AI and AI agents is creating both opportunity and pressure. Councils recognise the potential of these technologies,

but also the importance of introducing them responsibly, with the right data, governance and operational foundations in place.

A single housing complaint illustrates the scale of the problem. What presents as one enquiry can, in practice, touch housing, benefits, contracted repairs, social care, customer service, and compliance teams before it is resolved. Since April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code has been statutory rather than advisory, and non-compliance is now published. A meaningful proportion of cases are nonetheless still submitted late, indicating a structural weakness rather than isolated failure, and one that carries genuine reputational and regulatory risk for the authorities concerned.

Beneath these pressures sits a further, equally serious constraint: workforce continuity. New starters typically require significant time to become fully effective in complex casework, and each departure represents a loss of institutional knowledge. Combined with services that remain fragmented across departments and systems, councils are being required to deliver more, faster, and with greater transparency, using an operating model that was never designed for this level of complexity.



¹<https://ifs.org.uk/publications/how-have-english-councils-funding-and-spending-changed-2010-2024>

²<https://www.housingtoday.co.uk/news/housing-ombudsman-case-determinations-up-30-on-last-year/5139908.article>

³<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/2025/09/23/annual-complaints-review-2/>

Why Today's Operating Model Can No Longer Keep Up

Most council operating models were designed for a different era: individual service departments, linear workflows, manual coordination between teams, channel-specific engagement and reporting that looks backwards rather than forwards. This model was adequate when complaints or requests typically remained within one team's responsibility. It is no longer adequate for a single case to routinely span five or more systems and several departments, each operating on its own timeline and with its own version of events.

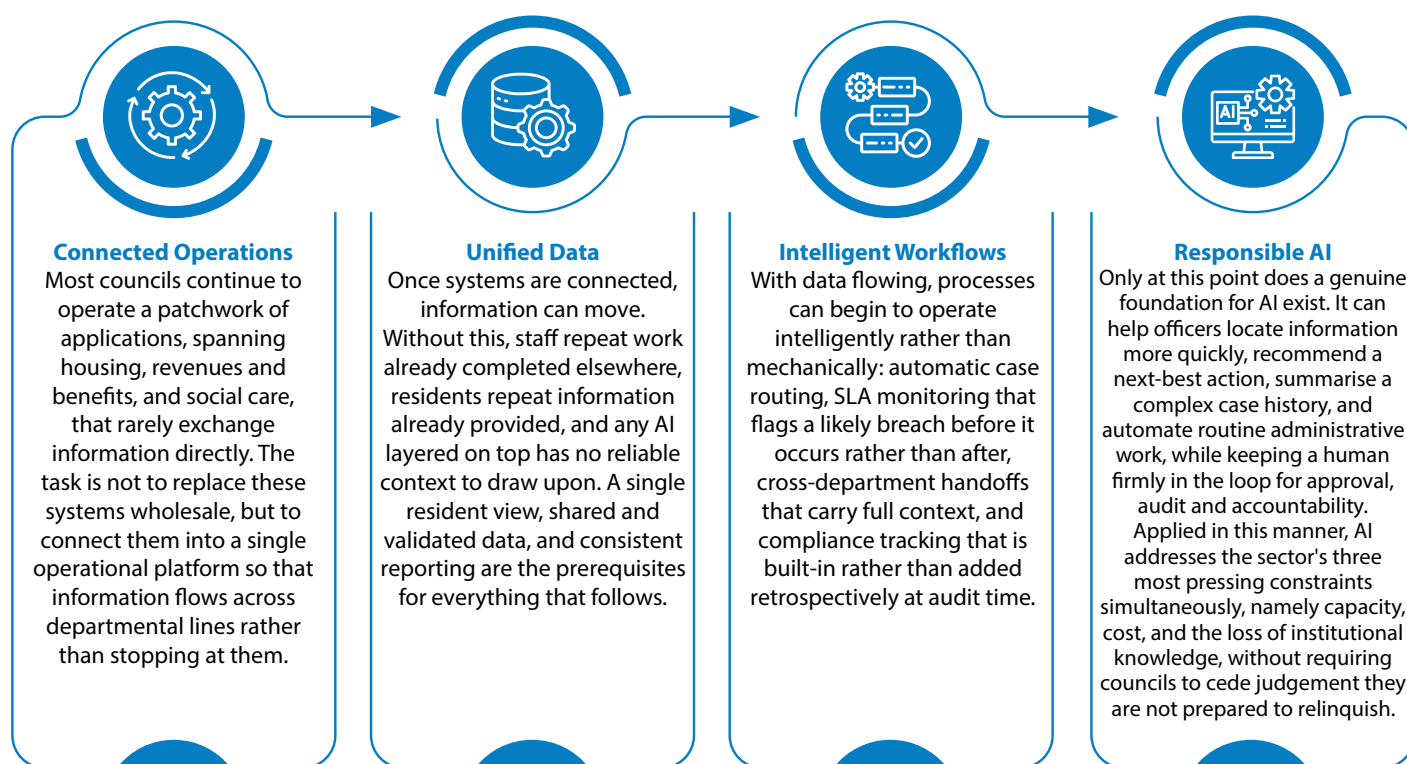
Today's environment requires a different approach: cross-department collaboration as the norm, connected citizen

journeys rather than disjointed handoffs, real-time information rather than end-of-month reporting, faster decision-making, and services that anticipate need rather than merely respond to it.

Many councils have already digitised individual services, moving forms and payments online, for example, and that progress should be recognised. However, digitisation in isolation has reached its limit. The next phase of transformation is the integration of services, people and data so that a council can operate as a single intelligent organisation rather than as discrete departments. Automation and responsible AI have a legitimate role to play, but only once that connective foundation is in place.

Building the Digital Foundations for Intelligent Government

AI dominates most discussions of the future of local government, but a degree of precision is required regarding what it actually represents: AI is not the foundation of transformation; it is the outcome of it. Without connected operations, trusted data, and integrated workflows in place, an AI initiative has little to reason over and is unlikely to deliver value beyond a demonstration. The journey to intelligent government begins several steps earlier, with four pillars that must be established in sequence.



Brent Council: Building the Foundations in Practice

Brent Council's experience demonstrates how local authorities can begin addressing today's operational challenges through a more connected approach.

Like many councils, Brent recognised that increasing service expectations, rising demand and evolving compliance requirements were creating a need for more efficient and consistent ways of working.

Complaints management was one area where these pressures were clearly visible. Brent Council was managing complaints through fragmented tools with no standardised approach across service areas, disconnected workflows, and limited end-to-end visibility. This made consistent, data-informed decision-making difficult and left staff without a single view of a case as it moved between teams.

From 2019, working with Infosys, Brent Council consolidated its complaints handling onto a single Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Power Platform environment, spanning corporate complaints through to cabinet-level cases.

The result was a unified view across services, standardised case management, streamlined workflows, self-service options for residents, and consolidated reporting through Microsoft Power BI. The impact has been measurable: a 50% reduction in calls and letters as residents shifted to self-service; a 50% reduction in call handling time; a 50% reduction in manual effort for officers, and continuous availability for residents to raise or track a case.

For other councils facing similar challenges, Brent Council's experience demonstrates an important point: transformation does not always require starting from scratch. This is the connected-operations foundation. It also shows the platform must be established first, before automation and AI have reliable foundations to build upon.

Accelerating Connected Government with Infosys and Microsoft

The next phase of local government transformation requires a combination of technology innovation, operational expertise, and responsible adoption.

Microsoft provides secure and scalable platforms that help councils modernise services, strengthen collaboration, and explore emerging capabilities such as AI-enabled productivity tools.

Infosys brings deep transformation experience across cloud, data, automation, and AI through capabilities such as **Infosys Cobalt**, a comprehensive suite designed to accelerate enterprise cloud

transformation and **Infosys Topaz**, an AI-first suite of services helping organisations modernise their technology foundations and responsibly scale emerging innovations.

Together, **Infosys** and **Microsoft** help councils move beyond isolated digital initiatives towards connected operations that improve employee productivity, increase organisational resilience and enhance resident experiences.



Looking Ahead: The Future is Not AI. The Future is Better Government.

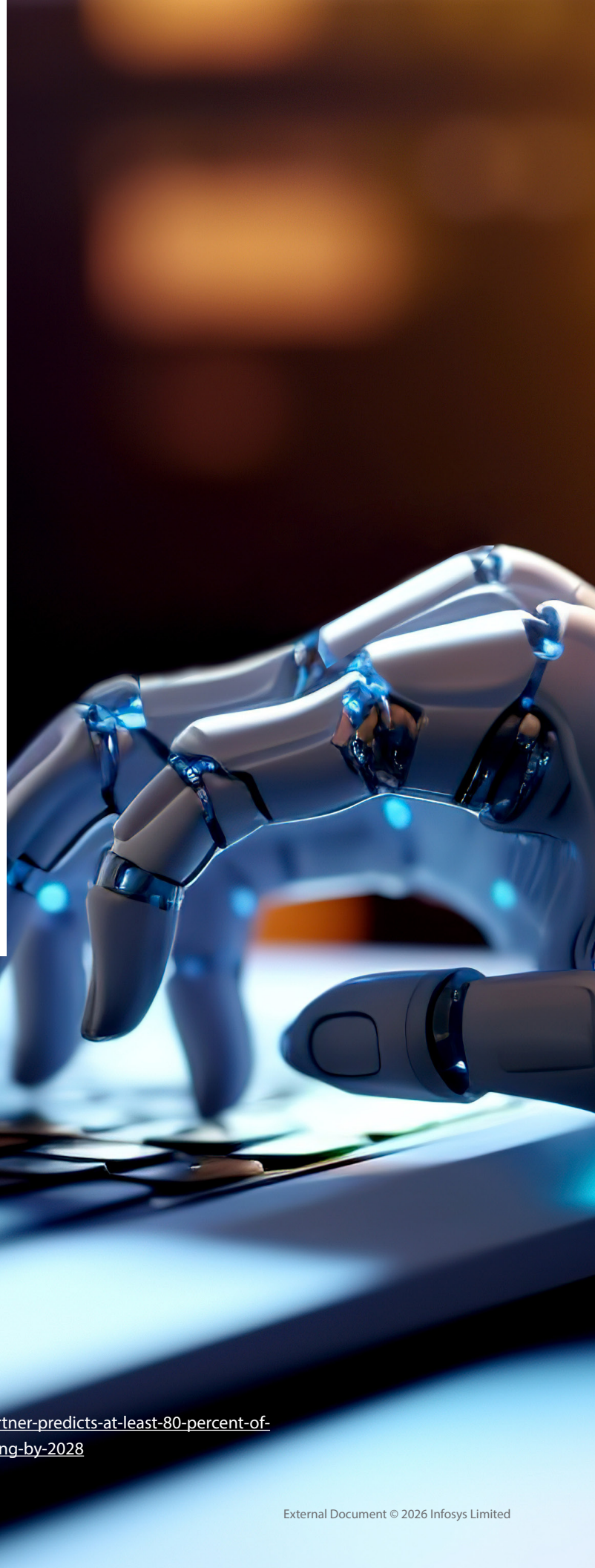
The next generation of local government will no longer be defined by how many services have been digitised, but by how effectively those services operate together. According to Gartner, at least 80% of governments will deploy AI agents to automate routine decision-making by 2028⁴.

To reach this point, it begins by connecting the systems already in place, providing staff and residents with a single, trustworthy view of a case, and establishing the workflows and governance that enable the safe introduction of automation and AI, while retaining people's control over judgement and accountability.

Brent Council's experience demonstrates that this is achievable, and that the returns, in officer time, resident satisfaction, and regulatory confidence, are tangible rather than theoretical. Proven approaches and established platforms can help local authorities accelerate progress, reduce implementation complexity, and focus on service outcomes.

For councils facing comparable pressures, the message is clear: connected operations provide the foundation for building services that are more responsive, resilient, and future-ready. Once that foundation is in place, the case for automation and AI builds itself.

Ready to move from fragmented services to connected operations? Engage with us to explore proven approaches that improve service delivery, strengthen compliance and prepare your council for the future.



⁴<https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2026-03-17-gartner-predicts-at-least-80-percent-of-governments-will-deploy-ai-agents-to-automate-routine-decision-making-by-2028>

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Tony Afuwape is a seasoned digital transformation leader, and has extensive experience delivering large-scale technology-enabled change across local government, the NHS, and complex public sector organisations. As Head of Digital Transformation at Brent Council, they have led strategic initiatives that harness data, automation, and digital innovation to improve public services. With expertise in enterprise transformation, programme leadership, and digital strategy, they have successfully delivered multimillion-pound portfolios while driving organisational change at executive level.



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Jamie Gillan is a Specialist in Microsoft's AI Business Solutions team in the UK. With many years' experience working with the public sector, he supports local government, housing, and transport organisations. He helps councils explore AI and digital innovation to modernise services and meet evolving citizen expectations.



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Mohit Sachdeva is a customer experience (CX) and digital transformation leader at Infosys, with experience across the public sector and financial services. His background combines customer engagement strategy, Microsoft technologies and AI. He brings a practical perspective on how local government can modernise service delivery, improve citizen experiences, and achieve greater operational efficiency.

Infosys Cobalt is a set of services, solutions and platforms for enterprises to accelerate their cloud journey. It offers over 14,000 cloud assets, over 200 industry cloud solution blueprints and a thriving community of cloud business and technology practitioners to drive increased business value. With Infosys Cobalt, regulatory and security compliance, along with technical and financial governance comes baked into every solution delivered.

Infosys Topaz is an AI-first set of services, solutions and platforms using generative AI technologies. It amplifies the potential of humans, enterprises, and communities to create value. With 12,000+ AI assets, 150+ pre-trained AI models, 10+ AI platforms steered by AI-first specialists and data strategists, and a 'responsible by design' approach, Infosys Topaz helps enterprises accelerate growth, unlock efficiencies at scale and build connected ecosystems. Connect with us at infosystopaz@infosys.com.

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