

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

Rapid growth in online services,
doubling usage

Transforming customer self-service
by removing barriers, improving
satisfaction, and automating more,
freeing up team resource to focus on
revenue collection and reviews.

- 11 FTE retrained and redeployed in Revenues & Benefits
- £356,000 staff costs saved from manual processing
- 90% automated Council Tax change of address
- Online take up has more than doubled since 2021 (20,000 to 45,000)
- Customer Services email facility now switched off

ABOUT NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

- Services 323,700 residents
- 150,000 council tax properties
- 43,300 university students
- 11th most deprived district in England out of 317 districts
- 22.5% of the working age population claim DWP benefits

BRIEF

The council wanted to increase adoption of online services by providing a seamless experience for citizens, without needless logins and passwords to remember, and improve customer experience with much faster processing of transactions.

The incumbent digital solution suffered from low uptake and poor rates of automation; the council wanted something less cumbersome with fewer barriers for citizens to quickly report changes online.

SOLUTION

In 2021, Nottingham City Council engaged Govtech to deliver its webCAPTURE Revenues processing automation service. This would transform – customer experience by making it simpler for more customers to use online self-service and improve performance with automated processing. Automation would free up experienced team members to devote more time to complex cases and focus on early intervention to aid recovery of debt.

RESULTS

Since going live in 2022, Nottingham has seen a rapid growth in online take up:

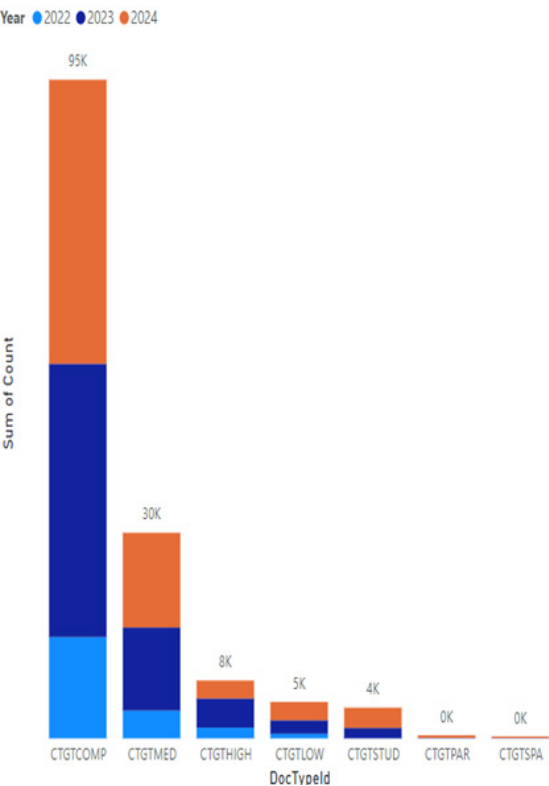
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The fact that our usage has doubled in two years and our automation is above 80% has been a game changer for us in terms of releasing staff and resources to other areas within Revenues.

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Chris Pembleton, Revenues Manager

As the following graph shows, not only was there an increase in online transactions, but those interactions were fully automated and archived in the Document Management System (DMS) as complete; meaning there was no work involved for the team.



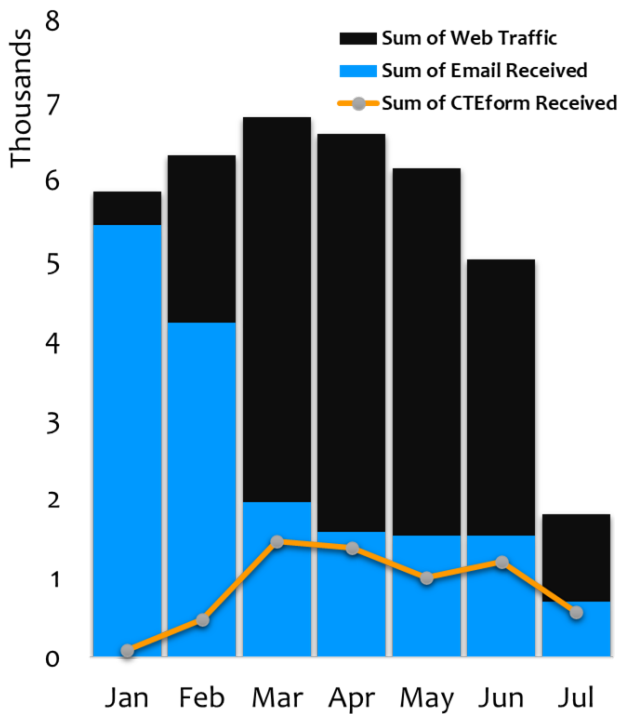
In Revenues, completed items (those which were fully automated) freed up the time of 6.5 FTE. Other items, which business rules flagged for Review, also delivered savings because these had also been partially automated and the intervention generated explained exactly what was required by the Officer to complete them.

“There are huge savings on the work that comes through, either partly automated or fully. We are in control of what gets automated, and our business rules ensure that we’re only looking at things we’ve specified that we want to see. Everything else is automated.”

In monetary terms, reverse analysis has shown that, if Nottingham were to manually process the transactions automated by Govtech, it would take 160,000 hours. Instead, this resource has been reassigned to focus on early interventions and recovery which has a positive impact on the collection rate.

In Benefits, Nottingham has subscribed to UCDS, Govtech’s Universal Credit Digital Service, where automation has helped to release around 6 experienced Benefits FTEs, who now either spend more time dealing with complex cases or were retained within Revenues for the purpose of council tax administration and debt recovery which provides greater added value than removing the positions. The ability to free up and redeploy experienced staff is consistently reported by Govtech customers.

The rapid growth in online take-up following the removal of registration barriers meant that the email channel declined, and Nottingham felt comfortable that switching off that channel altogether would not simply divert people back to the contact centre.



A key aim of Nottingham was to transform the online experience for citizens alongside a doubling of online engagement in 2 years....

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We've got a sample of more than five thousand responses with an overall Trust Pilot rating of 4.6 out of 5, which is fantastic. All our council tax forms came out on top... and some of the comments we've received include: 'easy to use', 'excellent' and 'easy options'.

Chris Pembleton, Revenues Manager

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More recently, Nottingham's statistics from Q3 2024/5 show it is achieving an automation rate of 90% for 'Change of Address' which is the most complicated Council Tax transaction to fully automate. A tremendous achievement which places Nottingham joint-third in the Govtech 'change of address leaderboard'.

"We're seeing the benefits of that in the service and with our backlog which has come right down."

SUCCESS FACTORS

Migration and onboarding

Having engaged at the end of 2021, with implementation in 2022, within 6 months the process was live and seeing return on investment from the start. Customers were happy to engage online and benefit from the improvements in automatic processing. An increase of over 50% in online transactions is testament to that.

90%

automation rate
change of address

**11 FTE**

resource saved
and redeployed in
Revenues

**£356,000**

staff costs saved
from manual
processing

**Email**

channel switched
off

**4.6/5**

customer
satisfaction
from web forms
feedback



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It was very simple to do. Revenues and Benefits are very highly regulated, and rules based. As experts in that field, Govtech were able to help us to set and tailor our business rules for automation. It really is just a configuration project. So, the implementation and testing was very simple.

Chris Pembleton, Revenues Manager

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Journey to get more from automation

As with every automation journey, working together in partnership, Nottingham evolved and tweaked its parameters to try and tune out items that were categorised as either medium or high. This involved changing their business rules to maximise automation, allowing more transactions to be processed without manual intervention, or at the very least, minimal validation from a colleague. Those that were still flagged would be presented and prioritised in the DMS workflow for colleagues to complete.

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When we first went live, we started off quite strict in terms of how far we would allow people to backdate to a certain period; we moved from three, to six months which helped with our automation rate. The more we felt comfortable and confident with the service, the more we allowed, as we knew what the automation service was delivering.

Chris Pembleton, Revenues Manager

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Also with an annual service review, together Govtech and Nottingham look at its automation statistics to see what is working, what could be improved, deliver more, as well as sharing of best practise from other councils and how it might benefit or apply to them.

Online adoption

One of Nottingham's key objectives was to get more of their citizens and customers to transact online. It was difficult to promote the previous online solution as it didn't deliver in terms of automation meaning customers were still waiting for their requests to be processed. They needed to channel shift to the new Govtech webforms so they could benefit from the perks of automation. Branded to suit Nottingham's website, the new forms were put in place and instantly, and quite rapidly, traffic to the forms grew and so the team was able to close emails as a channel to reach them; instead directing them to their new suite of webforms on their website.

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In essence, people tell us who they are, what they're here to do, and we tell them there's a form to do that, and we provide them the link which directs them straight to the Govtech form. Whether it's to make a change, set up a direct debit, apply for a discount or exemption, setup a payment arrangement or engage with landlords. The more we can channel shift customers to using the online forms, the greater automation we see, and the more resource we can free up.

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Chris Pembleton, Revenues Manager

Customer satisfaction

Feedback on the new webforms provided outstanding results, with citizens delighted by how 'easy' it was to interact online. A survey from a sample of 5,000 respondents scored the new forms a 4.6 / 5 for satisfaction and because of this, they are more likely to continue using online services. Thus, as the tangent continues to grow, and with more people interacting online, the more savings and resources saved within the team.



ABOUT GOVTECH

Govtech is part of the Netcall group and a trusted partner for its many UK local authority customers. As experts in digital process automation, we help councils to maximise returns on investments in online services, Customer Experience and Customer Relationship Management systems. Our hosted solutions integrate with all mainstream Revenues and Benefits systems and automate processing of online Revenues and Benefits transactions.

We help you achieve more by freeing up skilled resources that are lost to manual checking and processing. As budgets tighten, demand grows and resources are stretched thinner, you're trying to do more with less. Whether you use NEC, MRI, or Civica, our end-to-end eCAPTURE and webCAPTURE digital process automation services will help you to bridge the gap.

All standout digital transformation success stories begin somewhere

No matter what your starting point is, get in touch and our team will arrange an informal conversation to understand what improvements you want to make and why, explore ways digital process automation may be able to assist and, if you need it, provide help to write a business case based on achieving those goals.

hello@govtech.co.uk | **01285 659286** | **www.govtech.co.uk**



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