apse membership resources

Briefing 20-66   July 2020

Council mobile apps

To: All Chief Executives, Main Contacts and APSE Contacts in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

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Key Points

Many Councils over the past few years have invested in their websites and in mobile apps to reduce the demands on service centres, and to improve the quality of services that they can deliver to residents. This briefing outlines some of the best practice examples of local authorities using mobile applications for these purposes.

1.0   Why have a mobile app?

A good mobile app can:

- Make sure that public services and information remains easily accessible for residents
- Reduce the number of contact centre requests and free up the service for people who need it most
- Reduce transaction costs of public enquiries
- Allow for more effective reporting of issues and faults (e.g. with photographs, GPS locations, availability of tenants)
- Help the Council to achieve a range of different goals and priorities for the local area (e.g. increasing tourism)
- Help to keep members of staff informed and up to date

Some local authorities also recommend certain mobile apps to residents, such as this website page from City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council which recommends a range of externally produced apps to assist with healthy living. Below are some examples of the different types of mobile apps that have either been developed by the local authorities or pre-developed apps are being utilised by local authorities to deliver information to residents. Each example contains a link to the Android and iPhone versions of the app and a link to the Council website for more information. Screenshots of the app are also included in each example.

2.0   Mobile app examples
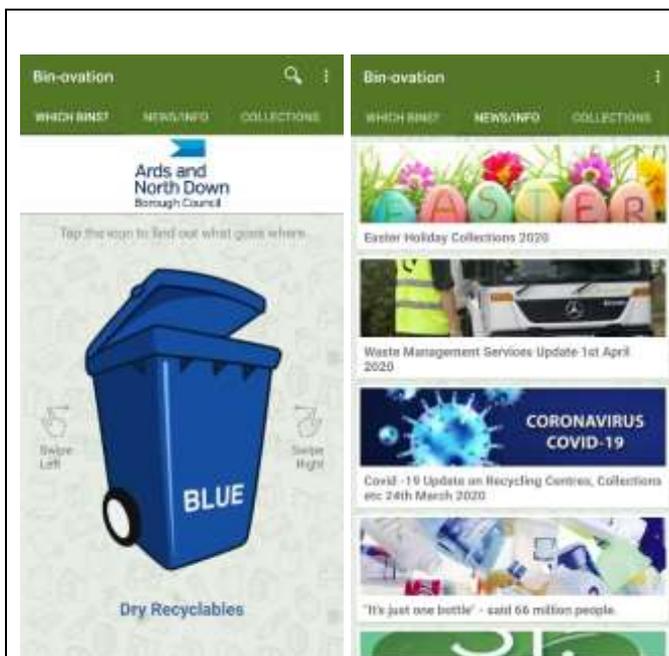
Example (left): Swipe through the different options and click on the bin to see what items go in

Example (right): The latest news on the waste and recycling service for residents
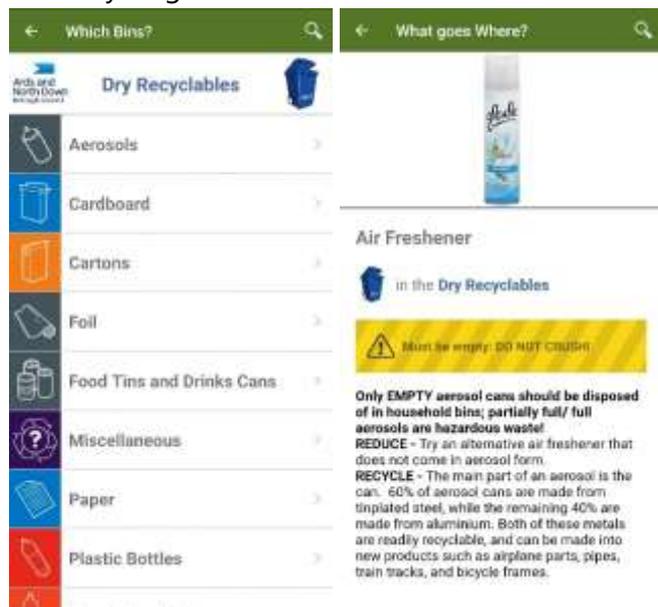
Example (left): Some of the different categories of items that go in the blue dry recyclables bin

Example (right): Advice on how the selected item should be placed in the bin, with a warning about not crushing it or placing it in a bin if not empty

Bin-Ovation

(several councils)

(**Google Play / App Store / Council Website**)

Bin-Ovation is an app that is currently used by 9 councils in Northern Ireland to provide:

- information about bin collections
- detailed information and photos of which items go in the different recycling bins separated by category
- news and information from the council about recycling services (e.g. changes during holiday collections)
- push notifications for when bins should be put out
- locations of recycling centres
- a form to contact the Council about waste queries

Ards and North Down Borough Council recently celebrated having 30,000 users. The mobile app is a great example of how an app for a particular service can assist the Council in achieving their goals (in this case – ensuring the right materials go out in the right bin, and that residents have the most up-to-date information on their recycling service.

Example (left): Main menu showcasing the different features of the app (e.g. ebooks, audiobooks, search)

Example (right): Opening hours, location, map and travel information for each library
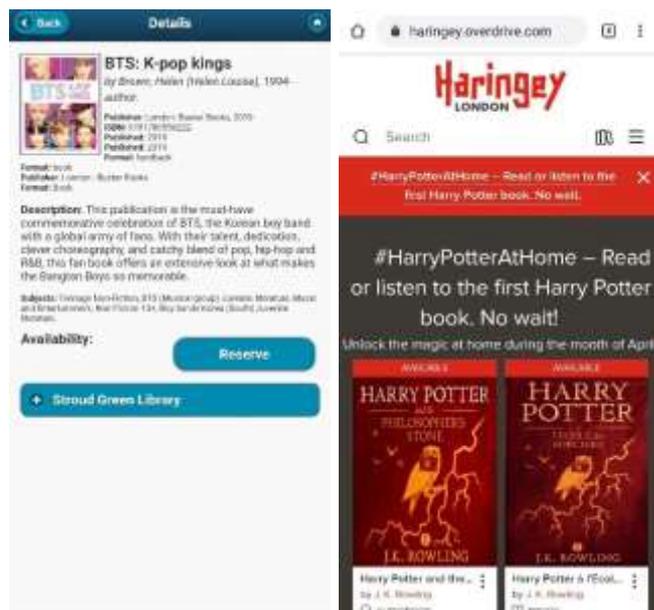
Example (left): Record page for an item that is available for reservation, and what library the book is currently in

Example (right): Free ebooks and audio ebooks that are available for download through the app

Haringey Council - Libraries

**([Google Play](#) / [App Store](#) / [Council Website](#))**

Haringey Council have a range of mobile apps for different services including:

- [Our Haringey](#) for reporting problems on streets
- [Mod.Gov](#) for council meeting papers
- [My Haringey Home](#) for council tenants
- [Home Connect](#) for those on the housing register
- [PayByPhone](#) to pay for parking
- [SpeedoFit](#) for swimmers

Their Haringey Libraries app gives instant access to thousands of books, CDs and DVDs through their fully integrated library catalogue.

The app also has a great feature that allows you to scan the barcode of any book, CD or DVD when you are out shopping so you can check whether it is available to borrow in one of your local Haringey libraries.

The app also includes directions and opening information, news, information on upcoming events and lets you login to manage your account.
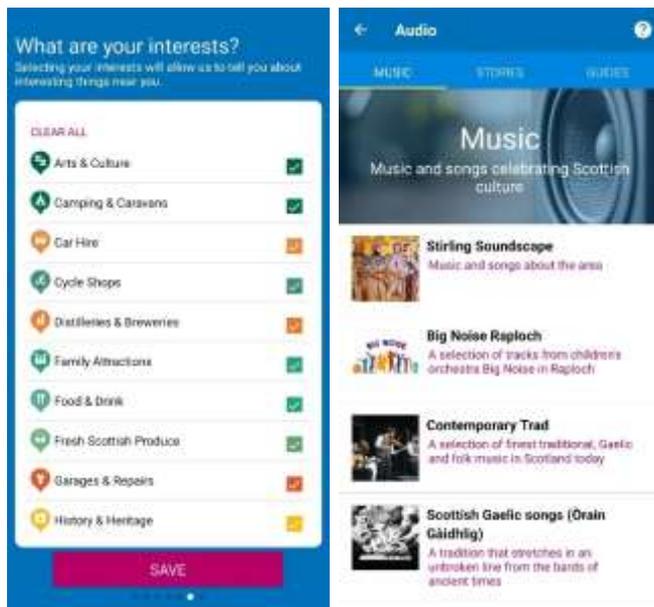
Example (left): A list of interests that can be selected

Example (right): The music player available in the app that offers several free playlists of songs about the Stirling area and traditional types of Scottish music

Stirling Council

- Explore Stirling

([Google Play](#) / [App Store](#) / [Council Website](#))

Stirling Council have a mobile app called Explore Stirling that acts as a travel and tourism guide for the local area. When you open the app, you can select from a wide range of interests. The app contains:

- Walking Tours (with optional audio guided tours taking in local historical sites)
- Driving Tours
- Cycling Tours
- Lists of recommendations for everything from family activities to independent shops (with GPS functionality to guide you to them)
- Several different free music playlists of songs about the area and traditional Scottish music
- Collections of stories from local storytellers
- Guides to Robert Burns, Stirling Statues, the Battle of Bannockburn, etc
- A searchable map of the local area with highlighted sites of importance

This mobile app is a great example of how a Council app can provide value for residents while helping the Council achieve its goals (e.g. increasing local tourism)
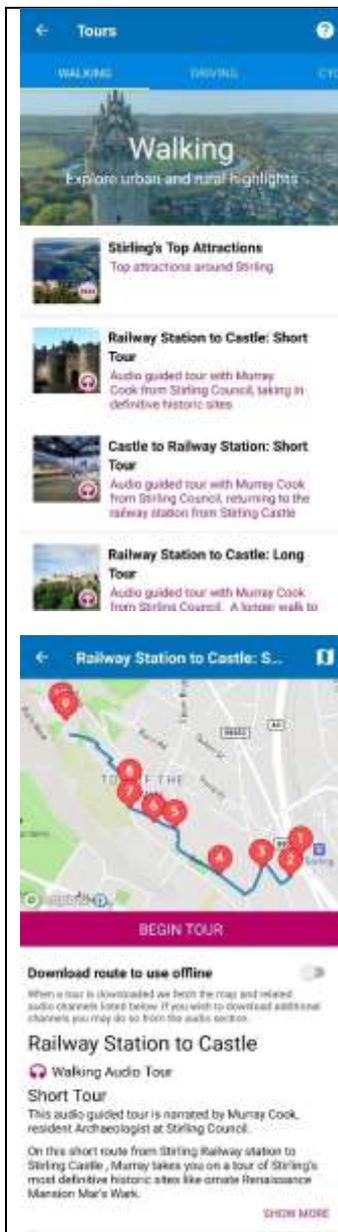
Example (left): The Tours menu which highlights the different walking, driving and cycling routes available in the app

Example (right): An example of one of the audio guided walking routes with built in directions and the ability to download the route to use offline

Example (left): Main navigation page

Example (right): Councillors contact details page separated by geographical area
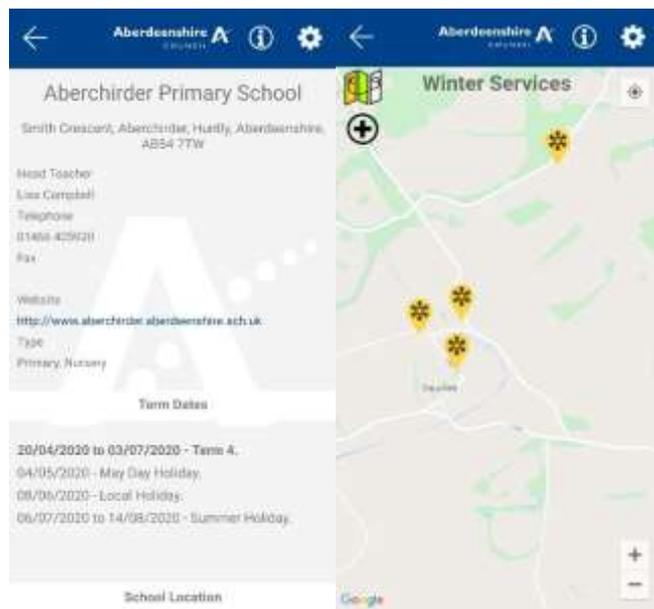
Example (left): Address, contact details and term dates for primary, secondary and special schools

Example (right): Locations of grit bins in your local area

Aberdeenshire Council - myAberdeenshire

([Google Play](#) / [App Store](#) / [Council Website](#))

Aberdeenshire Council have a very comprehensive mobile app that lets users access a wide range of council services. This includes:

- checking recycling collection dates
- checking school and term dates
- finding local recycling centres
- browsing events
- viewing council jobs
- accessing contact details for councillors and watching live/archived council meetings
- viewing council winter service gritting routes and the locations of grit bins
- reporting road and street lighting faults
- council news
- push notifications for multiple services

This app is a very good example of how to produce an all-in-one app solution. Many of the pages work in app and others redirect to the appropriate pages on the council's website.

Example (left): Main menu

Example (right): List of home repairs. If you click on any of these options it generates another list of items, so you can specify what needs repaired
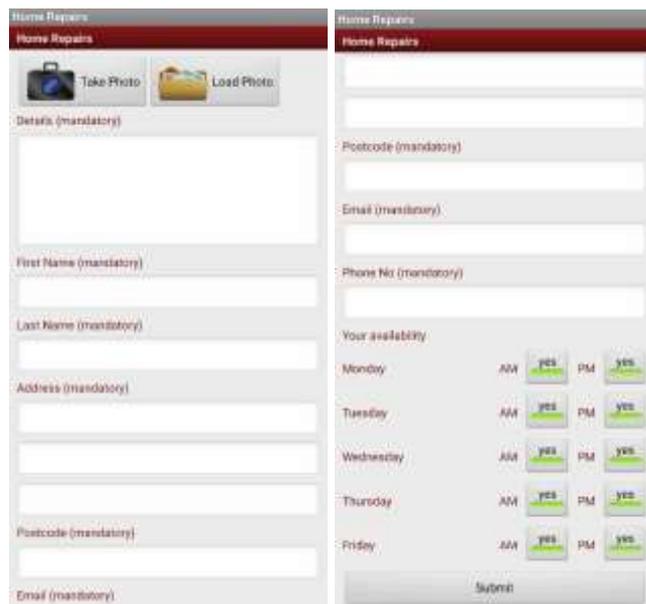
Example (left): Form to complete

Example (right): (continued) form to complete, with the ability to add your availability Monday to Friday, morning or afternoon.

North Lanarkshire Council - NLC Local

([Google Play](#) / [App Store](#) / [Council Website](#))

North Lanarkshire Council have a well designed mobile app called NLC Local that allows residents to:

- report home repairs
- report street repairs
- make payments (rent, council tax, fixed penalty fines, etc)
- access information on universal credit
- access the council website
- plan travel and journeys in North Lanarkshire
- access the Money Advice Service
- requesting services such as street cleansing, litter removal
- access other general information such as school holidays, registering to vote, reporting flytipping / graffiti / abandoned vehicles etc

On the left side, it shows their reporting function in the app with an example of best practice by including the tenant's availability at the point of the inquiry.

A wide range of services can be accessed through the app and it is well laid out and easy to read.
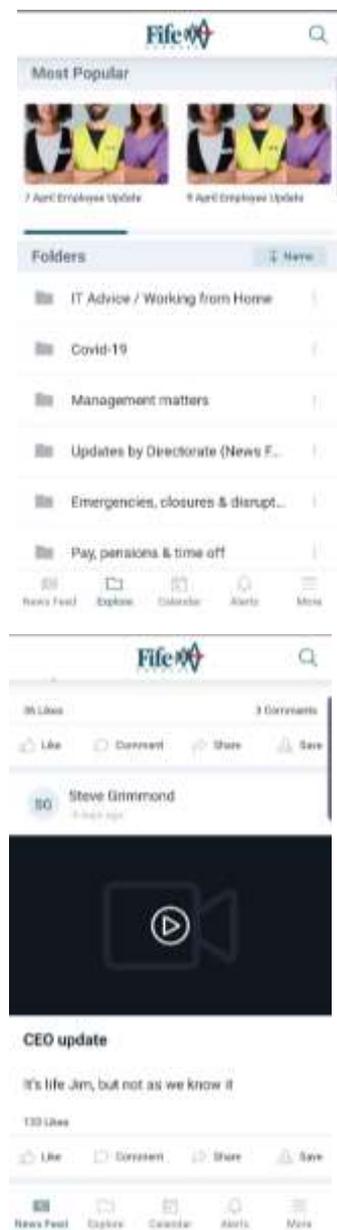
Example (left): Folders showing lots of useful information

Example (right): Video updates, like this one from the CEO

Fife Council

FC People - Internal app

(**Google Play** / **App Store** / **Council Website**)

Fife Council People is an employee app that has many handy features including:

- a news feed
- useful information and answers to common questions on topics such as terms and conditions, pay, pensions and time off
- access to HR, employee benefits and training systems
- instant alerts and advice in emergencies or bad weather
- ability to give feedback and submit questions
- directory of useful contacts

The app can be logged into with a Fife Council e-mail address and is also available as a website http://fife.theemployeeapp.com/.

The screenshots to the left demonstrate some of the different features of the Fife Council internal employee app.
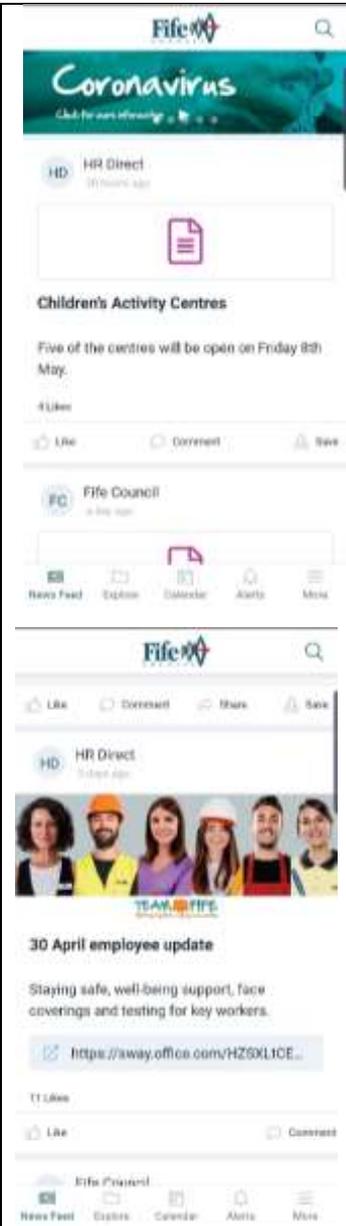
Example (left): Updates from HR on coronavirus and children's activity centres

Example (right): Employee updates

3.0   APSE Comment

As one of the champions of frontline service delivery, APSE recognises the importance of councils staying relevant in the modern era and allowing residents to access services in the ways they wish. The councils above and many others have done an excellent job of developing and investing in solutions to achieve their goals, and the examples contained

within this briefing should serve as a useful starting point for those councils who have not yet developed a mobile app of their own.

Reminder: APSE has set up a COVID-19 Information Hub to deal with frontline service issues as they arise, ensuring greater resilience and learning between each other during this difficult time. You can access this hub by [clicking here](#) and you can also join our WhatsApp Support Network by [clicking here](#).

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