Inform Report

President's Conference, 18-19 June 2019

July 2019

Socitm inform

Table of Contents

Introduction 03

Exploring the ethics of AI 04

How do we address data privacy? 04

How do we address the skills challenge? 05

How do we address data transparency? 05

What is ethical? 05

Martin Reeves: We can't solve everyone's problems 06

How to innovate in leadership 07

Connecting in Norfolk 07

How will you create a culture of innovation in your organisation and community? 08

How will you engage your leaders to champion digital innovation? 08

How Socitm's Leadership Academy empowers people 09

Playing games with security 09

Helping local authorities with cybersecurity 10

Jason Kitcat: Better innovation requires permanent teams 11

Conclusion: Just try it 12

Introduction

Car manufacturing is a staple of the West Midlands. Martin Reeves, chief executive of Coventry City Council, reminded delegates at Socitm's President's Conference in Birmingham on 18 and 19 June 2019 that Jaguar Land Rover is headquartered in his city. Two green cars continued the theme as Sandra Taylor gave her inaugural speech as the newly installed Socitm president.

The first was Citroën Dyane, an economy supermini based on the 2CV, which when tested by The Motor magazine in 1969 took 31 seconds to accelerate from 0-60mph and had a top speed just eight mph higher than that. Taylor said the Dyane has been "euphemistically described as a car like no other" as well as "the most intelligent application of minimalism ever to succeed as a car".

"It's noisy, it has horrendous road-handling and terrible build quality," she said. It was also Taylor's first car, when she was 18 years old: "And I loved it."

The second car was a Lamborghini Huracán Spyder supercar, which takes 3.1 seconds to get to 62mph, has a top speed of 202mph and sells second-hand for around £150,000. "It's apparently a supercar that most of us can only dream of driving, let alone owning. "Which one would you prefer?" she asked the audience.

Her point was that it doesn't matter unless you have a plan for using them. "If you don't know where you want to go, you haven't got a map, you don't know which side of the road to drive on, you don't know the Highway Code, you don't know how to drive it, you don't have the fuel to put in it and the resources to run it," she said, adding that the same is true of IT.

"At the end of the day it's just a tool, which needs people with the right vision, the right leadership and the right skills to actually get anywhere at all," Taylor pointed out. While this year's President's Conference covered a wide range of topics, this idea was a common theme of many speakers.

Exploring the ethics of AI

Nicola Graham, the outgoing Socitm president and head of ICT for Aberdeenshire Council, opened the conference with a workshop on artificial intelligence. She outlined four areas for consideration:

1. What robotics, AI and automation mean for jobs;
2. Biases in data;
3. Mass surveillance; and
4. Controlling data and keeping it secure.

David Dinsdale, chief digital officer for public sector and health at Atos, outlined a report from his company that looks at emerging technologies, with the overarching theme of "just because we can, doesn't mean we should," something he said represents a huge change for technologists. This includes accepting and admitting mistakes, such as Amazon's realisation that its use of AI in recruitment was leading to bias against women, as the data was looking for people who were similar to existing employees. "AI is very bad at diversity," he said.

Dinsdale added that AI introduces uncertainty, as it will generally have a degree of confidence attached to its findings, and decisions need to be made over what level of confidence is acceptable. It can also make it very hard for humans to understand how decisions are made, particularly if a system uses thousands or millions of inputs. This would make it hard to guard against bias, he said.

Socitm's Jos Creese outlined the society's work with Eduserv (now part of Jisc) on harnessing data for better public sector outcomes. He said that local public services demonstrate huge enthusiasm for using data to improve outcomes. "But I also see a relatively low level of data maturity," he added.

The report will include a 'data playbook' for organisations, covering principles including placed-based and personal data, open and shared data, ethics and privacy, cybersecurity and safety, data standards, master data management and information management quality. "I believe the public sector should be in the lead here," said Creese. "I think we have a role to set a leadership example for the UK as a whole, and potentially for the world."

Delegates were asked to discuss four topics and responded with the following:

01 How do we address data privacy?

- Give citizens the ability to manage their own data.
- Involve elected members in deciding the ethical use of data, such as balancing potential savings against privacy.
- GDPR does not itself provide individuals with the ability to manage their data.

- Ask if there are red lines beyond which AI should not be used.
- Ask at what point the organisation should target individuals using their personal data.
- Consider the differing approaches taken by the UK's devolved nations on health and wellbeing.

02 How do we address the skills challenge?

- Consider how we make the public aware of how their data is used.
- Consider how we could set up ethics boards.
- We will need people who can bring together technology and processes.
- Caldicott guardians, senior staff in NHS organisations and local authorities who are responsible for protecting the confidentiality of health and care information and ensuring it is used properly, could be a model for this work.
- Strict rules, rather than guidelines, on AI could stifle innovation.

03 How do we address data transparency?

- There are generational differences, with young people being glib about agreeing to data sharing, while older people are more cautious.
- Consent sign-up processes could be standardised through colour-coding, in the fashion of nutritional information on food labels.
- Need to consider how people who refuse consent can access services.
- Need to consider who owns the AI models resulting from use of our data.

04 What is ethical?

- Ethical means no adverse effects and avoiding bias.
- The Information Commissioner's Office generally offers guidance then takes action when it believes an organisation transgresses legal requirements. In this area, it would be helpful to have clearer direction.
- Ethics boards should be diverse in their makeup and include representatives of user organisations.

Responding to the comments, David Dinsdale said we should avoid the usual model in which things get fixed only after something goes wrong. Jos Creese added that the local public sector needs to act in this area rather than waiting for government or businesses and, while it will struggle to avoid any adverse effects, it should work hard to minimise them.

Read more...

Atos, 'Journey 2022, Future vision – resolving digital dilemmas' report: https://bit.ly/328Ts7C

Jeffrey Dastin, 'Amazon scraps secret AI recruiting tool that showed bias against women', Reuters: https://reut.rs/2UghQQS

Martin Reeves: We can't solve everyone's problems

Economic and political events of the last decade, from financial crash, through austerity, to the Brexit vote, have been as hard to predict as the movement of a ball in a pinball machine. These events have generated untold collateral damage in our communities claimed Coventry City Council's Martin Reeves.

Public services must change how they operate as a result: "We had the arrogance to think we could solve everyone's problems," he said This was always debatable, but following what he believes is a permanent and significant fall in the local public sector's purchasing power, it is impossible now, he added: "That heroic model of leadership went."

Instead, local public services need to focus on helping the communities they serve to build solutions. "We need to try to find a way to help people live their lives in the way we would like to see our families live."

Such work requires clear communication, Reeves said, which means IT has to abandon jargon that excludes people, as well as obsessions over technology. "Stop talking about the technology, stop talking about the kit," he advised, illustrating this with a picture of Christopher Robin pulling Pooh down the stairs, head-first. "What problems are we trying to solve? With whom, how and why?"

It also requires more innovation, more fast failure and disruption, as opposed to incremental improvements in how organisations work. IT, in common with other specialist professions, also needs to stop worrying about whether it is represented at the top of their hierarchy.

Most importantly, it requires public servants to serve the public, not their colleagues or elected members. "Public services are not there for you, they are not there for me," he said. "They are there for the people who live, work and play in our area."

Photo: Nicola Gotts

How to innovate in leadership

Diversity was the focus as Sandra Taylor introduced a workshop on innovation and leadership. She said that digital public services need to work for everybody. "That's why it's important that all of the new technology is developed and implemented by a diverse workforce," she said.

Andrew Rogers, chief digital officer at Socitm Advisory, introduced the Socitm Digital Maturity Assessment (DMA) tool, built with the Welsh Government for its local authorities and in the process of being adopted by Coventry City Council. Most such tools consider three factors – councils, customers and place – but the Socitm tool provides a rating for nine factors:

1. Vision and leadership
2. Customer experience
3. Digital skills and people
4. Service design
5. Methodologies and standards
6. Delivering digital
7. Data and analytics
8. Digital platform
9. Technology

There are five or six questions for each factor. The tool is designed to be used online by people across organisations to provide an assessment of maturity against each of these pre-determined factors. This can help reveal differences of perception within the organisation, such as when technologists may believe things work really well, while service delivery staff think otherwise.

> *"Public services need to work for everybody. That's why it's important that all of the new technology is developed and implemented by a diverse workforce."*
>
> Sandra Taylor, Dudley Council

Connecting in Norfolk

"I don't think people generally associate the word 'innovation' with the public sector," said Kurt Frary, deputy head of information management and technology at Norfolk County Council. However, the authority is trying to prove that assumption wrong, for example by engaging a local company to set up an escape room, where people have to work out how to get out by following clues in what had been storage space in the Museum of Norwich.

Norfolk aims to be the best-connected rural county in the UK. It uses a range of technologies but is focusing on long-range wide area networking (LoRaWan), which can connect sensors and devices in remote locations, such as to report whether a farm gate is open or closed. The council has implemented LoRaWan at county hall, with a range of 25 miles reaching the coast. With

partners, it is bidding to install 220 gateways that would cover Norfolk and Suffolk and allow use by small businesses, schools and public sector organisations.

Norfolk has already implemented one project using LoRaWan, to measure road temperatures, allowing the council to make better decisions on which roads to grit in winter. It has previously relied on six weather stations around the county, but now supplements this with five thermometers built into road surfaces in Great Yarmouth and fitted by the council's highways team. Whilst the weather stations provide data once a day, the connected thermometers report more than once an hour.

Frary said that the council's work on innovation involved working with Capita, where its deal includes a clause on social value; the supplier has provided 68 kits for schools which allow pupils to build Internet of Things projects. Norfolk County Council's leader Andrew Proctor and its digital innovation and efficiency committee provide strong backing for innovation. Frary advised other councils, seeking to boost innovation, to get buy-in from senior leaders. He also said it makes sense to give council staff permission to try things out.

Delegates then discussed two questions, and shared the following answers:

01 How will you create a culture of innovation in your organisation and community?

- Tell people that 'failure is an option'.
- Identify key stakeholders and get their support.
- Engage young people.
- Promote entrepreneurial small businesses.
- Set up hackspaces and hold events.
- Look at how you can involve partners.
- Involve your community as well as businesses.
- Establish a technological environment that can allow innovation.
- Give everyone in the organisation the ability to innovate.

02 How will you engage your leaders to champion digital innovation?

- Show tangible outcomes that add value for communities.
- Demystify the technology you use.
- When approaching leaders, avoid technobabble: say what works, what doesn't, what it costs and what the savings are.
- Share best practice.

Read more:

Socitm policy briefing on leadership, diversity and skills: https://bit.ly/2YstVnu

How Socitm's Leadership Academy empowers people

Nadira Hussain, Socitm's director of leadership development and research, presented a group of recent graduates of Socitm's Leadership Academy, which over the last two years has produced 200 graduates and continues to grow and receive strong feedback.

This year, working with the society's partner QA, the academy has made 240 places available with more than half of the places already booked. All corporate members of Socitm are able to use the scheme through a free place that is available through the package.

Alison Lincoln, ICT manager of projects and customer delivery at Blackpool Council, took a recent Empowering Women in a Digital World (EWDW) course, held as a two-day course with two trainers and 12 delegates with a follow-up at the President's Conference. "The programme has helped me to develop my self-confidence," she said.

The course covers values and beliefs – which encourages participants to be authentic, partly as this helps leaders to gain respect – silencing inner critics, carrying out challenges and using confident body language. Those taking part then form networks, such as through WhatsApp groups.

Catherine Evans, a senior ICT officer at Dudley Council, took a course on returning from 13 months of maternity leave. "I found it very difficult to balance everything after the longest break I'd had from work," she said, adding that the course made her a stronger leader by giving her time away from the office to reflect on how she works.

Two participants of Socitm's Top Talent course in Wales discussed their course, which included a challenge set by the Welsh Government to encourage participation in democracy by 16 and 17 year olds, who will get the right to vote in Welsh Assembly elections from 2021. They developed a digital toolkit, using collaboration service Slack.

Playing games with security

Chris Parker, executive director of security consultancy Cyberplus, led a workshop where delegates had to consider how they would act as executives of a local authority experiencing a cyberattack.

To illustrate the value of running exercises, he recalled helping to plan the invasion of Iraq when serving in the Army. In an exercise four days before, he included a tank breakdown on a bridge, to complaints from a colleague about how long it would take to sort out.

In the invasion, a tank did break down on a bridge, making the rehearsals of how to clear it with another tank invaluable. Following this, the complaining colleague called him, swore briefly and rang off.

"There are no new air accidents, only new pilots," Parker quoted pilot training for the Royal Air Force, with the Army preferring "train hard, fight easy". The same can be said of IT security, he added, with the following techniques of particular use:

- Those leading in a crisis may need to behave like an actor playing a version of themselves, including being calmer than they feel.
- A crisis commander should write down what they plan to do.
- It usually makes sense to manage an incident locally rather remotely, even if that means putting a junior person on the spot in change.
- A crisis may well involve briefing the media, insurers and loss adjusters, as well people within the organisation.

Rehearsing potential crises is very valuable, not least because people don't cope with stress well, unless they have trained for it.

Helping local authorities with cybersecurity

Peter W, chief technical officer of digital government at the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), briefed attendees on how local authorities are being attacked digitally. He stressed that most cyberattackers aim to achieve financial gain rather than notoriety, as they are a safer way for criminals to operate than physical action: "Robbing a bank is frankly dangerous. There are guns involved. Someone might get hurt."

One method which the organisation is seeing deployed against local authorities is 'password spray' attacks, where automated attempts are made to access numerous accounts with common passwords.

Among other things, this means organisations should assist staff in using strong passwords, rather than making arbitrary demands for 'complexity' such as insisting on the use of both letters and numbers. "You are forcing the user to fight that complexity," said W, whose surname is not publicly disclosed.

NCSC has published a list of the top 100,000 passwords found through security breaches, and several of the most popular consist of a word followed by '1', which would comply with a rule insisting on letters and numbers but are insecure given they are so common. W pointed out that many cloud services have built-in security measures that can help tackle such attacks, but these can need activating.

In general, the adoption of cloud computing services can boost security as software is updated and patched centrally by the supplier, W said, but its use amplifies the need for good password management, given the systems are online.

NCSC provides Active Cyber Defence services to public-sector organisations which aim to track and resolve common issues actively, mitigate known large-scale problems and fix systemic vulnerabilities in core systems. W said that its Web Check service, which looks for simple misconfigurations in websites, is being used by 97% of local authorities. But he warned that the service should be set to cover all URLs used by organisations rather than just the main ones.

The organisation's Protective Domain Name System, which blocks public-sector users from visiting websites hosting malicious material, is now used by 222 local authorities, just over half. In the week ending 9 June it handled 2.6bn queries a week, blocking 2.1m attempts to connect to 5,629 malicious domains.

Read more

NCSC Active Cyber Defence services: https://bit.ly/2xsHpnC

Top 100,000 passwords: https://bit.ly/2vfJdir

"Robbing a bank is frankly dangerous. There are guns involved. Someone might get hurt."

Peter W, NCSC

Jason Kitcat: Better innovation requires permanent teams

Jason Kitcat, former head of corporate development at Essex County Council and before that the elected leader of Brighton and Hove Council, told delegates that a lot of public services are still run on a hierarchical, militaristic way – "the heroic model of leadership" Martin Reeves had referred to earlier in the conference. This involves business cases which Kitcat described as being "full of lies", in claiming a piece of work will save so many millions of pounds in five years' time.

Instead, organisations should aim to use much shorter, iterative assessment processes such as the OODA loop (observe, orient, decide and act) developed in the 1950s by US Air Force strategist John Boyd.

Kitcat said that online bank Monzo, which launched in a low-key fashion and has added and changed what it offers based on experience of what works, is a good example. In the public sector, the Home Office has created an all-digital passport renewal process without changes to the law. But in general, Kitcat said that the public sector has just "puddles of goodness".

Essex carried out a project to improve hospital discharge processes for older people, involving the county council's adult social care team, consultancy FutureGov and Colchester General Hospital. It initially started as a chatbot, but Kitcat said they found that this confused users who weren't sure whether or not they were talking to a real person.

It was turned into an online assessment tool in the style of Gov.uk. The council decided not to go ahead with it in hospitals as it was too hard to use, and instead plans to provide the service through its website instead.

Asked how councils can enable such innovation, Kitcat said that permanent funding for teams rather than projects is a better option that business cases for specific projects. "I think organisational design is often the unspoken, key element of this," he said. "It means moving all of this work away from being a cost centre to an opportunity... We need to grow up and build sustainable funding."

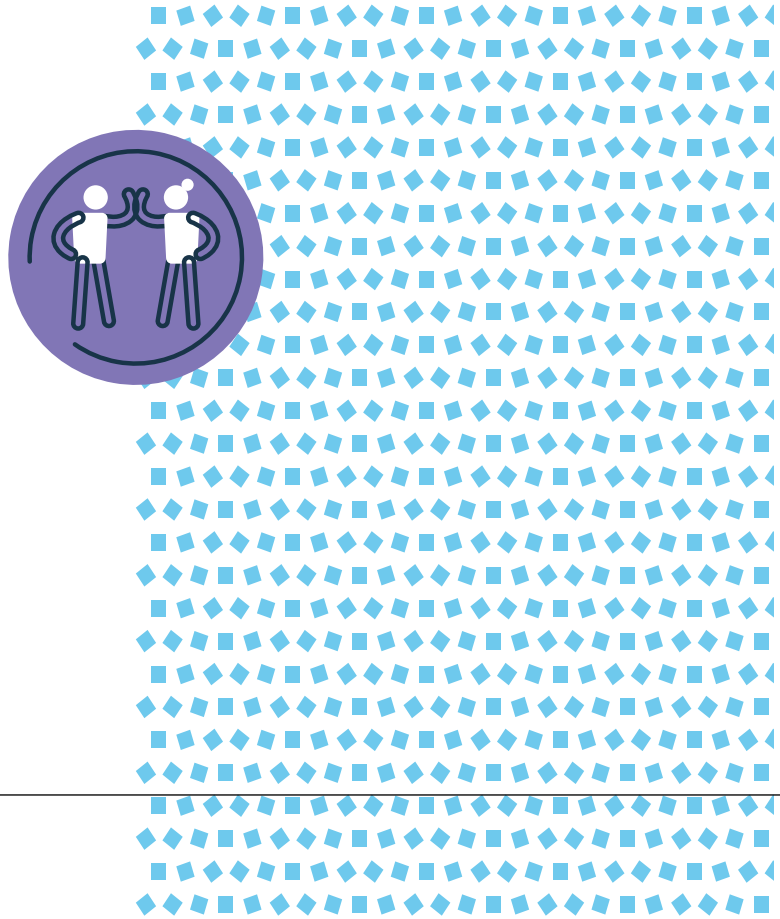
Photo: Nicola Gotts

Conclusion: Just try it

Will Dyer, a consultant for Socitm Advisory and chair of this year's conference, reminded delegates that the workshop on resilience had discussed how IT is much younger than other professions such as the military, oil and gas extraction or the emergency services: "Therefore, we're all quite young too," he joked.

Dyer said that conference sessions showed that local public services have fantastic people working for them but, he added: "It's important to share best practice and emphasise the importance of leadership when it comes to change management."

He closed the conference by repeating two phrases from the conference, that delegates could usefully take back to their day jobs: "'Just try it' and 'What are you going to do tomorrow?'"



About this report

Author
SA Mathieson - Writer and Analyst

Editor
Marianne Prior - Communications Manager

Designers
Magdalena Werner - Senior Creative Designer
Benjamin Hughes - Junior Designer

Reference: 19021

Have your say

We always welcome feedback and discussion on the contents of our publications.

Martin Ferguson
Director of Research & Policy
martin.ferguson@socitm.net

Nadira Hussain
Director of Leadership Development & Research
nadira.hussain@socitm.net

Get in touch

Website: www.socitm.net
Email: inform@socitm.net
Tel: 01604 709456

Join the conversation... @Socitm | Socitm