

AGENDA 11, Enc v) Digital Asset Management - Civic.ly Platform: Executive Summary to Business Case prepared by Scribe

Background

This summary has been prepared by the Executive Officer to seek Council approval for the adoption of Civic.ly, a digital asset management platform purpose-built for town and parish councils. The business case attached has been developed in close collaboration with Civic.ly, based on a detailed assessment of Ashington Town Council's current operations, assets, and forward ambitions. The 50% subscription discount secured reflects the EO's direct negotiation with the supplier and the council's existing relationship as a Scribe customer.

This is not an off-the-shelf proposal. The business case reflects where we are now, where we need to get to, and what it will take to manage our assets with the transparency, attention, and efficiency that the council and the community deserve.

Current Position

Ashington Town Council has taken significant steps in recent years. We have brought play areas into council ownership, completed our first year-end on Scribe, and built-up a dedicated Neighbourhood Services function with our own trained officer – bringing more in-house that previously delivery including planting and play areas. We now need to properly establish how these assets and services are managed, and our current tools are no longer adequate.

The limitations are well-documented and directly experienced by the team. Asset registers built in spreadsheets crash under the weight of photographs and data, requiring repeated rebuilds. Whilst inspections and visits can be planned, there is no structured inspection schedule/checklist for defibrillators, bus shelters, or public seating.

Play area inspections are transitioning from Northumberland County Council to in-house delivery — a positive step, but one that requires a proper compliance framework from day one. When Cllrs or members of the public ask whether maintenance has been carried out, there is currently no quick way to evidence it. Day-to-day coordination between the office and the Neighbourhood Services Officer relies on WhatsApp, email, and verbal communication — with no single source. This is not a criticism of the team. It reflects the limitations of the tools, not the ambition or effort of those using them. The council has outgrown its current systems, and this investment allows a smarter way of working.

The Platform

Civic.ly is a comprehensive, mobile-enabled asset management platform covering:

- A structured asset register — GPS-located, photograph-supported, and permanently accessible
- Pre-built inspection checklists for play equipment, bins, defibrillators, and outdoor assets
- Smart scheduling with automated reminders — fortnightly play inspections, monthly defib checks, seasonal maintenance
- Mobile field app — inspections logged and evidenced on-site, in real time, with no paper trail to transfer
- Interactive GIS mapping — all 400+ bins, 7 play areas, 16 defibrillators, and every other asset visible on a map
- Full audit trail — timestamped records of every visit, inspection, and defect, instantly accessible
- Unlimited users — staff, councillors, and future contractors all working from the same information

This replaces spreadsheets, informal communication, and manual planning with a single platform that scales as the council grows.

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Cost

Item	Detail
Monthly subscription	£262 (50% discount negotiated — standard rate £524)
Annual cost	£3,144
Setup fee	Waived (Scribe customer benefit — normally £1,000)
Commitment	Cancel anytime with 30 days' notice

Proposed Funding

The EO/RFO recommends that the annual subscription cost of £3,144 be met equally from two existing budget heads:

- 50% (£1,572) from the Staffing budget
- 50% (£1,572) from the Street Repairs and Maintenance budget

This split reflects where the most direct and likely savings will arise from adopting the platform.

Staffing budget contribution

A significant proportion of the platform's value is in reclaiming officer time currently consumed by manual, duplicated, and repetitive tasks — rebuilding crashing spreadsheets, maintaining work planners, fielding queries from councillors and the public about whether work has been done, and coordinating informally across WhatsApp and email. The benchmark for councils transitioning from manual to digital asset management indicates a 30-40% reduction in asset-related admin time. Even at the conservative end, this represents several hours per week across office and on-the-ground staff. Funding part of the subscription from the staffing budget reflects the reality that this investment directly reduces the administrative burden on the team and creates capacity for higher-value work.

Street repairs and maintenance budget contribution

Structured, scheduled inspections consistently produce maintenance savings by identifying small defects before they become costly repairs. Moving from reactive to planned maintenance — with proper records, automated scheduling, and early defect identification — reduces the frequency and scale of emergency interventions. Funding part of the subscription from the repairs and maintenance budget reflects the direct relationship between better asset management and lower reactive spend. The cost of a single avoided emergency repair or insurance claim would exceed the council's entire annual contribution from this budget head.

Considerations

Transparency and accountability

If the council were to take on more direct responsibility for public assets, the ability to evidence our work becomes essential — to Cllrs, to residents, to our insurers, and in the event of any incident. A proper audit trail is a governance requirement.

Supporting our Neighbourhood Services

The council has supported bringing in-house planting and play area inspections, in addition to other areas managed like Dove's Corner and the Workers Memorial. Working with our NSO to bring forward a scheduled routine for what we do has been weeks in the making and this is the next step. We don't want to manage a growing inspection workload, or scheduled tasks on paper forms and WhatsApp. Civic.ly provides a professional platform that reflects the ambition of the service we are building.

Preparing for in-house play area inspections

The transition of play area inspections from Northumberland County Council to in-house management is a significant step. It gives us direct control and means repairs can be made in a

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timelier manner, but it means are 100% responsible for compliance. Doing this without a proper system, proper records, and a proper audit trail is a risk the council should not carry. There are other play systems out there, but not that incorporate other assets also.

Organisational resilience

Knowledge about assets, inspection histories, and maintenance schedules should be held in a reliable system, not in individuals' heads, or on paper. Civic.ly makes the council resilient to staff changes and supports confident onboarding.

Recommendation

Members are asked to approve the adoption of the Civic.ly asset management platform at a monthly subscription of £262, subject to the 30-day cancellation terms. This represents a modest, well-evidenced investment in the infrastructure the council needs to manage its assets responsibly, evidence its work to the public, support our Neighbourhood Services function, and build the organisational resilience to sustain ambition over the long term.

If anyone has any questions please contact me in advance of the meeting; this will allow me the opportunity to go back to Scribe if necessary.