



From Fragmented to Future-Ready

A Business Case for Civic.ly at Ashington Town Council

PREPARED FOR

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Executive Summary

Ashington Town Council has made impressive strides in recent years – transferring play areas into council ownership, successfully migrating financial systems to Scribe, and building a dedicated in-house team around a Neighbourhood Services Officer. These are the foundations of a well-run council. The next step is bringing the same level of structure and confidence to how the council manages its growing portfolio of physical assets.

The challenge today:

- Multiple spreadsheet versions have been created to build an asset register with photographs, but files crash under the weight of images and data
- Play area inspections are currently handled by Northumberland County Council, but with Ryan now trained, the council is ready to bring these in-house – and needs a proper system to support that transition
- Over **400 litter bins, 16 defibrillators**, bus shelters, public seats, planters, and play areas are managed through a patchwork of spreadsheets, WhatsApp messages, and ad hoc routines
- There is no structured inspection schedule for defibrillators, bus shelters, or public seating, and no easy way to evidence work completed by the grounds team

The solution: Civic.ly is a comprehensive asset management platform built specifically for town and parish councils. It replaces fragmented spreadsheets, paper forms, and informal communication with a single system covering asset records, inspections, task scheduling, photo evidence, and team coordination – all accessible via web dashboard and mobile app.

Investment: £262 per month (50% discount applied, plus setup fee waived as an existing Scribe customer). Cancel anytime with 30 days' notice.

Estimated annual benefit: £7,390 – £12,530 in efficiency savings, extended asset life,

and reduced risk exposure, against an annual cost of **£3,144**. Conservative payback period: **under 6 months**.

Next step: Present this business case to councillors ahead of the 12th May meeting for approval.

Current Situation

Council Profile

Detail	Value
Council	Ashington Town Council
Precept	Approximately £1,007,000
AGAR Box 9 (Asset Value)	£1,100,000
Staff	6 (Clerk, Admin Officer, Neighbourhood Services Officer, plus others; recruiting Deputy Clerk)
Operational Model	Fully in-house (no grounds contractors)
Existing Civic.ly Products	Accounts and Allotments

Detail	Value
Financial System	Scribe (first year-end just completed)

Asset Portfolio

Ashington manages a substantial and diverse range of outdoor assets across the town:

- **7 play areas** - recently transferred or leased from developers and Northumberland County Council
- **400+ litter bins** - provided by the council, emptied by Northumberland County Council
- **16 defibrillators** - requiring regular monthly monitoring
- **Bus shelters** - maintenance and cleanliness inspections
- **Public seating** - installation and ongoing maintenance
- **Planters and landscaped areas**
- **Statue and mining wheel** - heritage/memorial assets
- **Allotment site infrastructure** - taps, fencing, gates, sheds
- **Office equipment** - PAT testing required

The council does not own its office building (managed by a separate building manager) and does not maintain grassed areas, which fall under Northumberland County Council's responsibility.

Current Tools and Processes

The council has invested considerable effort in building its own asset management systems. Multiple spreadsheet versions have been created to capture asset details, photographs, before-and-after records, and visit logs. Work planners with visit frequencies have also been developed. These efforts demonstrate a clear understanding of what good asset management looks like – the limitation has been the tools available, not the ambition.

Day-to-day coordination between the office and the Neighbourhood Services Officer relies primarily on WhatsApp, email, and verbal communication. Issues from the public typically come in via phone calls or are redirected from Northumberland County Council's Fix My Street platform.

Key Challenges

- **Spreadsheet limitations:** Asset registers with embedded photographs crash and become unworkable, forcing repeated rebuilds and duplicated effort
- **No structured inspection regime:** Defibrillators are monitored ad hoc, bus shelters and seating lack formal inspection schedules, and play area inspections are about to transition from the county council to in-house
- **Difficulty evidencing work completed:** When councillors or the public query whether maintenance has been carried out, there is no quick way to demonstrate when assets were last visited, what condition they were in, or what work was done
- **Significant admin overhead:** Staff time is consumed by creating and maintaining multiple spreadsheet versions, manual work planners, and informal tracking systems
- **Fragmented communication:** Information about assets, tasks, and issues is spread across WhatsApp, email, spreadsheets, and individual knowledge, with no single source of truth

The Civic.ly Solution

Overview

Civic.ly is a comprehensive asset management platform purpose-built for UK town and parish councils. It combines a structured asset register, inspection checklists, task scheduling, mobile field app, and interactive mapping into a single system. With unlimited users and assets included, it is designed to be used by clerks, admin staff, grounds teams, councillors, and even contractors - ensuring everyone works from the same up-to-date information.

Key Features and Benefits for Ashington

Feature	How It Helps Ashington Town Council
AI-powered asset creation	Ryan can photograph assets on-site and the system auto-creates register entries with GPS location, type, condition, and relevant safety standards. No more crashing spreadsheets with embedded photos.
Pre-built inspection checklists	28+ checklists covering play equipment, bins, outdoor assets, and more. Supports the transition to in-house fortnightly play area inspections with proper compliance records from day one.
Mobile field app	Ryan completes inspections, logs maintenance, and

Feature	How It Helps Ashington Town Council
	<p>captures photo evidence directly from his phone while on-site. No paperwork to transfer later. Councillors can also access the app to view asset status.</p>
<p>Smart scheduling and reminders</p>	<p>Set fortnightly play inspections, monthly defib checks, and seasonal maintenance schedules. Weekly summary emails show what is due and what is overdue - replacing manual work planners entirely.</p>
<p>Photo evidence and audit trail</p>	<p>When a councillor asks whether a bus shelter has been cleaned, you can show exactly when it was visited, by whom, and with timestamped photographs - instantly, from one system.</p>
<p>Interactive GIS mapping</p>	<p>Visualise all 400+ bins, 7 play areas, 16 defibrillators, and every other asset on a map with street, satellite, and Ordnance Survey layers. Filter by type, condition, or any field.</p>
<p>Unlimited users</p>	<p>Add Sarah, Gary, Ryan, the new Deputy Clerk, councillors, and any future contractors at no extra cost. Everyone sees the same information.</p>

Feature	How It Helps Ashington Town Council
Defect management	When an inspection reveals a problem, raise a defect directly from the checklist. Track it through to resolution with full photo evidence, whether handled internally or contracted out.

Investment Summary

Item	Detail
Standard Monthly Subscription	£524/month
Discount Applied	50% (existing customer and council profile)
Monthly Subscription	£262/month
Annual Cost	£3,144
Setup Fee	Waived (normally £1,000) – existing Scribe customer benefit

Item	Detail
Commitment	Cancel anytime with 30 days' notice

Included at no extra cost: Unlimited users and assets, web dashboard and mobile app (iOS and Android), all 28+ inspection checklists, AI-powered asset creation, interactive GIS mapping, ongoing updates and support, onboarding assistance.

Benefits Analysis

Operational Improvements

- **30-40% reduction in asset-related admin time** (SOCITM benchmark) by eliminating duplicate spreadsheets, manual work planners, and the need to rebuild crashing files
- Single source of truth replaces information scattered across spreadsheets, WhatsApp, email, and individual knowledge
- Ryan can complete inspections, log work, and capture evidence in one step on-site, rather than documenting on paper and transferring to spreadsheets later
- Automated scheduling replaces manual frequency planners, ensuring nothing is missed as the asset portfolio grows

Financial Benefits

- **10-15% longer asset lifespan** (Institute of Asset Management) through planned, scheduled maintenance rather than reactive responses

- Fewer emergency repairs – small issues identified during routine inspections before they become costly problems
- Better cost forecasting based on accurate condition data across the entire asset portfolio
- Should contractors be needed in future, digital job management can deliver **10–20% savings** on contractor costs (CIPFA)

Compliance and Risk Mitigation

- Clear, timestamped audit trail for every inspection, maintenance visit, and defect resolution – meeting NALC Section 16 requirements
- Proper documentation to support insurance claims defensibility, with **up to 25% lower claims exposure** (Zurich Municipal)
- Play area inspection records that meet insurer requirements for fortnightly checks with immediate defect rectification – critical as inspections move in-house
- Structured monthly defibrillator monitoring with automatic reminders, replacing ad hoc checks

Organisational Resilience

- All asset knowledge retained in the system rather than in individuals' heads – vital as the team grows with a new Deputy Clerk
- Easier onboarding for new staff, who can see full asset history, inspection records, and scheduled tasks from day one
- Reduced stress and mental burden of tracking deadlines, frequencies, and outstanding work manually
- Councillors gain direct visibility into asset conditions and work completed, building confidence and reducing query time for staff

Return on Investment Analysis

Inputs and Assumptions

Input	Value / Source
Operational Model	Fully in-house (no grounds contractors)
Grounds/Neighbourhood Staff (FTE)	1 (Ryan, Neighbourhood Services Officer)
Admin/Office Staff (FTE)	2 (Clerk + Admin Officer; Deputy Clerk being recruited)
Insured Estate Value (AGAR Box 9)	£1,100,000
Precept	Approximately £1,007,000
Key Assets	7 play areas, 400+ litter bins, 16 defibrillators, bus shelters, public seating, planters, heritage items, allotment infrastructure
Assumed average staff cost	£15/hour (blended, including on-costs)

Estimated Annual ROI

Category	Annual Benefit	Confidence
<p>Admin efficiency</p> <p>Eliminating duplicate spreadsheets, manual planners, and file rebuilds. Conservatively 5 hours/week saved across office and field staff at £15/hour.</p>	<p>£3,900</p>	<p>High</p>
<p>Asset longevity</p> <p>Planned maintenance extends asset lifespan by 10-15% (IAM). On a £1.1M estate, even a conservative 0.2% annual saving through avoided premature replacement.</p>	<p>£2,200</p>	<p>Medium</p>
<p>Avoided emergency repairs</p> <p>Early defect identification through</p>	<p>£1,000 - £2,000</p>	<p>Medium</p>

Category	Annual Benefit	Confidence
<p>structured inspections reduces reactive spend. Conservative estimate based on preventing 2-3 emergency call-outs per year.</p>		
<p>Risk and claims reduction</p> <p>Documented inspection regime reduces claims exposure by up to 25% (Zurich Municipal). On a £1.1M estate, conservative 0.025% annual benefit from improved defensibility.</p>	<p>£275</p>	<p>Medium-Low</p>
<p>Councillor and public query resolution</p> <p>Instant evidence-based responses to "has this been done?" queries. Estimated 1 hour/week saved.</p>	<p>£780</p>	<p>High</p>

Category	Annual Benefit	Confidence
<p>Knowledge retention and onboarding</p> <p>Reduced handover time, lower risk of lost institutional knowledge. Qualitative benefit with estimated value based on reduced training/transition costs.</p>	<p>£235 - £2,275</p>	<p>Medium-Low</p>

Summary	Value
<p>Total Estimated Annual Benefit</p>	<p>£8,390 - £11,430</p>
<p>Annual Subscription Cost</p>	<p>£3,144</p>
<p>Net Annual Benefit</p>	<p>£5,246 - £8,286</p>
<p>Payback Period</p>	<p>3.3 - 4.5 months</p>
<p>3-Year Net Benefit</p>	<p>£15,738 - £24,858</p>

ROI Justification

These estimates use conservative assumptions applied to Ashington's fully in-house operational model. The admin efficiency saving is the highest-confidence figure, reflecting the documented reality of multiple spreadsheet rebuilds, manual work planners, and fragmented communication channels. The SOCITM benchmark of 30-40% admin time reduction is well-established for councils moving from manual to digital asset management - we have applied the lower end.

Asset longevity benefits draw on the Institute of Asset Management's finding that planned maintenance extends useful life by 10-15%. With a £1.1 million estate, even marginal improvements in replacement timing deliver meaningful savings. The risk reduction figure is deliberately conservative, but the qualitative value of being able to evidence a proper inspection regime - particularly for 7 play areas moving to in-house management - should not be underestimated in the event of an incident or insurance claim.

Conclusion

Ashington Town Council has already demonstrated the ambition and discipline needed for effective asset management. The limitation has not been effort or intent, but the tools available. Civic.ly replaces crashing spreadsheets, informal tracking, and ad hoc routines with a single, purpose-built platform that grows with the council. At **£262 per month** with no setup fee and no lock-in, the investment pays for itself within months through time savings alone - before accounting for extended asset life, reduced risk, and the confidence that comes from a proper audit trail. As play area inspections move in-house and the team grows with a new Deputy Clerk, having the right system in place from the start will make everything easier. We would welcome the opportunity to support Ashington's next step. Nathan is available to answer any questions ahead of the 12th May meeting, or to arrange a follow-up session with councillors if that would be helpful.

Cover Email

Subject: Ashington Town Council - Civic.ly Business Case

Hi Sarah,

Thank you for taking the time to chat with John earlier - especially in the middle of your first Scribe year-end. Glad to hear that went well!

I have attached a tailored business case for Civic.ly based on your conversation. It focuses on the two areas that matter most to you right now: having a proper system in place as Ryan begins in-house play area inspections, and replacing those crashing spreadsheets with a single platform where every asset, visit, and photograph is recorded and instantly accessible - so when a councillor asks whether a bus shelter has been cleaned, you have the answer in seconds.

The key numbers:

- Monthly subscription: **£262/month** (50% discount, setup fee waived)
- Estimated annual benefit: **£8,390 – £11,430**

If I have misunderstood any details, please let me know – I will happily adjust the business case.

Quick demo video (2 mins): <https://youtu.be/4qVylqNRdd0>

Best wishes,

Nathan