

**Round 6 Fund application - Alpha project : Entry # 8070****2. Project contact details****2.1 Lead authority name**

Rushmoor Borough Council

**2.2 Details of the person leading this application**

Alex Shiell

**Role**

Digital Manager

**Email address**[Alex.shiell@rushmoor.gov.uk](mailto:Alex.shiell@rushmoor.gov.uk)**Phone number****2.3 Details of a senior stakeholder from lead authority****Role****Email address****2.4 Details of a Section 151 Officer from lead authority****Role****Email address****2.5 List your project partners and provide a single point of contact for each organisation:**

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Project partner organisation	Name of single point of contact	Role of single point of contact	Email address of single point of contact	Phone number of single point of contact
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Basingstoke &  
Deane Borough  
Council & Hart  
District Council  
(shared service)

North Tyneside  
Council

### 3. Your project proposal

#### 3.1 Project title

Exploring and prototyping a digital service for taxi licence holders to manage their licenses

#### 3.2 Project description

Taxi licensing service users expect a convenient digital service with which to manage their information and undertake key tasks to ensure their licences remain valid (see Discovery).

This collaborative Alpha will build on existing Discovery & Alpha work to determine:

- Are Licensing user needs common across different local authorities?
- Can these needs be met with a consistent, scalable digital service solution?
- Can such a solution deliver meaningful and realisable benefits?

#### 3.3 How much funding are you applying for?

138150

### 4. Project assessment

#### 4.1 Describe the problem and hypotheses that your alpha project seeks to test.

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Taxi licensing users include:

- Hackney Carriage and private hire driver licence holders
- Taxi vehicle licence holders
- Private hire operator licence holders
- Local Authority staff in licensing and supporting teams.

Taxi drivers and taxi company operators require a licence to operate. To acquire and retain their various licenses they need to know what information to provide and when, to ensure the licences they hold remain valid and lawful. Licence holders interact with these processes intermittently and struggle to take appropriate action independently and at the right time.

Licensing staff meet this need by contacting licence holders, by phone or email, to notify them when information or tasks are due. Licence holders provide required information by phone, email or in person. Officers validate information provided and may make further contact regarding outcomes. This situation and challenges in communication and clarity invariably leads to errors, lost time and frustration for both licence holders and licensing teams. In acute cases this can result in taxi drivers unable to work.

[Research](#) shows that licence holders expect all this to be possible online via a secure, digital service. No collaborator has found a viable market solution to meet this need; either as an integrated digital service layer or as part of a complete licensing system.

The proposed service would address multiple problems for users:

- Lack access to licence information & status at source with dependence instead on Officer availability.
- Time consuming manual checking & communication of basic administrative information.
- Manually re-keying & copying of data between systems.
- Reduced officer capacity for highly-value, proactive enforcement & human assistance activity.

Licensing powers are universally exercised in around 280 district, metro-district and unitary councils with 251,100 licensed vehicles, 343,800 drivers & 15,100 operators [in 2021](#). This need is assumed to be equally universal.

The Alpha project will test these hypotheses to further explore needs & solution development:

- The priority of user needs and features are common & consistent across the collaborating authorities' user groups.
- and therefore: the product prototype is in line with License holder users' expectations.
- A product based on the prototype can be reused across many councils with ways of working
- Collaborators can implement and reuse this product in their local technological setting.
- Collaborating Licensing Service will realise the scalable benefits of this product as expected.

### 4.2 Describe outcomes and outputs you aim to achieve by the end of the project.

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The Alpha phase will:

- Create a research plan to test the five hypothesis of the Alpha phase.
- Map user journeys for each Licensing service; create user stories; prioritise user needs & product capabilities for prototyping.
- Explore collaborator technical environments, requirements & constraints, including council DDaT team needs for digital service implementation.
- Explore differences in needs, priorities, processing & technology and their potential impact on service/product design & implementation.
- Test technical & non-technical concepts & prototypes with stakeholders as appropriate including licence holders; licensing officers; support system administrators & suppliers.
- Document our research, participation, prototypes, testing, results and findings in a final user research report.
- Create an interactive, shareable, tested digital service prototype for each collaborator.
- Identify measures required to optimise & evaluate the product, including the user experience, to support iterative improvement.
- Present project conclusions with next steps and product roadmap.
- Produce a benefits case for any potential Beta project.
- Create shareable communication media throughout.

All collaborators will work alongside user researcher and their engagement with the project and local stakeholders will directly shape Alpha work and build each authority's experience of iterative, agile service development. Project outputs will then support further decision making for all collaborators, regardless of their next steps.

### 4.3 Tell us how your project will make local government services safer, more resilient and/or cheaper to run in the context of the problem area.

The project aims first to:

- Develop a practical, efficient, available, digital service solution, meeting user expectations, consistent with contemporary GOV.UK services.
- Reduce license issues that prevent taxi drivers working and reduce taxi availability.
- Reduced administrative costs may be converted to licence fee reductions, benefiting license holders.
- Maximise time for value adding services activities that improve public safety outcomes.
- Develop a secure, user-centred digital service capability that:
  - fills a gap in the existing product market and the user experience;
  - is technology agnostic, ensuring flexibility for reuse through built in configuration options for integration, scalability and reusability
  - allows configuration & adaptation for a wide range to regulatory services and systems.
  - opens significant reuse opportunities for other regulatory services & secure data sharing, including to support safeguarding.

### 4.4 Tell us about who your project stakeholders are and how you plan to engage them.

The project team will:

- engage license holders via existing service communication channels and direct on-street engagement to promote the project, recruit research participants and share progress.
- promote and hold regular, engaging virtual show & tells, maintain a blog including sprint notes. Live sessions will be recorded for later viewing, as will short videos with content designed for specific audiences, such as the licence holder cohort.
- work closely with each authorities licensing, customer service, DDaT & legal teams, sharing progress and planning output from sprint ceremonies.
- "Work in the open", promoting and sharing progress with [Rushmoor.gov.uk/transformation](https://www.rushmoor.gov.uk/transformation) and by leveraging local and cross-government digital and service networks. This will include, the LocalGovDigital community, licensing officers groups, local taxi trade associations, licensing sector technology suppliers and interested parties from similar regulatory service areas.

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### 4.5 Tell us about any local government sector organisations you engaged with about your project.

The Institute of Licensing and the Hampshire and IoW Licensing officer's group (HILOG) have expressed interest in the bid and are engaging in discussions on possible involvement in the Alpha project. The similar engagement will be sort with the North East Strategic Licensing Group (NESLG).

We discussed our proposal with the LGA, who expressed interest in how this digital service might improve the speed of licensing activities; the need for faster licensing services having been communicated by Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle (PHV) trade bodies in various national forums. There is also significant LGA interest in the role of Taxi/PHV drivers in Safeguarding, which will be in scope of the user interactions examined by this Alpha.

In developing digital prototypes, we have and will continue to:

- Use components from the Gov.UK design system & service patterns wherever possible;
- Investigate opportunities and technical integration requirements to leverage existing GAAP services such as GOV.UK Notify.

### 4.6 How will project budget be used?

Item (e.g backfill staff time, buy in user researcher, software, hardware and others)	Time/quantity	Total cost/value £	Where will the funding come from? (e.g Local Digital funding or a particular project partner)
User researcher	120 days	60000	Local Digital Fund
Product Manager	30 days	18000	Local Digital Fund
Service Designer	30 days	18000	Local Digital Fund
Delivery Manager	24 days	14400	Local Digital Fund
Technical Writer	20	11000	Local Digital Fund
Software Developer	25	13750	Local Digital Fund
North Tyneside Licensing SME	12 days	3000	Local Digital Fund
All collaborators licensing team staff	36 days	7560	All collaborators
All collaborators DDaT staff	12 days	2520	All collaborators
All collaborators project support	36 days	7560	All collaborators

### 4.7 Tell us about your delivery plan.

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Rushmoor have already conducted Alpha work in their local setting and tested prototypes with users confirming some, but not all hypothesis in scope of this project. This Alpha seeks build on this work by testing the five stated hypothesis, in all collaborator settings.

A 3 month agile Alpha project of time-boxed sprints will deliver required outcomes and outputs in accord with the [project plan](#).

We will test hypothesis with users by researching, developing, testing and iterating suitable prototypes. We will gather data and opinions directly from users to shape this process and evidence our research conclusions. The Licensing SME from North Tyneside will, in addition to supporting the project team, contribute data & insight from significant existing analysis assets created in past work with the service locally.

Key milestones:

1. Steering group agreement of project team staffing arrangements at each council and agreement of specification to commence required role procurement.
2. Lead council & steering group award/complete recruitment to complete the project team.
3. Project Kick-off
4. Agreement of user research plan, commencement of recruitment.
5. Commencement user research activities
6. Commencement of prototype development and testing
7. Completion of internal user research
8. Start testing of full collaborator prototypes
9. Completion of all user research and prototyping activities
10. Completion of user research report & concluding presentations
11. Project closed

Prior to project close, there will be an all collaborator & DLUHC discussion of Alpha outcomes and next steps.

### 4.8 Describe how your project team will have the skills and time available to deliver the project in an iterative, agile and user-centred way.

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To support agile delivery of the project we propose:

- A multi-disciplinary team, working in the open together throughout the project with the following roles:
  - Product manager
  - Delivery manager
  - User researcher
  - Service designer
  - Technical writer
  - Software developer
- Time boxed sprints reflecting delivery of the project plan (see attached) with a delivery manager facilitating ceremonies & participation from each collaborating authority (sprint planning, stand-ups, show & tells, retrospectives).
- User researchers working in each collaborating authority throughout the project are a key relationship to ensure local user engagement; to evidence robust testing of hypotheses and prototypes with users; to share and promote learning within the project team & local stakeholders.
- We aim to first fill these roles with local authority staff to maximise the development and retention of skills and experience. Projected costs are based upon potentially sourcing roles from the digital marketplace and existing skills supplier relationships. Staff assuming roles will be supported, if needed, by Rushmoor's digital and licensing teams, who will share their experience of agile, iterative methods, tools & templates, from their discovery and alpha work to date.
- Prior to the project's delivery plan timeline, a one month 'sprint zero' will be facilitated by Rushmoor BC and the project steering group (see 4.9) to complete any team role procurements, and source any back-fill & training required by the project team.

### 4.9 Define the governance structure of your project.

With over 400km between collaborators, digital collaboration will be essential and is a listed risk. Well established tools, such as Microsoft Teams are already in place and in use between collaborators. Past discovery and alpha work over the pandemic has proven a range of available tools for both collaborative work, such as Miro, and research, such as Mentimeter. Rushmoor will provide such tools and training therein as required by the project team & collaborators.

A steering group with representatives from each collaborating authority will govern the project. As lead authority, Rushmoor will chair this group. The steering group will monitor progress against agreed milestones in the delivery plan, respond to issues escalated by the project team and sign-off key project outputs and spending decisions. The steering group, with senior stakeholders show in () are:

- Victoria Hickie, Business Improvement & Administration Manager, North Tyneside (Joanne Lee, Head of Public Protection)
- James Knight, Service Manager, Place Protection, Rushmoor (James Duggin, Head of Operational Services)
- Rob Draper, Regulatory Services Manager (Tom Payne, Head of Environment and Community Services)
- Alex Shiell, Digital Manager at Rushmoor

The project team will self-manage project delivery under the coordination of the delivery manager. The project team will include a lead Licensing officer/manager from each collaborating council.

### 4.10 Outline the risks to project success.

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### Risks:

- Unexpected/unforeseen operational issues preventing proper participation of licensing team staff & SMEs. Mitigation: flexibility of project team staffing arrangements built into the plan to allow collaborators to balance their resourcing; daily stand-ups to monitor and react to issues; availability planned each sprint; depth and breadth of skills in supporting teams.
- Poor engagement from licence holder cohort. Mitigation: user research plan designed with local licensing teams and experienced user researchers; use of multiple engagement formats including on-street (visiting taxi ranks & businesses); consistent and responsive dialogue to manage expectations and demonstrate how participant feedback is shaping the project.
- In-effective remote collaboration: all collaborators will agree collaborative ways of working, tools and training requirements; effectiveness and issues will be discussed at daily stand-ups & retrospectives with rapid remedial action; project team will support each other with additional support from Rushmoor's digital team.

### Constraints

- Technical limitations in information systems such as API capabilities & security requirements.
- Variations in licensing service staffing structures, responsibilities, priorities & practices.
- Data availability issues such as consistency of data formats, structures & relationships.
- Legal or procedural requirements such as local licensing rules and data protection.
- Team capacity, budget & timescales.

### 4.11 Describe how project monitoring and evaluation will happen.

Contact between Licence holders and Licensing staff is not captured in a form that lends itself to easy analysis or evaluation. In licensing case management systems, contact is apparent based upon notes and actions recorded. Manual review of these records has enabled the projected efficiency & saving potential of this proposal.

The proposed Alpha will explore the correct measures and collection approach to effectively monitor the success of any potential service. This will be a key component of the Alpha hypothesis regarding the realisation of the scalable benefits of the product. This must be explored with collaborators to better understand the requirements and practicalities that any potential system of measurement will contend with.

We will know the Alpha phase is successful if:

- We can robustly test and evidence the five-given hypothesis with our stakeholders, including a representative cohort of licence holders.
- We can produce functionally consistent prototypes for each collaborator that 90% of user participants say they would use on testing.

### 4.12 Describe the benefits and savings your project is likely to deliver.



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Licensing Services set fees to cover the costs of licensing activities, including those in scope of the proposed solution. The proposed solution will:

**Save staff time:** reducing the continuous overhead on Licensing teams of contact to 'chase' information or documents with licence holders required to ensure licences remains valid. A conservative estimate of the cost of this activity is based on an estimate of average time spent across collaborators charged at a lower-end staffing grade hourly rate:

Annual officer time required per 100 licences = 52 hrs = £1735.

Projected time across all collaborators for 3,858 licences = 2006 hrs = £67,000.

Projected time required nationally, 610,000 licences = 305,000 hrs = £10,260,200.

Licensing teams may choose invest time in their other key public protection activities and outcomes, which include outcomes supporting key national agendas, such as the tackling Violence Against Women and Girls strategy. Rushmoor's internal Alpha work has identified that licence holder drivers prefer to raise safeguarding issue with licensing officers, despite signposting to official safeguarding contact.

**Postal costs:** The service would reduce the use and expense of postage, the most expensive contact channel. Each letter sent per licence on a national scale equates to £244,000.

**Availability:** as a digital, self-service option, the availability of the service increases for licence holders, removing delays from manual contact activity. This is expected to reduce incidence of delay driven license suspension or refusal that prevents drivers working, impacts their business and reduces availability of taxi services.

**Gateway capability for other services:** the secure, digital capability of this product has much wider potential usage in similar service problem areas, including other licensing and regulatory services.

### 5. Agreement with DLUHC

5.1 Please confirm that you commit to delivering the project outputs listed below. Please tick the box to agree.

- I agree

### 5.2 Agreements with DLUHC

Please tick the box to agree.

- I agree