

The Integration Wall: When APIs Don't Exist and the Bill Becomes the Programme

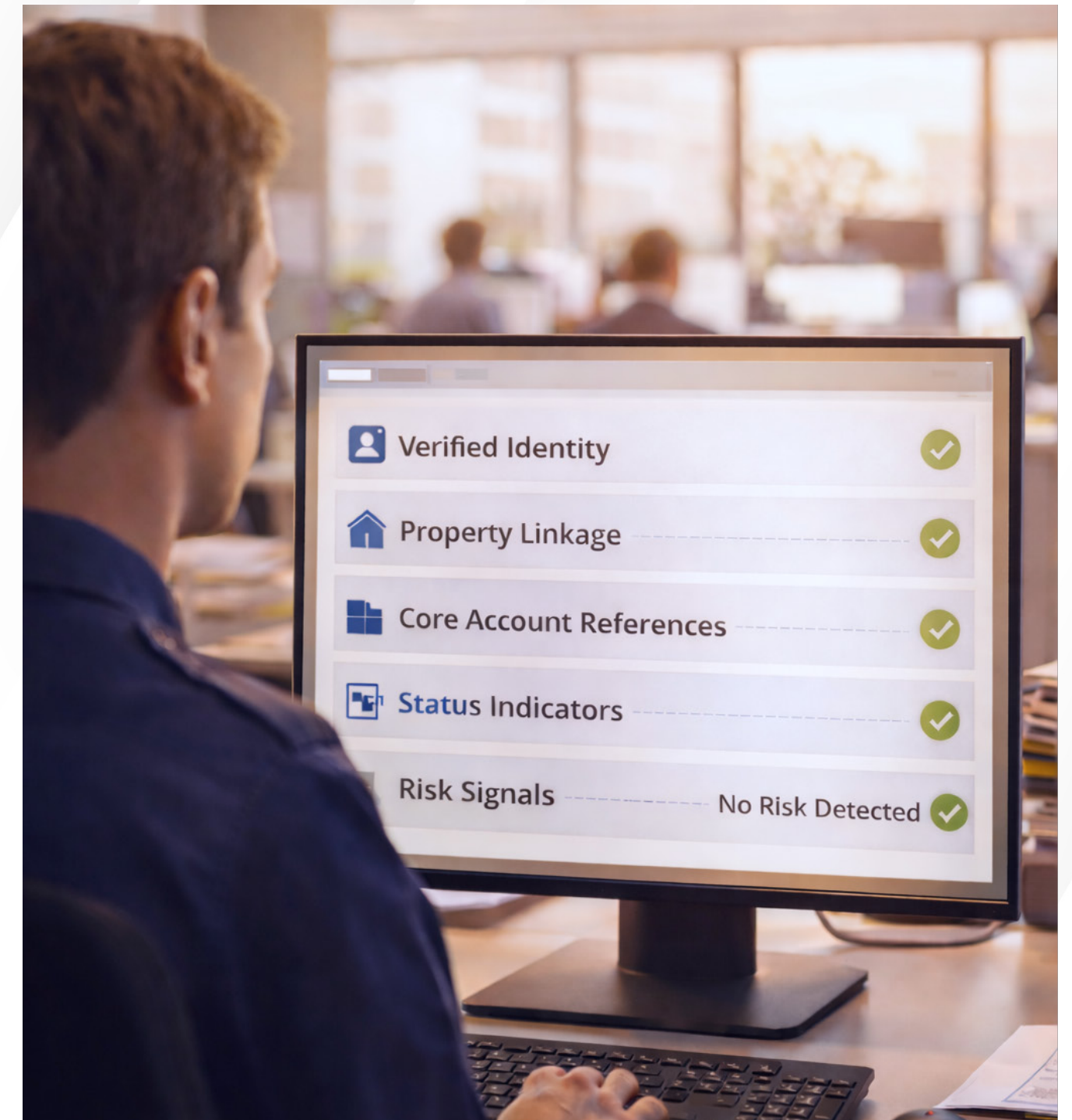


Overview

This PDF examines how council transformation programmes can become dominated by integration challenges when fragmented systems lack the APIs needed to create a single point of view.

As technical complexity and supplier costs escalate — particularly in Local Government Reorganisation — integration risks overtaking reform itself.

It introduces the Connected Council approach developed at OAS, which establishes a governed connective layer to create shared context without requiring universal system integration. The core argument is clear: integration should enable reform, not become the programme.



The Illusion of Universal Integration & Reality Becomes Clear

After the CRM conversation, most councils reach the same conclusion: if one system cannot give us the whole picture, we will integrate everything. In theory, this seems logical. If fragmentation exists because systems do not communicate, then the solution must be to make them talk.

Many of the APIs required to create a genuine, cross-service single point of view simply do not exist. Some systems expose limited endpoints and others reveal that none are meaningful for whole-council intelligence and many legacy platforms were never designed to participate in a shared data fabric and even where APIs can be built.

The second shock follows quickly: the cost. Each supplier prices development separately. Each enhancement becomes scoped work. Each variation requires approval. Multiply that across housing, council tax, benefits, adult social care, planning, waste and regulatory systems, and the integration line begins to dominate the programme.



When Integration Becomes the Programme

This is the turning point.

Transformation quietly becomes an integration-funded exercise. More time is spent working out how to connect systems than redesigning how the council operates. More energy goes into assembling business cases for API development than defining prevention outcomes. In some cases, the cost of connectivity rivals — or exceeds — the cost of the original reform ambition.

This is where it typically gets bogged down. Not simply because APIs are missing, but because the programme splits into two difficult tracks. One becomes a technical negotiation with suppliers over exposure, capability and roadmap. The other becomes a financial justification exercise — building business cases for connectivity before visible benefit has been realised. Momentum slows and delivery stretches. The reform agenda becomes dependent on contracts rather than outcomes.

The practical reality is that the cost of integration can potentially surpass the cost of the original transformation programme or if detected up-front make it unviable.



The Compounding Challenge of Reorganisation

In a Local Government Reorganisation environment, the challenge compounds significantly.

A newly merged authority does not begin with a clean slate; it inherits parallel housing platforms, separate revenues and benefits systems, multiple social care applications and differing data standards, contracts and supplier roadmaps. API maturity varies widely, with some systems capable of limited exposure and others never designed for cross-authority interoperability.

At the very moment members and senior leaders expect visible unification — one council, one experience, one view — technical diversity is at its peak. Attempting to hard-wire every application across this combined estate can consume years of funding and focus, delaying harmonisation benefits and postponing tangible, resident-facing improvement while integration negotiations dominate the agenda.



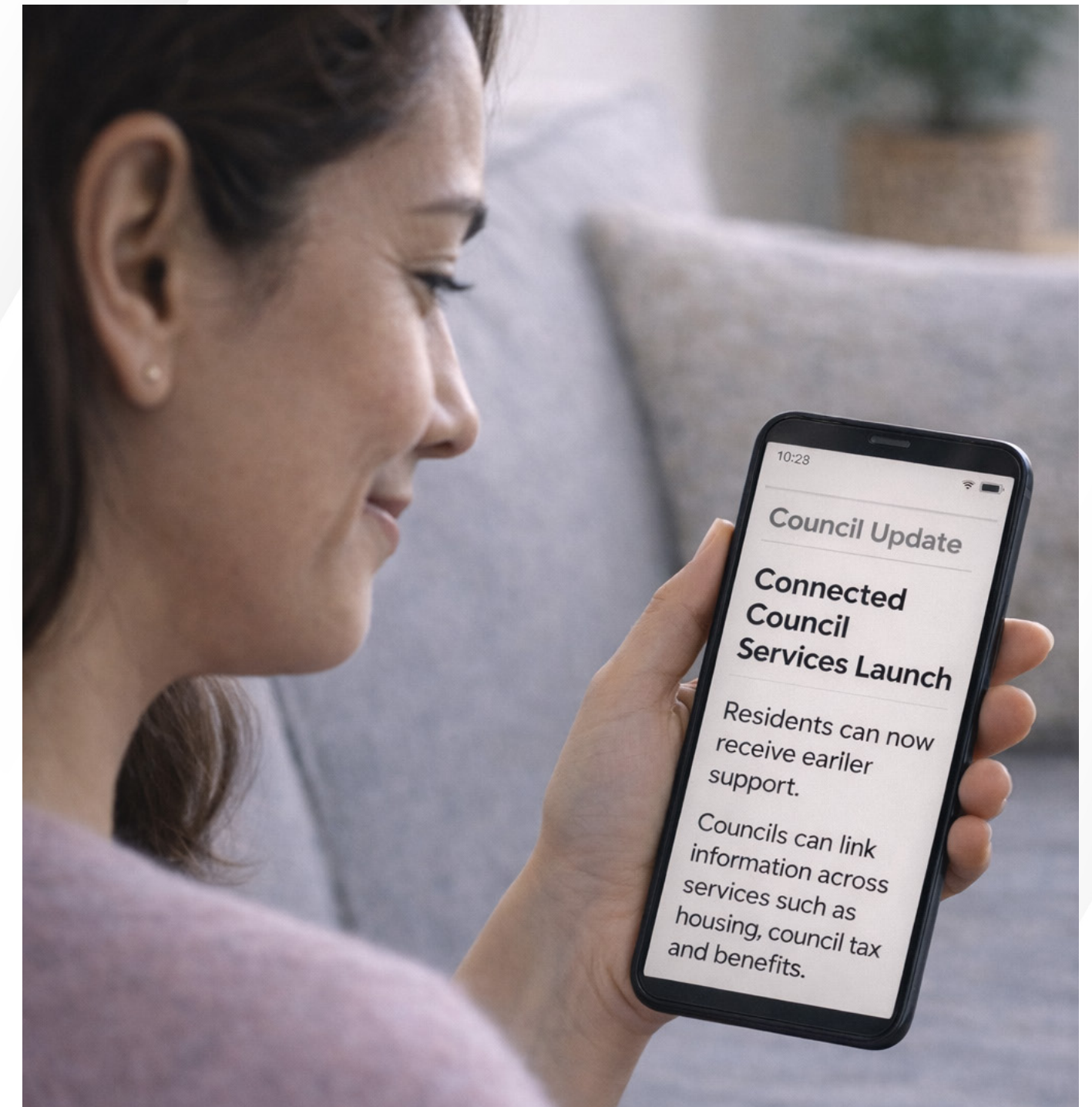
Establishing Coherence Before Completeness

The Connected Council model at OAS does not begin with universal integration. To unlock proactive capability — earlier fraud detection, coordinated vulnerability management, prevention rather than escalation — councils need visibility across services. Perfect technical symmetry is not required to start delivering value.

Our approach creates a governed connective layer that extracts only essential data points: verified identity, property linkage, core account references, status indicators and risk signals. It works with existing systems and avoids waiting for perfect APIs, establishing coherence before completeness.

Connectivity is then extended deliberately around specific, measurable use cases. Integration becomes incremental and purposeful, not all-or-nothing.

Tested in live council environments, this proves a trusted single view can be achieved without wholesale replacement. Integration stops being the programme and becomes an enabler — dissolving the Integration Wall and turning proactive ambition into measurable impact.



In Summary,

Council transformation programmes often stall when integration becomes the focus rather than reform. Fragmented legacy systems, limited APIs and rising supplier costs — especially during Local Government Reorganisation — can cause connectivity to overtake outcomes.

OAS's Connected Council approach avoids universal integration by establishing a governed connective layer that creates a trusted single point of view using essential data only. Integration becomes incremental and purposeful, enabling proactive, measurable reform without wholesale system replacement.



Connected Council

Get in touch by sending Pete Marshall an email to learn more.

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