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📝 **Cliff Saran's Enterprise blog**

New government, new approach to IT?

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There is a long shopping list of policies the incoming government needs to execute to drive the UK forward over the next five years. And while it may not seem like a high priority, getting the IT right is fundamental to the successful implementation of these policies.

There is now an opportunity to break from the best practices of the past. OpenUK's latest *State of Open* report blames the government's reliance on multi-year contracts with "legacy IT providers and consultancies" for the delivery of what it describes as "inappropriate shaped technologies and services". OpenUK believes the problem lies with closed code, which it says closes business development and entire markets, and closes off improved public sector outcomes. We also need a serious debate over what must be controlled and managed centrally and what is best administered locally. IT systems are expensive and local government should not have to foot the bill for the IT infrastructure that is essential for running public services.

There must be a better way to distribute funding to avoid a situation where local authorities are balancing their budgets to provide services to the community they serve with the exorbitant cost of the IT systems needed to keep these services running. Raising council tax and business rates should not be the way local government IT is funded.

AI in the public sector

We hear an awful lot about how artificial intelligence (AI) will revolutionise the public sector. AI has the potential to reduce bottlenecks and streamline services. But AI is not the magic bullet to cure the inefficiency of public services.

Rachel Coldicutt, founder and executive director of research consultancy Careful Industries and an expert in the social impact of new and emerging technologies, is among the many people voicing concerns about AI bias in the public sector. As Coldicutt notes, many AI systems in the public sector disproportionately affect marginalised communities and those relying on state support, potentially leading to life-changing impacts if they go wrong.

"Rapid deployment of AI and automated decision-making systems are entrenching biases, leading to inaccurate, discriminatory impacts," she says. "Policymakers must focus on harms which exist and are emerging now." Coldicutt believes the government should focus on automating the "easy things", not seeking quick solutions to complex social problems.

Political leaders generally want to be associated with shiny new things. Yes, innovation can drive the UK economy, but there is a huge opportunity across the UK tech sector to work with the incoming government to address the very real problems the country faces.