

## AP24/5/3 PERFORMANCE REPORT (ICT STRATEGY)

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**Wards affected:** (All Wards);  
**Appendices (attached):**

### Summary

This report provides an update on the progress of the ICT Strategy following the request from members at the July meeting.

### Recommendation (s)

**The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) **Note the progress that has been made on the ICT Strategy**

## 1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 As requested by Members at the last Committee meeting, this report brings forward an update on the ICT strategy for councillors to consider, specifically addressing progress on AP24/5.3 and the strategic adjustments made in response to recent organisational changes.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 At the last committee we reported progress on the ICT strategy as follows:

*Off Track with the following narrative:*

*The updated ICT strategy was approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee on 28 January 2025. The uncertainty of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and cancellation of the move to East Street have had a direct effect on the strategy, whereby several key elements require full revision. This has impacted on the in-year objectives, now showing completion around 60%.*

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- 2.2 This report seeks to provide further insight into the challenges that have influenced the direction and pace of the strategy, resulting in delays. It outlines the key areas of the strategy and roadmap currently being addressed, acknowledging that the council is undergoing a programme of significant change while continuing to deliver business-as-usual services. This work is being carried out by a small team that has experienced considerable disruption over recent years.

### **Datacentre Services**

- 2.3 As part of the original ICT Strategy, there were plans to move the Council's on-site datacentre to a hosted facility managed by a specialist provider. This would have involved physically relocating the hardware to an external site. During this process, any outdated equipment would have been replaced. The move was originally tied to the relocation to 70 East Street, which would have meant closing the old Town Hall and moving to a new building that had insufficient space to support the necessary datacentre infrastructure. However, since the East Street move has been cancelled, relocating to a hosted datacentre is no longer practical. Instead, reviewing and upgrading the existing on-site datacentre is now considered a more cost-effective and operationally sound approach, especially considering the upcoming Local Government Reorganisation.
- 2.4 Despite this shift, the Council remains committed to modernising its ICT infrastructure. A smaller number of new servers will be deployed to meet current and future computing needs. These upgrades will improve system performance and energy efficiency, helping to reduce the Council's overall carbon footprint.
- 2.5 Infrastructure upgrades and security improvements are part of the Council's routine ICT operations. This includes replacing older hardware and strengthening protection against new and evolving cyber threats. These updates will continue regardless of any future changes to the organisation or its physical locations, ensuring systems remain secure and reliable as part of business as usual.
- 2.6 On 28 January 2025, the Strategy & Resources Committee reviewed an updated ICT strategy. This approach focuses on building a flexible and reliable technology setup that balances cost with practical needs. Instead of relying entirely on either local servers or cloud services, the Council will use a mix of both—known as a hybrid model. This will make it easier to work with future unitary partners and support the creation of a shared network system, which is expected to be mostly cloud-based.
- 2.7 A significant proportion of the main physical infrastructure changes are on course for completion in the next six months.

### **Network Services**

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- 2.8 The Council's network redesign has progressed steadily, with a key focus on removing outdated hardware while ensuring that essential systems—such as Planning, Council Tax, and Housing—continue to operate without disruption. This careful approach has allowed critical services to remain stable while improvements are made behind the scenes.
- 2.9 As part of the modernisation effort, connectivity has been upgraded at several Council sites, including Bourne Hall. These upgrades support the Council's 'Cloud Preference' strategy, which aims to make services more flexible and accessible by using cloud-based platforms where appropriate.
- 2.10 A rolling programme has replaced older copper connections with high-speed fibre at most locations. This not only improves performance but also simplifies management by consolidating services under a single, reliable supplier. The result is a more resilient and future-ready network.
- 2.11 In August 2024, the legacy 'Unicorn' network was successfully decommissioned. It was replaced with a direct connection to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) via a secured network provider, improving security and reliability. Additionally, the Town Hall's primary network link was upgraded to ensure continuity during infrastructure transitions.

#### **End User Compute / Devices**

- 2.12 We plan to continue using the Citrix environment as part of our current strategy to support secure and flexible working. While recent upgrades have improved system resilience, our focus is now on making the environment more usable and better aligned with staff needs. At this stage, the complexities involved in moving to alternative platforms means that Citrix remains the most practical solution.
- 2.13 We continue to reduce our reliance on legacy systems, recognising the importance of modernising and streamlining our infrastructure. As part of this effort, all corporate laptops have now been upgraded to Windows 11, enhancing security, performance, and compatibility with modern applications. Staff also continue to benefit from the rollout of these devices, completed this spring, which support secure working both within and outside the Citrix environment. This approach promotes flexibility while maintaining robust security standards throughout the transition likely to be associated with Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

#### **Microsoft 365**

- 2.14 The licensing model for Microsoft 365 was revised upon renewal in March this year to provide a more efficient use of the Licences available to us. This has seen the removal of the typical Office 365 components and a hybrid type M365 licence with the enhanced security that this brings.

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- 2.15 The use of M365 continues to provide staff with flexibility both inside and outside the Citrix environment, and recent improvements have almost fully remediated previous limitations with Teams functionality and restricted printing only allowed within Citrix. Staff are now able to use Teams more effectively and staff and members are now able to print outside Citrix if required.
- 2.16 The data migration project is ongoing, with additional training booked in conjunction with an external provider to support the transition from on-premises storage to the Microsoft Cloud and in the case of some historical documents on microfiche to the Xerox docushare cloud platform.

#### **Telephony Fixed and Mobile**

- 2.17 Extensive work has been undertaken to modernise the Mitel desk phone estate, with legacy physical hardware successfully replaced by more resilient virtual machines. In parallel, the Playhouse telephony system has transitioned to a cloud-based solution, enabling staff to handle calls remotely when required.
- 2.18 Following engagement with key stakeholders including the Contact Centre, whose requirements for wallboards and call recording functionality were central to the evaluation the decision has been made to adopt the solution deployed in the Playhouse as the organisation-wide Softphone platform. A formal procurement process is now underway to support its implementation.
- 2.19 The mobile telephony project outlined in the original strategy has been successfully completed, with approximately 100 handsets and contracts now consolidated under a single service provider. Following the government's decision to withdraw proposed Right to Disconnect legislation, the use of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) remains permissible where appropriate. Where a business case identifies the need for a corporate handset, the existing deployment process will continue to be used, ensuring best value through the EEBC mobile contract solution and a shared data pool accessible to all devices.

#### **Major and Minor Applications**

- 2.20 Work on essential major applications remains aligned with the original strategy, with the understanding that many will be migrated or consolidated as Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) progresses. It is anticipated that a future EastSurrey.gov unitary authority may adopt a cloud-first approach, replacing or retiring on-premises systems. With increased purchasing power, solutions that are currently financially out of scope for most districts and boroughs may become operationally viable. In parallel, efforts continue to phase out or migrate minor applications, particularly those with limited use or exclusive to EEBC, in favour of platforms shared with likely EastSurrey.gov partners.

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### Conclusion

- 2.21 The progress that has been made has been considerable with a number of unexpected BAU activities taking longer to resolve and diverting attention from the overall change programme. However, we have recruited additional temporary resource into the team and are now progressing well, adapting the strategy as appropriate. Given the announcement of LGR, we want to make sure that any changes which are being made are, where possible, consistent with the ways that other potential partner authorities are working so as to avoid rework once the new authority comes into existence.

### 3 Risk Assessment

#### Legal or other duties

#### 3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1.1 All new systems and equipment will be designed and implemented in full compliance with recognised Equality and Access standards. Where applicable, Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) will be conducted for new applications to ensure they are inclusive, accessible, and do not inadvertently disadvantage any user group.

#### 3.2 Crime & Disorder

- 3.2.1 None for the purposes of this report.

#### 3.3 Safeguarding

- 3.3.1 None for the purposes of this report.

#### 3.4 Dependencies

- 3.4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

#### 3.5 Other

- 3.5.1 None for the purposes of this report.

### 4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The ICT Strategy was fully funded through both Capital and Revenue allocations. However, in light of ongoing inflationary pressures and rising ICT costs, budgets are being closely monitored to ensure financial sustainability and value for money throughout the delivery of this work.
- 4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** Delivering on our ICT strategy will ensure that our systems are modern, aligned with staff needs, and capable of supporting efficient and value for money service delivery.

### 5 Legal Implications

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5.1 **Legal Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

## 6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Effective Council - Improve access to services through technology.
- Smart & Connected – Increase digital connectivity for all.

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**

- Captured in the original report to S&R in September 2023 but now revised in the necessity to retain the datacentre on premise until the plans and structure for new infrastructure in EastSurrey.gov is agreed in the coming year.
- As indicated the replacement hardware will reduce the number of servers required to maintain existing applications and will run cooler and more efficiently. This in turn will reduce the running costs of the datacentre and by doing so reduce the overall CO2 emissions produced.

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**

6.4.1 None for the purposes of this report.

6.5 **Partnerships:**

6.5.1 None for the purposes of this report.

6.6 **Local Government Reorganisation Implications:**

6.6.1 Outlined in the body of this report.

## 7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

### **Previous reports:**

- Strategy and Resources Committee – 21 September 2023 – Agenda Item 4 (IT Strategy)
- Strategy and Resources Committee – 28 January 2025 – Agenda Item 8 (ICT Strategy Update)