Cheshire East Council

ICT Strategy

## 2023-2027

Open Fair Green

Cheshire East
Council

Contents

1   Introduction

This ICT Strategy provides a strategic response and blueprint for the future in which the technology landscape will be a fundamental and essential part of the running of the Council. We understand that bright, shiny technology is not an end in itself; it needs to deliver council services that offer choice, transparency, trust and value.

It complements and enables the Council's Corporate Plan and Digital Strategy. This ICT Strategy seeks to provide alignment between the external and internal transformation and digital agenda supported by a clear focus on the delivery of technology, cyber security, information assurance and data management services.

We recognise that having the right technology in place is important for our future. This ICT Strategy outlines how we will use information and technology to deliver our essential council services in a way that offers choice, transparency, trust and value for money. We have consulted with services and partners who have expressed their challenges and opportunities. Because of this, we are resetting our past approaches, behaviours and methods, to form an ICT Service that is fit for purpose now and in the future.

Whilst this strategy offers bold ambitions, we will continue to strengthen our core foundations and practices (for example cyber security) ensuring that the Council can continue its business in a safe and resilient way. We will, through a range of council initiatives set within our Corporate Plan, ensure greater connectivity and integration between directorates, suppliers, partners, communities and the wider regional relationships; ensuring we enable collaboration to increase opportunities for efficiency and transformational capabilities through digitalisation.

2   Context

"A digital authority can be described as one that dramatically increases the pace at which it improves its sustainability and resilience, by fundamentally improving how it engages society, how it applies collaborative leadership methods, how it works across disciplines and its diverse urban and rural geography and how it uses data and integrated technologies in order to transform services and the quality of life for those in and involved within the authority (residents, businesses, students, visitors)." **ISO 37106**

This ICT Strategy enables the Council to strengthen its digital approach by empowering council services to maximise the transformational opportunities offered by both current and emerging technology and digital tools. Our Council ICT Strategy supports our vision of becoming an open, fair and green Cheshire East.

3   The Council's ICT Vision

The Council's ICT vision is to "maximise information and technology to deliver change and innovation, based on a foundation of secure and flexible ICT Services."

The Council will continue to invest in people and technology to improve customer experience, increase digital services, and promote the use of Cloud services to provide resilient and efficient ways of accessing Council services. As an enabler, ICT Services will create a relationship between people and technology to remove barriers and use technology in the most productive way.

ICT Services will be designed around the customer and user needs first, with innovative technology being used in the right place at the right time that meets changing future demands and adapts to the business. This design-led approach is essential and is coupled with an open innovative approach to technology, and an agile approach to delivery that recognises services as constantly evolving in maturity.

4   Challenges

The vision is set against an evolving backdrop of challenges, including:

Financial and resultant recruitment challenges - The Council, like all councils, is facing financial challenges exacerbated by high inflation and rising demand which has reduced budgets. This may impact our ability to recruit specialist and technical resources which enable transformative innovation,

Growing demands - from an ageing population, the impact of migration on communities, Net Zero climate emergency targets and taking on national Health and Care digital responsibilities from central government and our Integrated Care health partners,

Regional and Place based priorities - which are creating new opportunities for integration across public service boundaries at a local level, reflecting Cheshire and Merseyside regional, and Cheshire East Place needs and population profiles,

Changing expectations – Cheshire East is a dispersed borough with rural and urban users and services needing to be more coherent, user friendly and accessible, 'always on' and responsive to individual needs and preferences,

Changing democracy and single versions of the truth - as more people should have their voice heard, need to be informed, and are having a real influence over local and national policy; consistent and accurate data is key,

**Changing business continuity** – the impact of the pandemic was rapid and severe, and this is unlikely to be the only emergency that we need to be prepared for, with potential future incidents likely due to climate and health associated events. We need to be prepared for power cuts, floods, building closures and lockdowns which may impact the delivery of digital solutions whether hosted in the cloud or locally.

5 Core Principles

To provide standard, sustainable and flexible technology

Focus on agile delivery, supporting and collaborating with the workforce

Maximise the value of technology enabling financial stability

Cyber Security & threat management

Facilitate sharing of information and partnership working

Ensure ICT governance and architectural practices are sustainable for the future

Ensure the Council's information and data is managed effectively with enterprise solutions

6　ICT Strategy overview

Open　**Fair**　**Green**

Corporate Plan

ICT Core Principles

Flexible Technology	Governance & Architecture	Agile Delivery	Information & Data	Sharing & Partnerships	Cost & value of Technology	Cyber & Threat Management

Digital Strategy

Strategic Aims

Well Managed Service	Accurate Info & Data	Secure & Compliant ICT	Robust ICT Governance

Enabling ICT Programmes & Projects

Digital Workplace	Digital Customer Enablement	Adult, Children's & Public Health	Information & Data Management	Security & Compliance	Application Lifecycle Management & Procurement
• Productivity growth and staff development • Decrease legacy kit • Infrastructure Investment and Essential Replacement	• Reduce manual process, provide consistency • Reusable technology	• Increased healthy lifestyle • Improved wellbeing for residents	• Centralised approach to information & data • Adopted Information Strategy • Consistent, compliant, innovative approach	• Reduce cyber security risks • Improve data protection • Increased compliance	• Compliant & quality driven business applications • Reduce complexity of ICT estate • Reduce ICT spend

Deliverables

• Flexible technology • Collaboration tools • Essential replacement • Adoption & training • Migrate to CEC O365 Domain • Migrate to Hybrid Operating Model	• Customer engagement • Automation • Case Management • Centralised approach	• Improved integration • Consistent data • Review care application • Interoperable records • Children Hubs • Assistive Technologies	• Information Management lifecycles • Adoption of corporate data platforms • Knowledge & Analytics • Assurance framework	• Data Security • Application Security • End Point Security • Identity Management • Zero Trust Architecture	• Industry standard technology • Cloud hosted apps • Value for Money (VfM) Procurements • Maintaining systems

ICT Vision

The Council's ICT vision is to

" maximise information and technology to deliver change and innovation, based on a foundation of secure and flexible ICT Services. "

How will we achieve our aims?

- Consistent user experience
- Taking a practical and agile approach to funding and procuring digital and IT solutions
- Enabling the benefits of cloud
- Adoption and Change Management - setting an expectation of on-going learning, innovation and skills development, digital service design and delivery
- Ensure the Council's data becomes a valuable asset and, is managed and protected correctly
- Ensure the Council's data is used to provide value
- Ensure opportunities for integration

- Transition to common, fit for purpose and connected systems
- Reduce complexity and unlock productivity
- Provide solutions that are digital and secure by design
- Protect the Council and systems from misuse
- Ensure security awareness is embedded
- Ensure workforce security skills are optimised
- Build and run secure digital solutions
- Provide governance to assure council-wide programmes with clear underpinning technical and information assurance policies
- Embed optimal governance arrangements for business managed applications

7   ICT Strategic aims and objectives

7.1 A Well Managed ICT Service

Technology will continue to support the Council in working to address the financial challenges ahead. This will be driven by a new operating model with its key themes based on a demand plan, an underlying investment plan, and the identification of enabling projects.

Simplify, standardise and share wherever possible. Investment and procurement decisions are based on business priorities and requirements to achieve best value and economies of scale, whilst avoiding duplication.

An 'invest to save' approach will be one of our key criteria in the review of any proposed spend on technology. This approach is critical to avoid poor decision making around the choice of new systems, whilst supporting decommissioning of legacy systems, alongside the consolidation and rationalisation of existing technology. Collectively this helps to ensure that any investment made in technology is maximised and aligned with the Council's ambitions.

7.1 A Well Managed ICT Service - how will we do this?

User self service

- Implementation of additional support channels including Live chat, automation and a prioritisation on telephony for urgent support. This is dependent however on business areas being supportive of different channels to support themselves.

- Redesign our services around the customer, work with customers to co-design services which meet customer needs and which makes it easy for them to access.

Monitoring

- Monitoring how the Council's technology contracts (for hardware and software) are run and perform. Our Vendor Management Team has become a 'centre of excellence' to support service-based contract managers with ICT related investments.

- We will make sure we get the agreed levels of service from our current and future suppliers. Availability of ICT services and support will need to be aligned not only within ICT Services but across Services and Suppliers as the Council's business becomes more reliant on digital solutions.

Funding models

- To enable more incremental change and support the financing of cloud infrastructure and applications.

- Software as a Service (SaaS) will move our line of business systems from internally hosted and managed, to an external (cloud) service. This means our capital model will need to move to revenue.

- This will require simplification and standardisation of business process to enable adoption.

- We will move applications as they happen organically (i.e., at the end of contract or at the time of a major upgrade).

Leverage and Value for Money

- Leverage of the benefits of cloud infrastructure and services where best value can be gained (known as Value for Money VfM)

- Exploit licenses and services in contract, where possible remove third party solutions.

- Reuse of developed cloud applications.

- Ensure that all business-as-usual (BAU) activity is effective and efficient.

- Optimisation of software solutions to meet demand and reflect fully the starters, leavers and partner processes and access.

7.2 Enabling accurate Information and Data

Our future vision is **built upon values that demand we lead from a Customer Experience (Cx) perspective**, with a desire to know what users want and need, always putting their needs first and being true to our word. So, our future relies on how we use accurate single version of the truth information in the pursuit of knowledge and insight. Reference should be made to the underpinning Information Assurance and Data Management (IADM) high level business case.

Insight means understanding behaviours of our ICT customers and users, and the services they use and how we can and do meet their needs in the best way. Better customer satisfaction means better service and better value for money. Using insightful intelligence or knowledge management, we will make the most of our data assets and information, enabling us to be more proactive in meeting our user's needs.
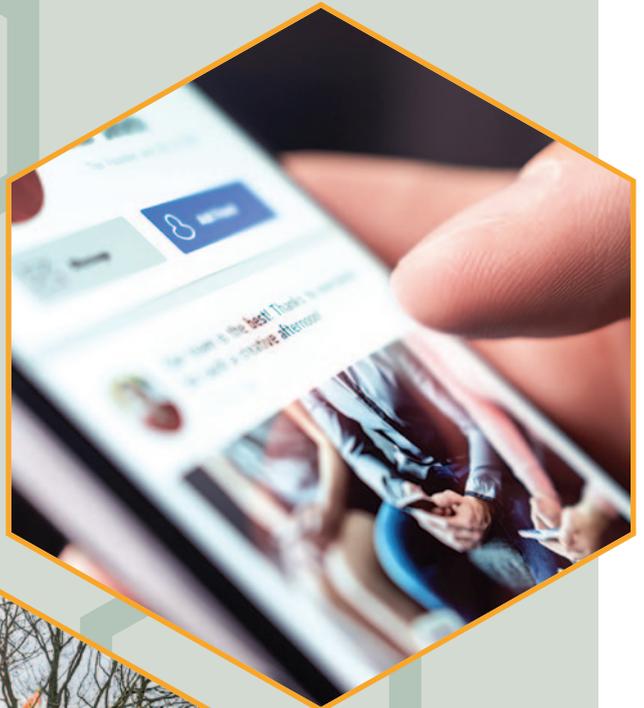
7.2 Enabling accurate Information and Data - how will we ensure this?

Our future relies on how we use accurate single version of the truth information in the pursuit of knowledge and insight. Reference should also be made to the Council's Digital Customer Experience (Cx) high level business case

Information maturity

- Continue to build on the progress made by the Information Assurance and Data Management (IADM) Programme

- Ensure data becomes a valued asset and managed correctly

- Ensure data is used to provide consistent, realistic and accurate information

- Incorporate knowledge management processes in the flow of work as a formal part of our duties

Ethical use

- Ensuring information assurance and data ethics are at the heart of our decisions. This will require an ongoing culture change across Council services, to maximise the value that data provides

- Continue to develop first-rate data quality standards and rules, making sure that they are enforced

- Develop an enterprise knowledge management strategy and supporting frameworks

- Create a cohesive, frictionless knowledge ecosystem from existing repositories, sources and tools working with partners at a place and regional level to enable wider outcomes

Skilled workforce

- Implementation of additional support channels including Live chat, automation and a prioritisation on telephony for urgent support. This is dependent on business areas being supportive of different channels to support themselves.

- Re-design our services around the customer, work with customers to co-design services which meet customer needs and which makes it easy for them to access.

7.2 Enabling accurate Information and Data - how will we know?

Through the development of a basic Knowledge Management Framework

	Converse	Capture	Curate	Circulate
People	Community of practice leaders and facilitators	Lesson capture facilitators	Knowledge owners for each strategic knowledge area	Knowledge Managers for projects and lines of business
Process	Knowledge exchange, peer assist	After action reviews	Creation of best practice, knowledge distillation	Before action assessment, Knowledge Management planning
Technology	Teams	Knowledge base, blog	Wiki, portal	Search, metadata
Governance	Set of Community of Practice, community charters	Expectations and quality standards for articles and lessons	Knowledge Management policy, taxonomy, metadata, information architecture	Expectations of reuse
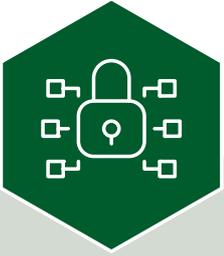
7.3 Compliant and Secure technology (1)

Technology underpins every area of the Council's work and without it we cannot sustain or improve business. We will enable the efficiency and responsiveness of the Council's operations, supported by a highly skilled workforce that will take advantage of the latest technologies and digital opportunities. **The goal is to keep up-to-date and to invest in services that can be scaled up or down as needs change**. This is underpinned by our Infrastructure Investment Programme (IIP), Core Financials, Procurements and ALM Programmes.

Where cloud technologies are greener than legacy systems, it is important to highlight when **cloud is powering the development of these products and services that local authorities can utilise to address climate change.**

Our Corporate Plan sets out ambitions to be more open, fair and green. Becoming greener is important for a number of reasons. The climate emergency is forcing Net Zero technology services, within local authorities, to adapt how they operate and contribute towards organisational and national targets to achieve carbon neutrality. **When it comes to cloud computing, data centres, and the wider IT service industry, the environmental impact these are having is complex** and, until recently, relatively unknown.

7.3 Compliant and Secure technology (2)

The Council's dependence on digital technology exposes vulnerabilities that seriously threaten the safety of individuals, communities and businesses and must be met with extensive, intelligent safeguards and improved digital literacy with all technology users. With more personal information shared online and more digital infrastructure than ever before, people are exposed to personal and social vulnerability simply by existing in the digital age.

Cyber security is crucial to ensuring services are kept up and running and to ensuring the public's trust in the Council with their information. A cyber attack could have very serious consequences disrupting services and damaging the Council's reputation. Healthy cyber security is key to the efficient and productive running of the council.

Today **cyber security is fundamental to creating trust in the Council's digital services**. The Council must give its users, including its own staff, confidence that their information is protected.

The Council needs to further explain the choices customers and users have with respect to data, how it is shared, protected, and for what benefit. This enhanced vigilance must be matched by the right investment and focus, as the use of digital services accelerates.

7.3 Compliant and Secure Technology - how will we achieve this?

Work space

- Transition to common, fit-for-purpose and connected systems
- Reduce complexity and unlock productivity
- Decommission, consolidation and rationalisation – a reduction in the number of systems, balancing the need for agility, value for money, risk and user expectations
- Emerging technologies will be harnessed to provide easily accessible, responsive and cost effective, council-wide services, that are easy to understand and meet user needs
- Enabling service agility by promoting modern and agile working, and providing (using a customer centric design) the right solutions with the right underpinning processes

Cloud

- Continue procuring with carbon thoughtful suppliers, who ensure carbon neutrality in their data centres
- Focusing on optimising applications for the cloud, and creating plans to replace applications that are not cloud native
- Ensuring ICT have the necessary skills to support a cloud environment
- Using our transitions to the cloud to build and design solutions to help combat the climate emergency

Carbon reduction

- Reducing energy consumption across our estates including reducing the data centre footprint by going cloud where appropriate
- Continue to re-design and digitise paper-based communications and processes
- Enabling remote working and reducing carbon emitting commutes
- Ensuring (where possible) that systems are accessible for all our professionals and partners across Cheshire East Place

Leverage and Value for Money

- Enabling digital service delivery across directorates
- Integrating strategies and action plans through cloud technologies
- Integrating regional and place based systems to enable partnership working and business transformation
- Adopting community engagement tools and platforms to maximise the co-benefits from developing and implementing climate friendly policies
- Determining our contribution to social value through the delivery of our services, our part in on-boarding and working with suppliers and partners, our social value link to the environmental factors through the re-use and donation of devices, and our part in any work experience activities

7.3 Compliant and Secure Technology - how will we ensure security assurance?

- Providing solutions that are secure by design.

- Protecting the Council and systems from misuse – introducing Zero Trust initiatives through the Security and Compliance Programme.

- Communications awareness campaign to educate people about cyber security.

- Further development of Lighthouse compliance sound bites.

- Ensuring security awareness is embedded and workforce security skills are optimised.

- Maintaining compliance and security excellence by managing and monitoring compliance across business, systems, technology, data, security.

- Introducing a dedicated focus and management of cyber security to enable a safe workforce.

- Building capabilities - signposting staff to advice and guidance on our communications hub – Lighthouse and through our Bright Sparks, IT Champions network.

- Improving the cultural elements of cyber security throughout the Council, for example, with members, leadership teams, governance, and awareness.

- Ensuring that the Council, its senior management and key stakeholders understand, assess, manage, and remediate cyber risk and ensure testing regimes, policies, processes and tools are in place

- Ensuring and testing that cyber security is understood as a whole workforce issue through the Information Assurance and Data Management (IADM) Programme.

- Ensure that we use National Cyber Security Centre and NW WARP tools and services

- Work with the Business Continuity team to ensure that there are response, recovery and continuity plans for cyber incidents, and that they exercised and tested.

- Ensure that we understand and manage cyber security risk within the supply chain.

7.4 Robust ICT Governance

We know that technology is not just a commodity that we buy in, information and technology (IT) are key enablers for the Council. **Where possible we will seek to introduce and renew new technology to maintain compliance and business relevance, automate business processes, make new efficiencies, lower operating costs and strive for excellence**. We will continue to work with Services to ensure IT solutions are recognised and ensure that technology supports the Council's needs. We continue to help identify requirements by working in partnership with services and helping to develop and deliver solutions.

Innovation is about how we look at existing and new challenges and identify how technology can support such major changes in the supply and demand of services. The supply side is about gaining awareness of what local, national and global partners can contribute. **The demand side is about closer collaboration with stakeholders (workforce, citizens, businesses and visitors etc.) to understand what they need.**

Innovation is crucial to the continuing success of the council; we must be able to introduce new products or solutions to either address existing business problems more effectively or maximise new opportunities to optimise costs and improve services. Local government is undergoing major changes; as monies from central government continue to be reduced or removed, whilst local fundraising opportunities are increasing, this may lead to a major rethink of how we can deliver future Council services.

7.4 Robust ICT Governance - what will our Core ICT Programmes deliver?

Business Requirements

- ICT and technology developments will be led by the requirements of the business

- It is accepted that the business needs to understand the art of the possible afforded by new and emerging technology to define their requirements, and as such, there must be a symbiotic approach between business requirements and ICT solutions

Applications

- The Council will adopt a Cloud First approach to the provisioning of all applications deploying multi-cloud solutions as appropriate.

- The Council will continue to choose proprietary systems above in-house development where appropriate

- The Council will look to lever the functionality of existing solutions prior to any procurement or development activity

- All ICT development will be linked to a business process review to generate efficiencies

- The Council will adopt Government Digital Standards to ensure interoperability and integration as appropriate

- Solutions will be device agnostic

- The Council will seek to ensure best value, making use of government procurement frameworks where possible
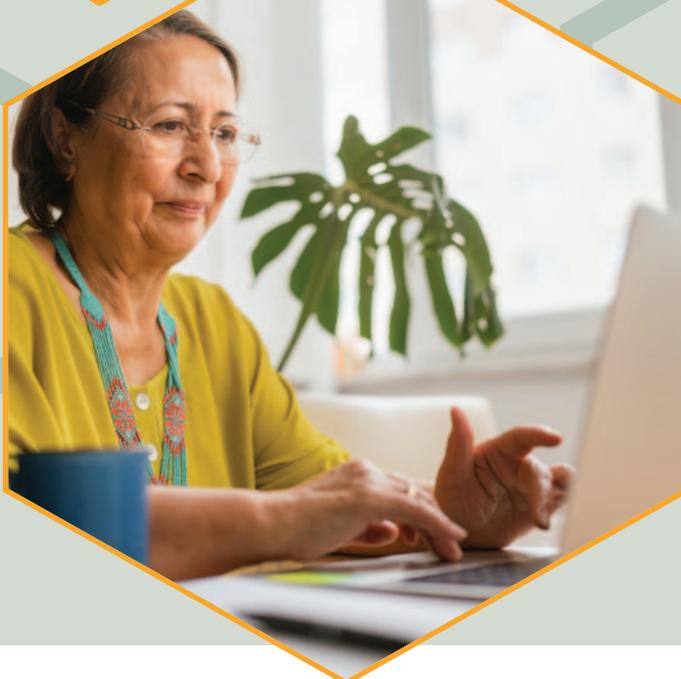
Infrastructure

- The Council will look to implement a multi-cloud model

- The multi-cloud model will enable a scalable and resilient infrastructure that can flex in line with business requirements and provide resilience to ensure business continuity

- Network segregation may be implemented to support Cheshire East Place operations.

- Infrastructure development will factor in collaboration with partner organisations, and any connectivity required as part of the regional Cheshire & Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB)

End user computing and agile working

- A standard range of devices will be provided to meet different service requirements

- A fully managed desktop provision will be in place, which is locked down, fully packaged, with roaming profiles enabled and standardisation of software versions where possible

- Internet and network access will be available to enable remote access to Council systems and data via Council-issue devices

Operating system and collaboration software

- The Windows 11 operating system will be updated in line with the Microsoft release schedule

- Microsoft Office 365 will continue to be the core productivity and collaboration tool, with the rollout of additional functionality over time

- Staff will be empowered to take advantage of technology deployed through appropriate training and support

Network and connectivity

- The wide-area network will continue to provide wide-ranging and robust connectivity between Council sites

- Consideration will be given as to how the wide-area network can be joined up with place based and regional partners, if required

- Use of GovRoam will continue to enable staff to directly access the Council network from partner sites across Cheshire East

- Enterprise mobility management solution will allow staff secure remote access to Council systems and data via Council-issue devices

- Public, guest and corporate Wi-Fi to be available in key Council buildings

Voice and telecoms

- Unified communications will continue to enhance agile working

- Mobile phones will only be issued subject to business need

Automation

- The Council will look to implement and support automation technology to enable the service areas to automate high-volume repeatable processing tasks.

Partnership Working

- ICT Services will work with partner organisations such as other local authorities, health bodies, schools, faith, charity and voluntary organisations to ensure that technologies are aligned to facilitate data sharing to aid service provision

7.4 Robust ICT Governance - how will this be implemented?

Business Alignment

- Aligning business and developing technology strategies - ensuring we provide technology that is innovative, reliable, flexible, integrated, secure, accessible and well managed.

- Robust governance and assurance building on existing governance to ensure everyone, all stakeholders from users to suppliers are engaged and comply with corporate policies and standards (detailed in the next slide).

- Continue to work closely with directorates and users to help challenge existing disjointed processes, rethink systems, promote and encourage new ways of working and the art of the possible.

Proactive approach

- Pro-active idea development through technical investigations, prototypes, demos and experimentation

- Feasibility testing and business case analysis through customer or employee pilots for example

- Create a business design authority - so that our users can put forward innovative business and technological ideas and solutions that meet our key challenges. And we'll break down the barriers to putting new ideas in place by focusing on thoughts and inspirations and recognising and rewarding individual or group contributions.

Develop Maturity

- ICT maturity is more than the sum of individual ICT functions and technical capabilities. IT maturity goals will be based on business expectations and requirements, and how those are likely to change over time.

- Once the Microsoft product team is established, the Business Design Authority should provide an escalation point and make Council wide decisions on the use of Microsoft 365 applications and services. ICT must work with the business to develop further the community of practice Bright Sparks that represent the view of business departments across the Council. With these components in place, ICT will be able to offer more effectively support and drive value from Microsoft 365, and will naturally be working closer with the business.

7.4 Robust ICT Governance - Microsoft core governance

To effectively support Microsoft 365 and to provide value, ICT must develop a dedicated Microsoft 365 product team to function as a centre of excellence for the Council. The product team will provide clear ownership and accountability and will develop a Microsoft 365 roadmap that meets the needs of the wider business and the corporate Business Design Authority.

This role provides platform-level ownership, develops business partnerships, and coordinates Microsoft 365 projects and initiatives. Building a Microsoft 365 product team allows the Council to unlock the value of Microsoft 365 and provides a number of distinct benefits including:

- Defined ownership and accountability Centralised governance and risk management
- Improved business engagement
- Stronger vendor relationships and reduced costs
- Increased user productivity and organisational competency

The Microsoft 365 Product Team
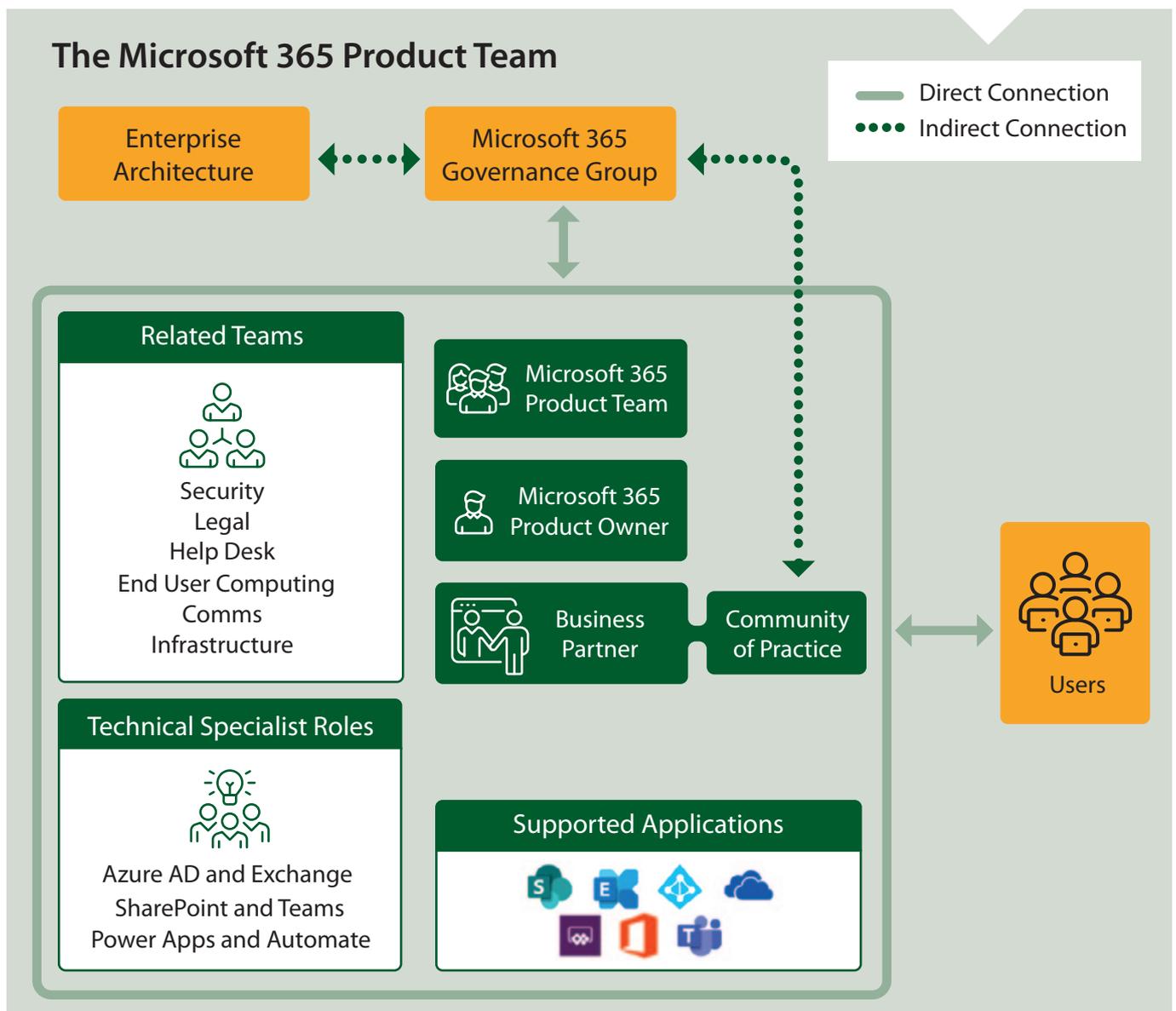
7.4 Robust ICT Governance - Metrics and KPI Success Measures

This overarching ICT Strategy is underpinned with a business plan including operational Key Performance Indicators and high level business cases which detail measures against which our performance can be assessed. These reports are reported formally on a quarterly basis to the Shared Services Joint Committee (SSJC) and on a monthly basis to each Council.
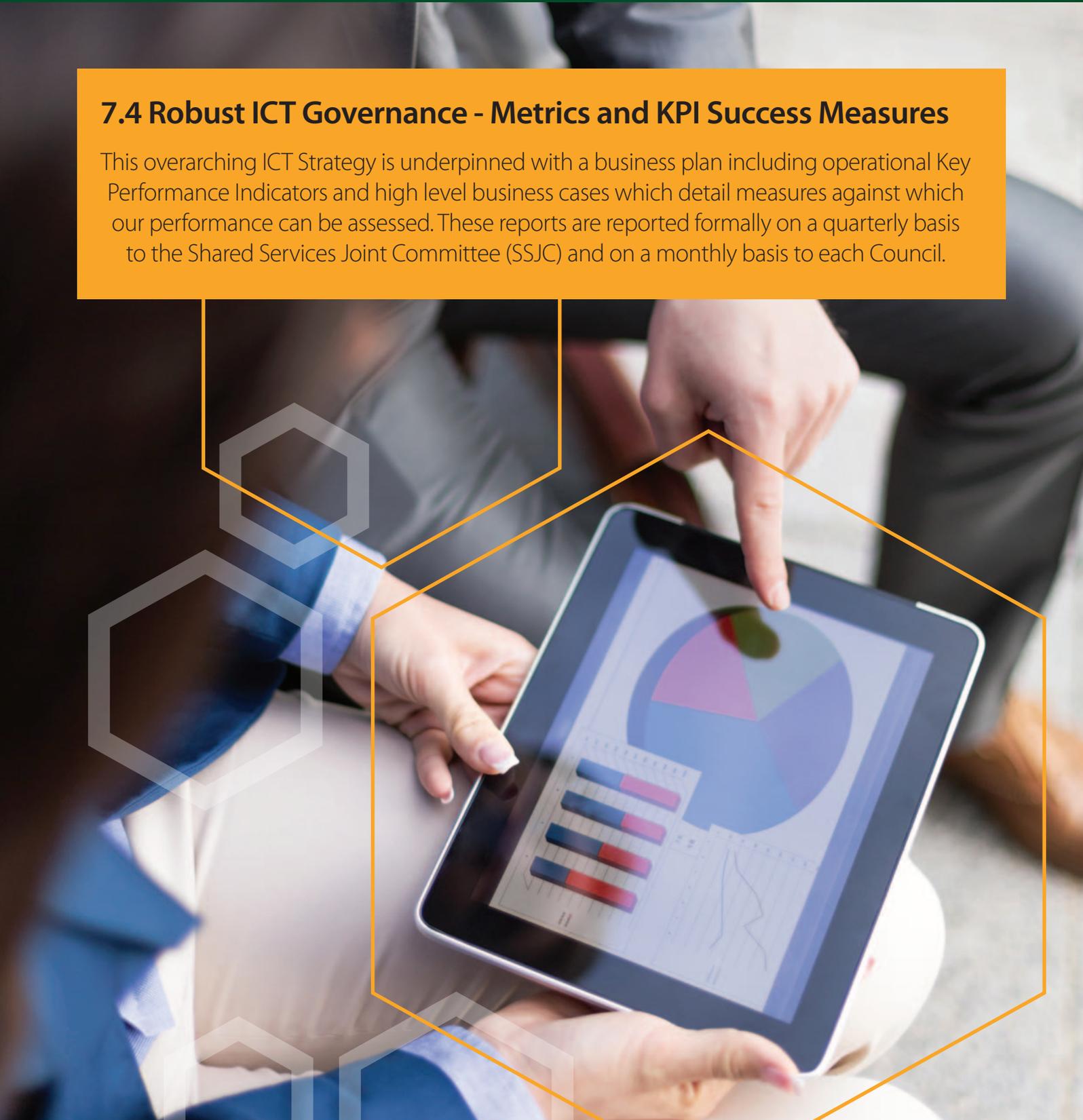
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