

ICT strategy

2024 - 2027



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

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Introduction

Smartphones, tablets, home broadband, social media, and mobile apps have all changed the way customers and staff go about their daily lives and request, track and receive services.

There are also huge opportunities to use the advances in technology to deliver services in more effective ways and move away from manual paper-based processes.

Making the most of what technology has to offer will be key to becoming a dynamic, forward-thinking council that meets the changing needs of our customers, communities, Councillors and staff.

As an organisation we hold valuable data and insight about our customers, services and communities, which we need to harness in order to make smarter decisions about resources, direction and delivery of our services.

Our continued success depends on our ability to embrace technology and make it work for us. This strategy aligns with the Council's Digital Transformation Strategy and outlines our approach to using technology within Mid Ulster District Council.

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Approach

We took a collaborative, data driven approach to developing the strategy...

Review of related strategies



We reviewed the current strategies that were relevant to producing our ICT Strategy. Annex provided at the end of this document.

Workshops



We ran workshops with eight teams to find out how they were using their IT systems to support service delivery.

Systems audit



We have reviewed 74 systems and apps with teams to find out what works and what needs improvement.

Best Practice



We have undertaken research and taken professional advice to ensure that we are adopting best practice for our sector.

Vision

We envision a Mid Ulster District Council where technology seamlessly enhances the lives of our citizens, Councillors and staff and underpins the success of our organisation.



Mission

Our mission is to harness the power of technology to bridge the gaps created by our modest team size.

We commit to crafting and executing a technology strategy that not only acknowledges our limitations but transforms them into opportunities for organisational improvement.

Through innovation, empowering colleagues in their own digital literacy, and strategic planning, we aim to streamline processes, optimise resources, and enhance the overall digital infrastructure of Mid Ulster District Council.

Principles

The core principles that will guide our work and decision making are...

1. Facilitators and enablers

Facilitators and enablers: we will provide the organisation with strategic, technical expertise and advice to get the most out of technology.

2. Cyber security

Cyber security: robust, up-to-date cyber security will be core to our operations.

3. Needs based

Needs based: technology will be driven by what our customers, communities, Councillors and staff need - not led by technology trends.

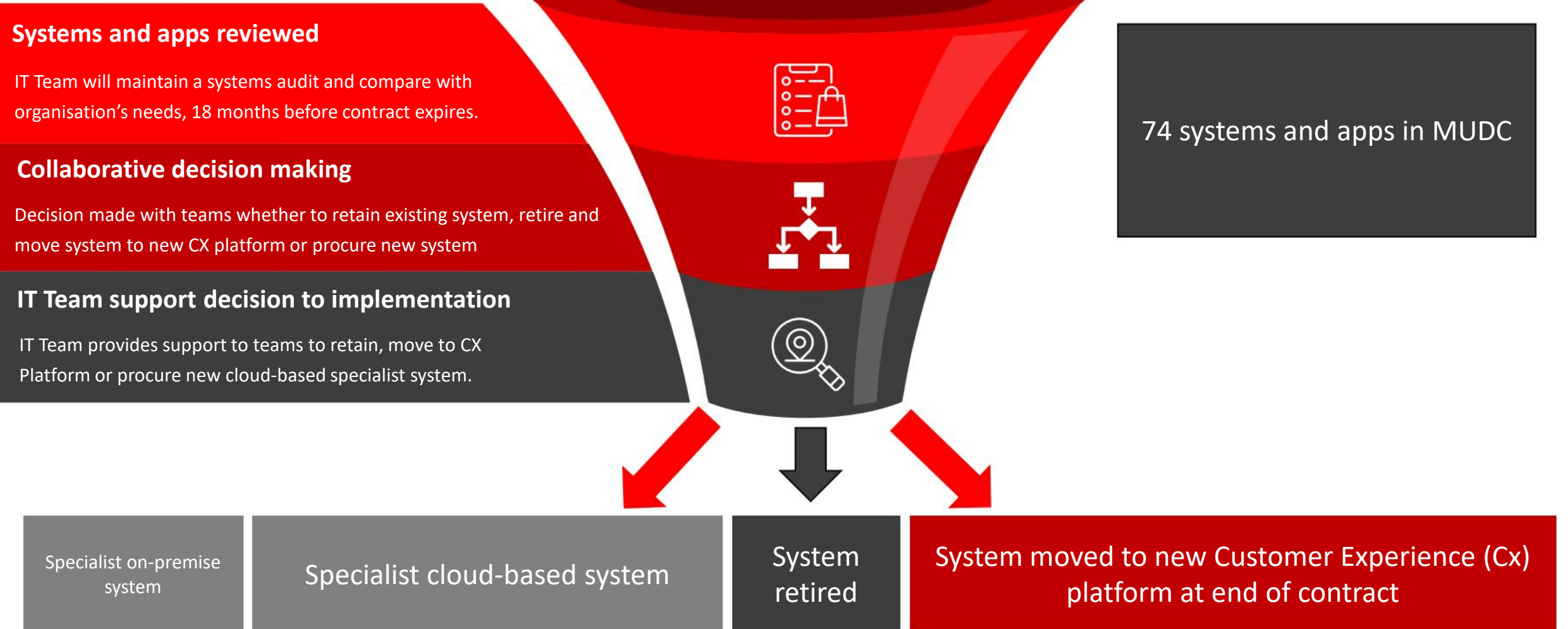
4. Harness our data

Harness our data: we will support the organisation to capture and make the best use of its data for reporting, monitoring and decision making.

5. Collaborative, cloud-based systems

Collaborative, cloud-based systems: we will move our operations to become cloud-based rather than on-premise and progress out-of-date systems to a single customer experience platform, where feasible, or support teams to find the right specialist solution for them.

Systems and apps review



Benefits of consolidating systems



Retain specialist systems where they provides significant additional value



Identify opportunities for specialist systems to communicate with CX platform.



Business aligned



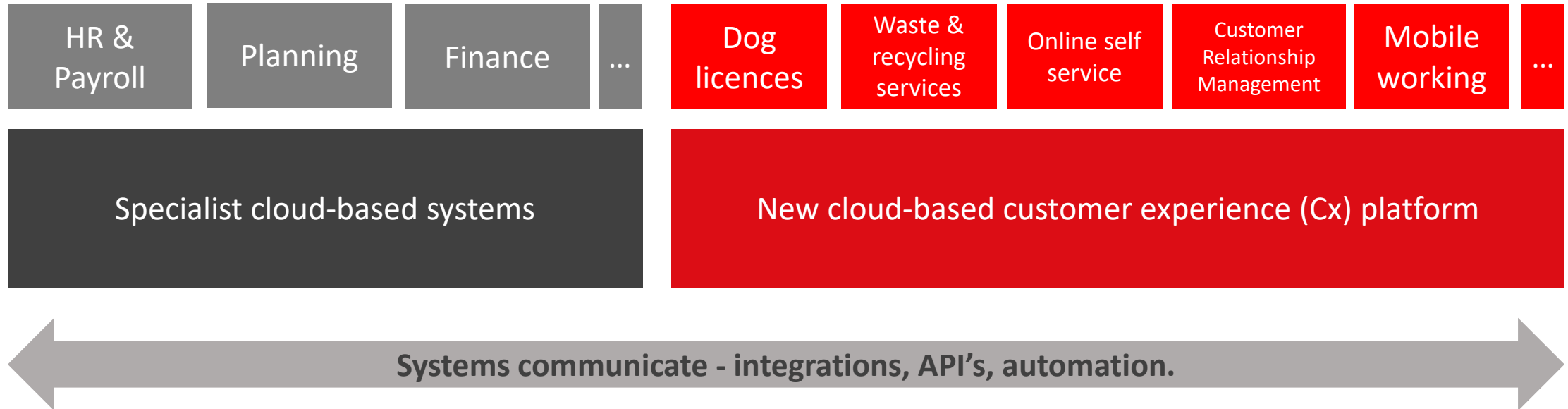
Shared functionality and improvements



Cross cutting business data



More integrated



Aims

The aims of the ICT strategy are:

1. **Improved customer experience** by enabling the delivery of services via digital channels, offering self-service options, and modern communication channels.
2. **Improved governance and decision making** to ensure that ICT's investments, resources, and energy are being used to support the Council's goals.
3. **Enhanced operational efficiency** by streamlining workflows, automating manual processes, leverage emerging technologies to enhance the staff and customer experience, and reduce costs.
4. **Continue to protect information systems, data and privacy** by maintaining and enhancing cybersecurity measures, ensuring compliance with regulations, and best practice.
5. **Drive innovation** by empowering our teams with the digital tools, skills and infrastructure to transform their services.

1. Improved customer experience

Digital technology, underpinned by robust processes and well-trained staff, offers Mid Ulster District Council a fantastic opportunity to improve services whilst meeting the challenges of public sector budgets. To deliver improved customer experience, we will:

Citizens

- Support the procurement and implementation of a new Customer Experience (CX) platform to deliver a seamless customer journey by phone, in person and online.
- Support the automation and integration of our services and systems to deliver services to citizens more effectively

Colleagues

- Ensure all colleagues can use cloud-based technology to be able to work anywhere.
- Standardise our laptop offer and ensure we always have a bank of 'Ready to Go' laptops for new starters or replacement devices from 2024.
- Replace the corporate intranet with intuitive M365 solution.

Councillors

- Ensure Councillors have access to up-to-date data and information on services to support citizens, in an easily accessible format.

ICT Help Desk

- Improve our help desk model to promote self-service, and automatic, intelligent resolution, to better meets the needs of our staff and IT colleagues.



2. Improved governance and decision making

With the technology now at our disposal, we can take a one platform approach across the Council, while still meeting the business process and reporting needs of individual services. To ensure that we maximise any opportunities to coordinate our technology across the council, we will provide improved governance and structure for decisions in relation to technology and systems. We will:

Develop a holistic view of our technology

- Adopt a whole council, cloud-based customer experience platform, where possible (specialist systems where needed will be retained).

Technology procurement

- Provide technical expertise and input to procurement involving technology.

Systems management support

- ICT will maintain an overview of systems, systems managers and a contract management system to ensure that opportunities for improvements are realised with our stakeholders and suppliers.



3. Enhanced operational efficiency

Changes in technology now mean staff can work from flexible locations and still able to securely access the devices, systems, and services they need to be effective in their roles. We will:

Make the most of Microsoft 365

- Maximise the use of Microsoft 365, integrate telephony with Teams and support staff to use collaboration tools available to them to improve efficiencies.
- Managed modern workplace programme, adopting information governance principles to migrate away from our file servers onto Teams/Sharepoint

Improve inter-department new starters/leavers processes

- Ensure that new starters and leavers are notified via HR to the IT Team and system owners to ensure new accounts are created or deleted in a timely fashion and improve cyber security.

Rolling programme to upgrade devices

- Develop a rolling programme of staff device upgrades so that all staff get a device refresh every 5 years.

Data collection, management and analytics

- Ensure our data principles, part of the digital transformation strategy, are fully embraced and supported.
- Power BI dashboards are created iteratively across the organisation depending on the needs of services, using links to live data held within Line of Business systems to auto refresh information.



4. Continue to protect information systems, data and privacy

We will protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of our information and systems by embedding the safety and security into all our technology decisions, this will enable modern service delivery without compromising our infrastructure or our citizens' data. We will:

Align our cyber security approach

- Align our cyber security approach, policies and assessments with national and industry standards such as National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), GovAssure, and Cyber Essentials, and respond to the needs of new legislation.

Monitor activity

- Monitor activity on our systems using automated intelligent tools that can alert us to unusual behaviour, spot vulnerabilities early and help us to manage emerging threats.

Secure by design

- Design security into our networks, by implementing intelligent network monitoring, policies and controls.

Empowered to act

- Support our colleagues to understand and identify security risks to the business and be empowered to act appropriately.



5. Drive innovation

The council aims to adopt a responsible and ethical approach to the use of new and emerging technology in-line with the principles of fairness, transparency, accountability and privacy. Technology is fast moving and capabilities will certainly change during the lifetime of this strategy. We will:

Grow our digital skills

- Set clear expectations for the minimum level of digital capabilities for all our staff and support teams to exceed those expectations to accelerate the delivery of the Digital Transformation Strategy in their business area.

Create an online training portal

- Provide a range of online training in a single location to all staff so they can develop and maintain their digital and data skills.

Embrace new technology that works for us

- Monitor developments in technology such as Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence and other future advances to provide leadership and guidance for the organisation.
- Adopt new technology that works for us as an organisation to meet the needs of our staff, residents and communities.



Resources

This strategy is owned and supported by the senior leadership team of Mid Ulster District Council. Though the council's IT team have key responsibilities in delivering this strategy, all staff and leaders have a role to play in ensuring its success.

IT Team Resources

Compared with many similar sized UK and NI local authorities, Mid Ulster District Council has a small IT function. To maximise the impact that the IT Team have, it is vital that the team is focused on high value technical work.

Proactive v reactive

The IT Team is a service team that spends approximately 75% of its time responding to service requests from teams for support, leaving 25% of their time available for high value strategic projects that support service delivery as outlined in this strategy.

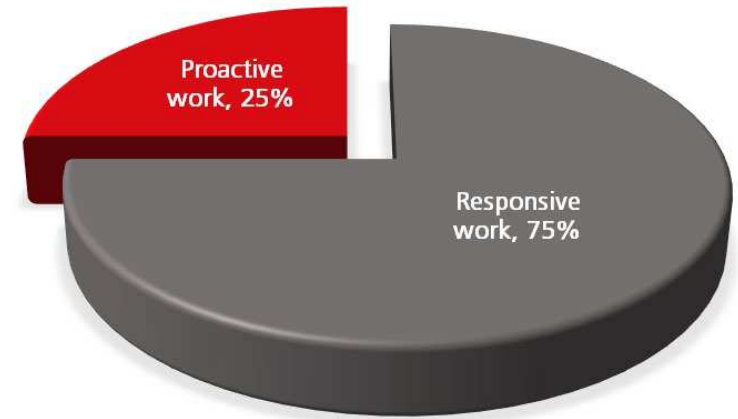
With the strategic use of automation and standardisation of our service desk and hardware processes, and supporting colleagues to become more self sufficient the aim is to change the proactive to reactive ratio of the team to at least 60% proactive – 40% reactive.

Budget

The strategy will be contingent on budget being available for its delivery.

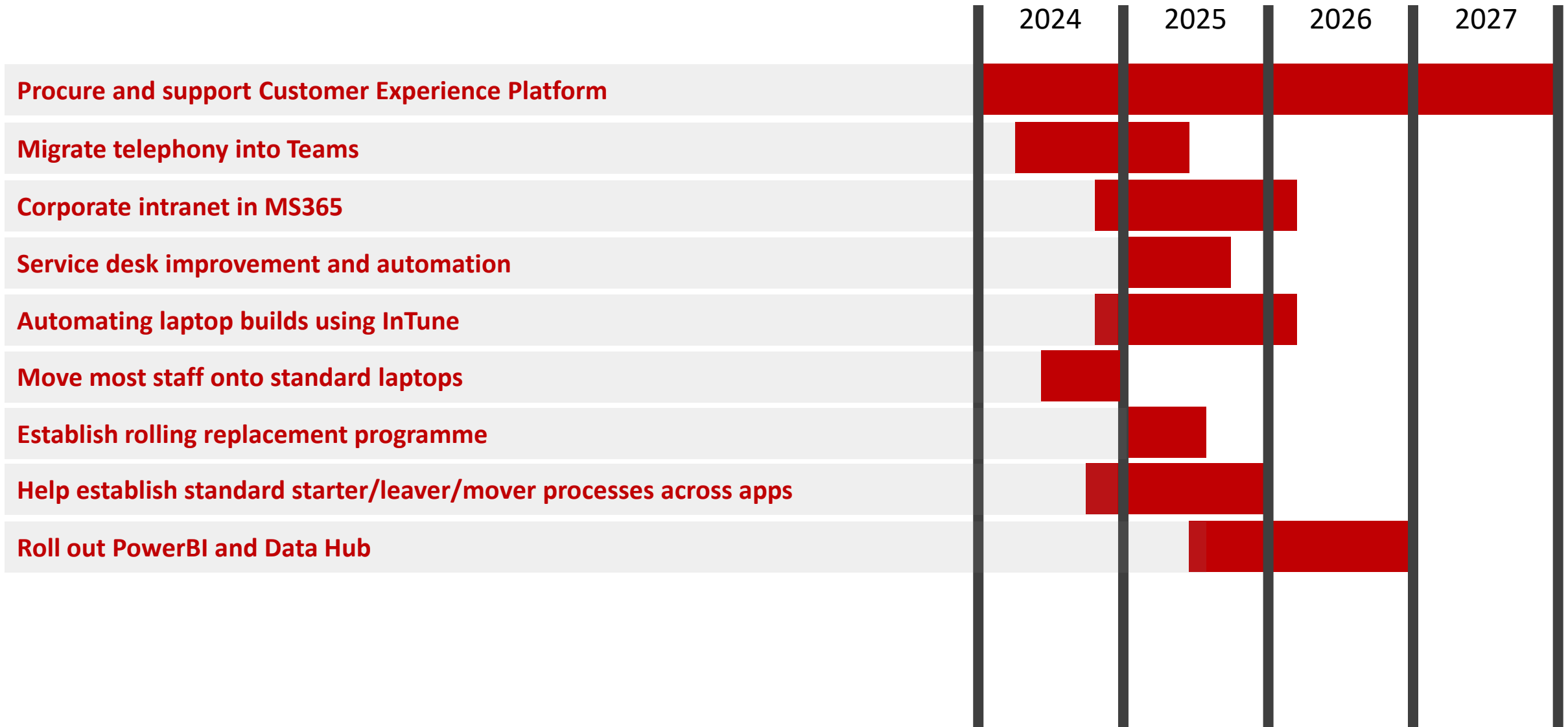
Partners

We aim to support our teams using Line of Business systems to improve relationships and get more out of their contracts with partners, particularly relating to training and support. However, we will be constrained by existing contracts and partners' support provision.



The IT Team's current time allocation

Timeline



Related strategies and plans

- Corporate Plan 2020-2024
- Digital Transformation Strategy
- Data Principles
- National Cyber Strategy 2022