 <b>Brent</b>	<b>Cabinet</b> 9 February 2026
	<b>Report from the Corporate Director of Service Reform and Strategy</b>
	<b>Lead Member – Deputy Leader &amp; Cabinet Member for Finance &amp; Resources (Councillor Mili Patel)</b>
<b>ICT Infrastructure Investment Programme 2026 -2028</b>	

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>List of Appendices:</b>	None
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> <small>(Name, Title, Contact Detail')</small>	Derrick Boyce, Head of ICT Solutions 020 8937 6045 <a href="mailto:Derrick.Boyce@brent.gov.uk">Derrick.Boyce@brent.gov.uk</a>  Fabio Negro, Managing Director Shared Technology Services 07557 633506 <a href="mailto:Fabio.Negro@sharedtechnology.services">Fabio.Negro@sharedtechnology.services</a>

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Brent Council's current 5-year ICT Infrastructure Investment Programme ends in March 2026. This report sets out an updated Capital Investment programme for 2026-2028, recommending Cabinet approves a £6.7M investment over two years.
- 1.2 The ICT Investment Programme sets out a targeted, two-year plan focusing on five core areas detailed in this report: modernising data centres, enhancing cloud infrastructure, upgrading networks, strengthening cybersecurity, and supporting vital business applications. These investments are crucial for enabling hybrid working, safeguarding sensitive data, and ensuring the council can deliver responsive, joined-up public services.
- 1.3 To illustrate the essential nature of this investment, one might liken the council's ICT infrastructure to keeping the lights on in a house, upgrading the wiring and securing the building, equivalent to delivering essential services, replacing

critical components e.g. laptops, updating the network and deploying robust cyber security measures.

- 1.4 Failure to proceed with this investment would expose the council to significant risks, including:
- (a) increased vulnerability to frequent and sophisticated cyber-attacks, similar to incidents experienced by the London Borough of Hackney and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, where recovery efforts may span several years and incur costs exceeding £15 million.
  - (b) IT systems may become less reliable with slow connectivity to line of business applications.
  - (c) a likelihood of major incidents or service outages and disruptions to ongoing council programmes.
- 1.5 Inaction is not a viable option. Such events could undermine public confidence, compromise essential service delivery, and result in substantial financial and reputational costs.
- 1.6 Recognising current financial pressures, the council is working to make substantial savings over the next three years. By adopting innovative solutions and new technologies, the investment runs alongside the 2-year Digital Roadmap 2026-2028 and serves as an enabler in supporting delivery of savings and benefit realisation. The ICT Infrastructure Investment Programme supports and aligns with these cross-cutting measures.

## **2.0 Recommendation(s)**

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves the ICT Infrastructure Capital Investment for 2026-2028 totalling £6.7m.

## **3.0 Cabinet Member Foreword**

- 3.1 In an era marked by escalating cyber threats and rapid technological change, Brent Council remains steadfast in its commitment to delivering secure, reliable, and innovative digital services. Our aim is to strengthen IT infrastructure, enhance resilience, and empower staff to serve residents more effectively.
- 3.2 Our approach is grounded in the lessons learned from recent high-profile cyber incidents affecting other councils, and it acknowledges the urgent need to invest in robust technology to safeguard essential services. By embracing new solutions and aligning our efforts with the Digital Roadmap 2026-2028, we will not only address current risks but also support the council's broader ambitions to achieve significant savings and deliver value for money in a challenging financial climate.
- 3.3 This investment programme is closely aligned with the council's overarching strategic objectives and directly supports the borough plan themes of Prosperity

and Stability in Brent and Thriving Communities. By equipping staff with modern tools for safer, more effective collaboration, the initiative underpins the council's ambition to deliver high-quality, responsive services to residents. The measures also complement sustainability, efficiency, and future-proofing initiatives, ensuring the council remains adaptable and resilient as technology evolves.

- 3.4 Key to this transformation is the transition to integrated, faster digital platforms and accessible services for residents. Targeted technology upgrades and process improvements will streamline service delivery, enabling quicker and easier online interactions with the council. Enhanced integration of service platforms will facilitate efficient information sharing between departments such as social care, housing, education, and environmental services, resulting in a more coordinated response to residents' needs.
- 3.5 Upgrading to cloud-based, energy-efficient solutions will minimise system outages and ensure essential services are available when needed. Improved monitoring and management tools will allow IT teams to proactively address issues, while providing staff with secure, up-to-date digital tools for effective support, both remotely and in person. These enhancements also foster a preventative approach through data-driven decision-making, helping to identify and resolve issues early. Ultimately, this capital investment underpins a more robust, agile, and responsive frontline service, supporting Brent's goal of building a secure, prosperous, and resilient borough for all. It will also support work to ensure that residents' data is stored and used safely and appropriately.

#### **4.0 Detail**

##### **Objectives**

- 4.1 The Council's commitment to maintaining a capital budget for technology investments ensures IT systems remain current, reliable, resilient, and secure, thereby enabling staff to work effectively and efficiently. The proposed investment for 2026–2028 builds on the final phase of the ICT Infrastructure Capital Investment 2021–2026, focusing on the Shared Technology Service (STS), which acts as a centralised hub for IT infrastructure and support across Brent, Lewisham, and Southwark. This encompasses data centres, cloud infrastructure, networks, and core business applications.
- 4.2 The investment will enable STS to implement modern management and monitoring tools for data centres, cloud environments, networks, and devices, ensuring operational efficiency and robust security. Given the persistent threat of cyber attacks, it is crucial for Brent to maintain resilient IT systems with strong security measures, necessitating continued and substantial investment in infrastructure.
- 4.3 Ongoing ICT projects from the current ICT Infrastructure Capital Investment will carry forward into the 2026–2028 plan, ensuring continuity and a seamless transition between phases. The outcomes and benefits of these initiatives are detailed in table 1.

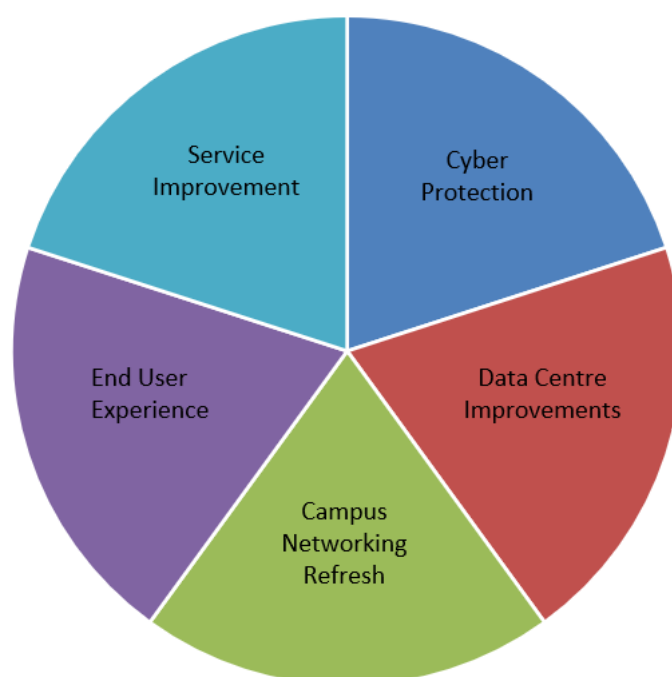
**Table 1 - Ongoing ICT projects**

<b>Project/Initiative</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Intended Outcomes/ Benefit</b>	<b>Next Steps / Investment Required</b>
Ongoing ICT Projects	Continuation of current roadmap projects into the 2026–2028 plan	Ensures seamless transition and builds on successful existing work	Further investment needed for continuity and expansion
Laptop and Mobile Refresh Programme	Regular replacement and update of staff laptops and mobile devices	Provides reliable, up-to-date devices to support effective performance of duties	Ongoing funding to maintain cycle
Upgrading Internet & Wi-Fi Connectivity	Enhancing network infrastructure across all Brent council buildings	Facilitates seamless and flexible working for staff, regardless of location	Investment in new connectivity solutions
Cybersecurity Enhancements	Implementation of robust cybersecurity measures with partners and national agencies	Safeguards council systems against cyber threats and secures digital infrastructure	Continued collaboration and investment in cyber protection

### **Options Appraisal**

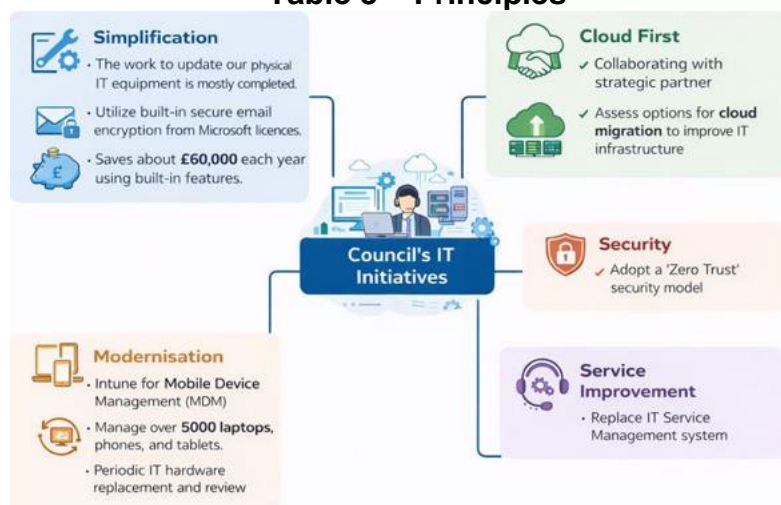
- 4.4 STS considered a number of options for each individual project, which makes up the overall Programme. As the Programme is developed in detail, the options will be reappraised to ensure that they remain the best solution for the organisation. The investment will provide a secure, stable and resilient IT infrastructure for the Council. Any initiatives may involve new procurements.
- 4.5 As with the previous ICT Infrastructure Investment, the new plan uses the following 5 categories in table 2:

**Table 2 - Technology Roadmap Categories**



- 4.6 For each category, STS have detailed below the initiatives / projects that will be required over the next 2-year period. See Milestones in section 6.1 for a breakdown of IT projects.
- 4.7 The next phase of investment, continuing from the original ICT Infrastructure Capital Investment, has the following principles:
- Simplification of systems
  - Cloud first approach to hosting
  - Modernise and rationalise our assets
  - Security is paramount
  - Continuous service improvement
- 4.8 The main components of the key principles are summarised below.

**Table 3 – Principles**



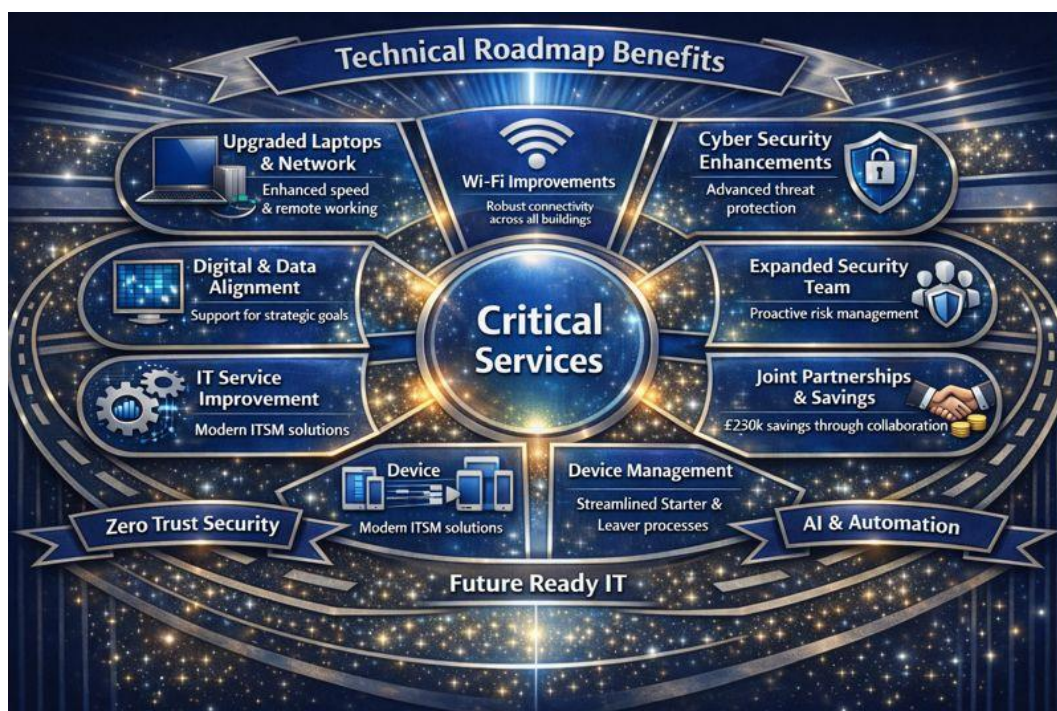
- 4.9 Brent has largely completed updates to its physical IT equipment and is now seeking to further simplify operations and reduce costs by leveraging additional features within its Microsoft user licences, such as integrated secure email encryption. This shift is expected to save the council approximately £60,000 annually. As cloud technology evolves, Brent is working with a strategic partner to assess its data centre infrastructure and consider cloud migration options, with the aim of transforming rather than merely replicating existing systems.
- 4.10 The council follows a 'cloud first' strategy for new implementations but continues to manage both on-premises and cloud hosting to maximise value across partner councils. The growth in end user devices has led to the adoption of Intune for streamlined device management and enhanced security. Ongoing hardware replacement cycles are used as opportunities to modernise solutions and services.
- 4.11 With cyber security threats increasing in complexity and volume, Brent is preparing to implement a 'Zero Trust' model, whereby every attempt to connect to our network to access line of business systems must be treated with zero trust, until that attempt can be verified. Unlike traditional methods that rely on a single "perimeter" defence—like a city wall—the 'Zero Trust' approach establishes individual lines of defence for every building within the city. Additionally, the council plans to replace its current IT Service Management platform with a more advanced solution that can automate processes and leverage AI to improve service delivery.

## **5.0 Benefits to the Council**

- 5.1 The ICT Infrastructure Capital Investment Programme is delivering the following benefits:



**Table 4 – Benefits to the Council**

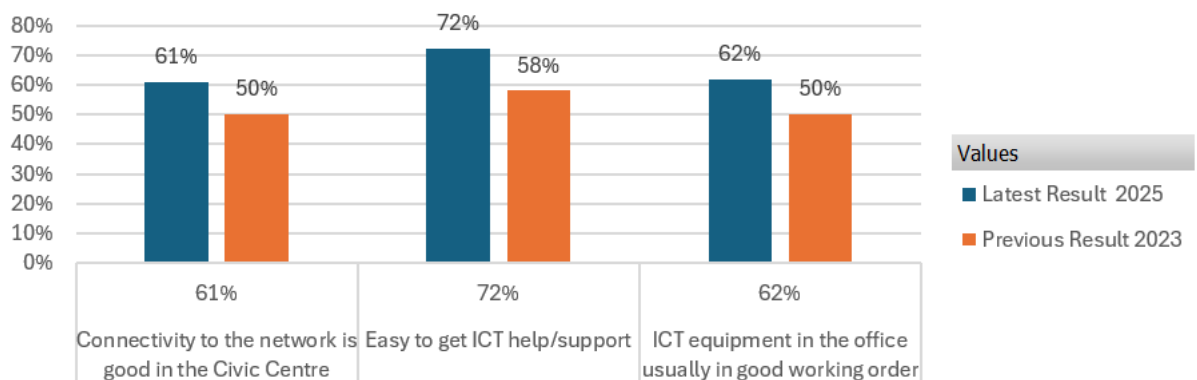


- Rollout of new laptops and upgraded network infrastructure, enabling staff to work more efficiently both in the office and remotely. This future-proofed the IT infrastructure, delivering greater speed, reliability, and adaptability for evolving requirements, while supporting faster and more reliable connectivity to internal systems, which in turn improved user experience and productivity. Refreshed iPhone devices with a comprehensive review and realignment to staff roles, ensuring devices meet users' specific needs.
- Upgraded outdated Wi-Fi across the Brent Civic Centre and six public buildings, including Willesden Green Library, Ealing Library, John Billam Centre, Kilburn Library, Kilburn Square Housing, and Kingsbury Library, resulting in robust connectivity and seamless roaming between floors.
- Strengthened our cybersecurity resilience through the establishment of a Security Operations Centre in partnership with Microsoft and NCC, alongside investment in advanced threat detection and protection solutions.
- Significantly increasing the capacity of the security and vulnerability team to proactively identify and address emerging risks.
- Achieved shared investment and procurement efficiencies by collaborating with strategic partners, such as the London Borough of Lewisham and Southwark, to develop improved working practices. For example, the join mobile telephony contact has yielded saving of £200,000, whilst the print contact is expected to achieve saving of £30,000 per annum over the next 3 years.

- Maximised resource utilisation through joint IT initiatives with Shared Service and Brent IT Solutions.
- By establishing key partnerships and focusing on strategic collaboration and resource deployment, STS has created opportunities for long-term savings, optimised return on investment and innovation across the organisation.
- Ensured alignment with our Digital and Data strategies to support organisational objectives and best practice.

5.2 Analysis of our IT survey shows Brent staff satisfaction has risen significantly over the past two years.

**Table 5 - Improved Staff IT Satisfaction Survey**



5.3 The new investment will continue to realise these high-level benefits over a 5-year period. The benefit realisation include:

Description of Benefit	Financial/ non-financial benefit?	Estimated benefit amount?	When will the benefit be realised?	One-off or recurring?
Data centre Improvement (Resilient IT) Creating a platform to enable the council's digital ambitions.	Non-Financial	N/A	2026-2027	One off
Campus networking refresh (Reliable/ Robust IT) Enabling a reliable, robust	Non-Financial	N/A	2026-2027	One off



environment to facilitate staff accessing systems.				
End User Modernisation (Worker efficiency)  Equipping the workforce with fit for purpose tools.	Non-Financial	N/A	2026-2027	One off
Cyber Protection  Protecting our residents' data and reducing the council's risk of cyber incidents.	Non-Financial	N/A	2026-2027	One off
Service Improvement (Efficiencies in service provision)  Ensure the delivery of digital and IT services are cost effective and provides value.	Financial	370,000	2026/2027	One off  One off

## 6.0 Timescales

- 6.1 The programme is a 2-year roadmap commencing in 2026/2027, designed to deliver a series of strategic technology initiatives including enhanced device management, adoption of advanced cybersecurity measures, and transition to cloud-based solutions, all aimed at improving operational efficiency and safeguarding council services.

**Table 6 – Milestones**

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Finish</b>
<b>Campus Networking refresh (Projects)</b>	2026/2027	2027/2028
<b>Cyber Protection (Projects)</b>	2026/2027	2026/2028
<b>Data Centre Improvements (Projects)</b>	2026/2027	2027/2028
<b>End User Experience (Projects)</b>	2026/2027	2027/2028
<b>Service Improvement (Projects)</b>	2027/2028	2027/2028

## 7.0 Risks

- 7.1 The risks associated with not investing in the IT Roadmap are significant for the council's operations. It is essential to keep the IT infrastructure up to date and well maintained, not only to support the operational efficiency of employees, Councillors and residents, but also to mitigate the growing threat of cybersecurity attacks. Maintaining robust IT systems helps ensure full and secure access to council IT services, which underpin the ability of staff to perform their roles effectively and efficiently.
- 7.2 Throughout the IT Roadmap programme, each new project will be subject to rigorous scrutiny, including a mandatory project initiation and approval process at the Operational Management Group and Joint Governance Board. This approach will ensure that every proposal is reassessed to confirm it remains the most appropriate option for the Council, delivers value for money, and incorporates the necessary safeguards to address emerging cybersecurity risks.
- 7.3 A summary of risks is provided in table 7.

**Table 7- Summary of Risks**

<b>Risk/issue description (incl. impact)</b>	<b>Planned mitigation or resolution</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Outdated IT infrastructure could lead to reduced operational efficiency and increased vulnerability to cyber threats.	Ensure regular upgrades and maintenance of IT systems; implement robust cybersecurity measures.	Head of ICT Solutions
A cyber-attack similar to recent high profile incidents could lead to extensive data breaches, harm the council's reputation, and interrupt vital services.	Continue proactive monitoring, conduct regular penetration testing, enhance staff cyber awareness training, maintain up-to-date backups, and ensure robust incident response and recovery plans are in place.	Head of ICT Solutions

Failure of IT services may disrupt council operations, impacting service delivery to employees, Councillors, and residents.	Adopt proactive monitoring, introduce redundancy systems, and establish rapid incident response protocols.	Head of ICT Solutions
Non-compliance with procurement governance may lead to legal or financial repercussions.	Follow established procurement rules and conduct regular compliance reviews for each phase.	Procurement Officer
Delays in securing necessary funding may postpone project milestones, leading to missed deadlines or incomplete deliverables.	Establish regular funding reviews, maintain close communication with finance teams, and identify alternative funding sources if required.	Programme Board Chair
Insufficient stakeholder engagement could result in lack of buy-in, low adoption rates, or misalignment with user needs.	Implement ongoing stakeholder communication plans, conduct regular feedback sessions, and adjust project scope based on input.	Head of ICT Solutions
Rapid changes in technology or regulatory requirements may render planned solutions obsolete or non-compliant, affecting project outcomes.	Monitor technology trends and regulatory updates, build flexibility into project design, and schedule periodic roadmap reviews. The decision to focus on a two-year plan, provides flexibility to adjust plan or continue to review our approach to changes in technology.	Head of ICT Solutions

## 8.0 Financial Considerations

- 8.1 The requested budget is £1,820,061 for 2026/27 and £4,867,225 for 2027/28. The table below sets out the planned spend profile for key areas:

**Table 8 – Investment Profile by Programme Area**

Programme area	2026-2027	2027-28	Total
Cyber Protection	77,395	829,850	907,245
Data Centre Improvement	333,182	1,389,133	1,722,315
Campus Networking Refresh	375,164	1,369,861	1,745,025
End User Modernisation	1,034,320	612,400	1,646,720
Service Improvement	-	665,980	665,980
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,820,061</b>	<b>4,867,225</b>	<b>6,687,285</b>

8.2 The costs, including staff costs, are valid capital expenditure under local government accounting requirements because they involve investment in intangible assets, hardware and multi-year licences. Regulations allow software licenses lasting for at least one year to be treated as capital. The IT team will keep track of costs for each project and work with Finance to ensure each separate asset is added to the asset register.

8.3 The capital budget only relates to Brent's share of the investment. Where STS invests in improvements for all partner councils (Brent, Lewisham and Southwark), these costs will be apportioned as determined in the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA).

8.4 The proposed £6.7m budget will be funded by prudential borrowing. Once all the investment is made, this will create an ongoing revenue pressure of approximately £0.6m per year assuming 5% interest costs and minimum revenue provision (a prudent charge to revenue for the repayment of borrowing) of 4%. The ongoing pressure will be reflected within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

8.5 Throughout this process, all potential cost efficiencies will be rigorously assessed and quantified, ensuring that every opportunity for financial optimisation is captured. Notably, this proactive approach is expected to deliver savings, with current projections indicating that the council will achieve cumulative savings of £370,000 in 2026/2027.

## **9.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement**

9.1 The Lead Member for ICT has been engaged on these proposals via the Joint Committee.

## **10.0 Legal Considerations**

10.1 The ICT Infrastructure Investment Programme 2026-2028 sets out a series of initiatives which may require the Council to procure or vary a number of contracts. Any decisions to enter into new contractual arrangements, extend or vary existing contracts, or undertake procurement exercises must comply with

the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23) or Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (where applicable) and the Council's Contract Standing Orders within Part 2 of the Constitution.

- 10.2 Under the Procurement Act 2023, all procurements above the relevant threshold need to be conducted via a tender process with support from the procurement and legal teams, including publication of appropriate notices on the central digital platform in accordance with Contract Standing Order 115. Where Officers wish to direct award a contract above threshold, advice must be sought from the legal and the procurement team to determine whether any of the Direct Award justification grounds in Schedule 5 of the PA23 apply.
- 10.3 For procurements valued below threshold, Officers must ensure compliance with the Council's governance procedures and Part 6 of the PA23 relating to Regulated Below Threshold Contracts. This includes publishing any notice requirements for below threshold contracts in accordance with Contract Standing Order 115.
- 10.4 Where systems or services are shared with partner authorities under the Shared Technology Service (STS), Officers must ensure that any procurement and contractual arrangements comply with the Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA). This includes the apportionment of costs, risk allocation, governance, and decision-making protocols agreed between the partner councils.
- 10.5 Each project and proposal pursued under the road map will need to consider and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 which may include individual Data Protection Impact Assessments, as well as specific legislation and guidance relating to the specific proposal.

#### **11.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations**

- 11.1 In this instance, there are no identified equality, diversity, or inclusion (EDI) considerations. The proposal does not give rise to any concerns under the Equality Act or the Public Sector Equality Duty, nor has an Equality Impact Assessment indicated any adverse effects on protected groups. The initiative is designed to be inclusive and accessible to all, ensuring that no group is disadvantaged or unfairly impacted by the proposed changes.
- 11.2 There are no health equalities implications associated with this proposal. The recommended actions do not affect health equality or disproportionately impact the health outcomes of any particular group. As such, the proposal upholds principles of equality and does not require further mitigation in relation to health equalities.

#### **12.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations**

- 12.1 This proposal directly advances the Council's environmental objectives by promoting digital transformation, which aligns with the Council's commitment to reduce waste and improve operational efficiency. By minimising the use of paper and other consumables, the Council actively supports its ambition to reduce carbon emissions. Furthermore, prioritising energy-efficient technology and cloud infrastructure demonstrates a proactive approach to reducing the

Council's overall carbon footprint. These measures are integral to the Council's climate emergency strategy, ensuring that all new investments are evaluated for their environmental impact and contribute positively towards a more sustainable future for the community.

### **13.0 Communication Considerations**

- 13.1 A clear and comprehensive communication strategy will be developed to ensure all stakeholders are informed of the proposal and its implications. This will involve timely updates to staff, service users, partners, and residents through appropriate channels. The communications will be designed to be accessible and transparent, allowing opportunities for questions and feedback to be addressed effectively.
- 13.2 Where necessary, tailored messages will be crafted to address the specific needs of different audiences, ensuring inclusivity and clarity throughout the process. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be put in place to assess the effectiveness of communications and to make improvements as required.

**Report sign off:**

***Rachel Crossley***

Corporate Director, Service Reform & Strategy