

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET19 JUNE 2025Report by Director of Business Operations and PartnershipsUPDATE ON THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an overview of what has been achieved through the Digital Transformation Strategy 2021–2025, to formally close this phase of the Council’s digital journey, and to outline the next steps toward a new strategy.

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- notes the wide range of achievements delivered across the three programmes of the 2021–2025 Digital Transformation Strategy;
- acknowledges the formal closure of this Strategy period; and
- notes the intention to bring forward a refreshed Digital Strategy later in 2025.

BACKGROUND

3. Digital Transformation is important in helping us better understand our communities and customers; targeting resource to maximum effect; helping reduce service demand; supporting services to take early or preventative action; changing community and individual outcomes for the better; increasing organisational efficiency; improving performance, spending our budgets smarter; sweating our assets to get the most value out of them; and ensuring we are broadening and developing the skills of our most important asset, our employees.

4. The Council’s Digital Transformation Strategy for 2021-2024 was approved by Cabinet in June 2021 and extended to cover 2025 in September 2024. The latest iteration of the Digital Transformation Programme, launched in April 2022, sought to consolidate and expand digital maturity across 3 key areas:

- Customer Experience;
- Workforce Productivity; and
- Business Systems & Processes.

PROGRAMME SUMMARY

5. Since 2021, the programme has played a pivotal role in transforming how we work, how we serve residents, and how we use data and technology to deliver better outcomes. As this strategy concludes, this report sets out key achievements, reflects on lessons learned, and introduces the priorities that will shape the next stage of digital transformation in East Renfrewshire.

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**IMPACT ON CUSTOMERS:
MORE ONLINE SERVICES, FEWER CALLS, INCREASED SATISFACTION**

6. The vision of our customer experience programme is to provide a consistent, efficient customer experience, designed with the user at the heart.

7. Over the term of this programme, we have expanded digital access to 24/7 online services, improving the customer experience, and working to provide a seamless end-to-end journey. This has reduced demand through traditional methods of contact. For example, call volumes into Customer First have reduced by 20-30% since 2019/20 and as part of linked budget savings our Customer First team has reduced in size by 20% in recent years delivering a cumulative saving of c.£240K over 2023/25 which was removed through the budget process. The projects listed below have contributed to this.

8. Key benefits from Customer-focussed projects include:

MyEastRen Customer Portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 30,000 users are registered, an increase of 40% in the last year and double those registered in 2022. Enables access to a growing suite of online services and is a significant contributor to reduced call volumes and improved customer service.
Council Tax & Benefits Online (New system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 13,000 (32%) customers have signed up online. Over 10,500 (25.8%) households have shifted to e-billing (paperless). Approximately 60% of all new Council Tax applications are online. <p><i>(Case Study 1 in the annex of this document has further information)</i></p>
Education Parents Portal & Parent Pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 15,500 Parents Portal accounts covering 94% of the pupil population. Supports Data updates, permission slips and under-22 bus applications. East Renfrewshire has Scotland's highest participation level.
Housing (New System)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 2,200 tenants (73%) registered since online service launched in 2024. Portal enables rent payments, repairs, balance checks and bidding for homes. Reduces paperwork, improves service transparency and supports self service.
Website New Appointment Booking Service & Updated Bin Collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since 2023, 94% of Birth registration appointments and 84% of Marriage registration appointments now made online. The Bin Calendar application is accessed over 500,000 times annually.
Customer First New Customer Contact Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Platform supports real-time queue management and remote working. Enabled continuation of service during Storm Eowyn with remote call handling. Callback feature has led to a 19% reduction in Call abandonment. New Chatbot service for Council Tax, Rubbish and Recycling guiding users to self-service.
Telecare New Digital & mobile working system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full migration of Telecare services from analogue to digital, supporting over 3,000 vulnerable residents. East Renfrewshire became the first in Scotland to deploy a cloud-based Alarm Receiving Centre. One of the first councils in Scotland to earn the national Platinum Digital Telecare Implementation Award.

IMPACT ON EMPLOYEES & PRODUCTIVITY

9. Our Workforce Productivity Programme aims to integrate data and utilise business intelligence, automation and artificial intelligence to improve outcomes for communities and individuals, and increase staff productivity, performance and effectiveness.

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Productivity Improvements

10. Across the current Digital Transformation Strategy, projects delivered since 2022 have collectively saved £1.4m of staff time across the organisation. This is equivalent to over 30 FTE. Approximately 16% is cost avoidance, which has prevented additional budget pressures. The remaining benefits sit with Departments to manage by refocussing staff time to higher value tasks, deploying staff to meet other business demands or reducing posts, via the budget process, through service redesign.

11. Revenue Estimates for 2024/25 concluded that since 2023 £1.774m of the Council's savings proposals related to efficiencies or the Council's digital transformation programme.

Performance Improvements

12. The Council has strengthened performance management by making data more accessible and actionable. Our Management Insight dashboards are central to this effort, providing managers real-time visibility of operational KPIs across services and foresight into key trends enabling faster and more informed decisions. The availability of this data is also supporting further improvement across council services.

13. The introduction of the Invoice Payment Dashboard for example, has helped increase payments made within 30 days to 95.29% in 2024/25, up from 86.03% in 2020/21, and is expected to move the Council into the upper national quartile for invoice payments. *(Case Study 2 in the annex of this document has further information)*

Digital Foundations Enabling Resilience and Smarter Working

14. A series of strategic improvements to the council's digital infrastructure has increased performance and resilience across schools and offices. Refurbished office spaces better support hybrid and collaborative working, with digital tools improving how teams connect and deliver services. Preparations for Windows 11 and Microsoft Co-Pilot will bring AI powered enhancements to everyday tasks helping staff to work smarter. *(Case Study 3 in the annex of this document has further information)*

15. A new ICT Service Desk system has streamlined how support is delivered, improving responsiveness and enabling more self-service. Real-time reporting tools help teams manage workloads and priorities more effectively, enhancing the support experience for staff across the Council. *(Case Study 4 in the annex of this document has further information)*

Digital Skills & Training

16. As the Council embraces digital transformation, it is essential that staff are confident in using modern digital tools. Over the past year, employees have taken part in a range of training opportunities, including M365 workshops, online webinars, and personalised one-on-one or team sessions. Microsoft Planner emerged as a key focus area, especially among teams seeking better ways to manage tasks and projects, reflecting a broader shift toward digital working practices.

17. Team-based training is also helping to build a culture of peer support and reducing the need for follow-up assistance. For example, one team used training to improve their use of the Updates app and Teams, leading to smoother shift handovers and less duplication. Another team transitioned from manual to digital processes, gaining confidence with Teams and improving their record-keeping. These outcomes show how digital skills are driving more efficient and collaborative ways of working.

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MAINTAINING & IMPROVING KEY SYSTEMS

18. Our final programme, Business Systems & Processes (BS&P) aims to maximise the value from the Council's key technology platforms and efficiently prioritise and manage the small staff and technology base required for implementing complex, large-scale system change.

19. Projects within BS&P continue to maintain and enhance the Council's key systems through essential upgrades that strengthen security and improve functionality and efficiency. Over this cycle of Digital Transformation, the Council has implemented new or updated systems that cover every household in East Renfrewshire and every Council employee. These include: a platform for customer contact (calls, email, etc.), council tax and benefits, council housing, telecare, school payments, and employee annual leave. The HSCP has been progressing a major project to implement a new case management system which will go live later this year. This programme has also overseen a recent upgrade to our Income Management System to enhance security and ensure compliance with the latest Payment Card Industry Data Security (PCI DSS) standards.

20. As well as the fundamental upgrade of Council network infrastructure, work is well underway to update all corporate laptops and PCs to Windows 11 and the latest versions of Microsoft 365 desktop applications. This work is being done in tandem with improvements to the Council's record management and information governance arrangements which will pave the way for the safe, ethical and strategic utilisation of artificial intelligence tools.

CLOSING THE STRATEGY

21. The Digital Strategy 2021-25 has delivered substantial and wide-ranging benefits despite the challenges following the Covid-19 pandemic and a complex digital environment. The programme has enhanced resilience, modernised service delivery, improved customer experience, supported financial savings and increased efficiency.

22. As part of each project there is a lessons learned review. Across this cycle, key lessons have included:

- clear alignment with the Council's strategic vision and ambitions is vital;
- effective project prioritisation is essential to ensure we are focussing on the right projects;
- user centred design helps to ensure the service user is at the heart of any new digital process;
- co-ordinated governance and resource management of shared corporate resources across council services has been invaluable - as we do not have the resources to do everything;
- investing in strong foundations: information governance, data quality, data protection and privacy, and strong cyber security and resilience is not negotiable;
- projects do not end at technological enablement, the hard work of implementing business change following deployment is where the greatest benefits are secured;
- every major system change has some optimism bias built-in which results in underestimating the time it will take to implement. This is often driven by vendors seeking to minimise any perceived risk and secure a sale during procurement; and
- technology is becoming more complex. The era of single-service line-of-business systems is over. Systems need to interact with multiple different on-premise and cloud-based platforms. This makes the procurement and technical requirements more complex, time-consuming and a cross-service joint endeavour.

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OUR FUTURE PROGRAMME

23. As the Council moves beyond the 2021–2025 Digital Transformation Strategy, the next stage will take account of national thinking, including SOLACE, Improvement Service, the Digital Office work on the ‘to-be state’ of the Council of the Future, and align with and contribute to ‘A Place to Grow’, ‘Our People Vision’ and ‘Organisation Health Check’.

24. The new strategy will be brought forward after recess. Work is already well underway, and departments are currently reviewing their digital ambitions for their services.

IMPLICATIONS

25. Change and digital transformation across an organisation as diverse as a Council (and HSCP and ERCLT) is a complex area. There is a complicated ICT system architecture and network of operational processes that sit behind the services that our residents interact with on a day-to-day basis. We must plan carefully to ensure that we are focusing on improving our high-volume processes whilst undertaking the routine work to keep our systems up to date, secure and integrated.

26. Budget challenges mean we must clearly prioritise our activities and resources to ensure we deliver benefits from projects, that they contribute to future savings opportunities and improve the experiences of residents and reduce bureaucracy. Learning from others’ successes (and failures) will also help transition quicker and save rework.

27. Recruiting, retaining and, where possible, growing the right skills and experience is essential to the success of our digital transformation journey. Digital, data, technology and service design skillsets are in significant demand nationally and it is a challenging marketplace. Programmes routinely have gaps in key skillsets which means the need to prioritise resource to achieve the best collective benefit – this is a key function of the 3 Programme Boards, which must work together to make decisions and recommendations. We have also developed close links with the Scottish Local Government Digital Office and Scottish Digital Academy to ensure we can develop and enhance our digital, data and technology skillsets.

28. Equality, Fairness and Rights Impact Assessments (EFRIAs) are a key part of project governance. This is, in part, why there is a strong focus on the principles of user-based service design. Examples where changes have been made as a result of EFRIAs include retaining face-to-face and telephone customer contact for those who need it most; and work with services across the Council to ensure that web-based services meet accessibility standards. As part of our Council Tax and Benefits system the project used surveys, pop-up events and user testing to gather insights, identify user needs and pain points. This helped to ensure the service was intuitive, accessible, and fit for purpose.

FINANCE & EFFICIENCY

29. As set out above, despite the challenges of the pandemic and post-pandemic period, the Digital Transformation programme has delivered significant cost-avoidance, as well as one-off and recurring productivity and financial efficiencies which have contributed to the Council’s budget savings. The Programme has also supported channel shift by significantly expanding access to 24/7 online services. This is resulting in fewer complaints in key service areas.

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30. Whilst significant benefits have already been realised, the Council will continue to face very challenging financial circumstances for the foreseeable future. The key principles behind the programme that will lead to budget savings are:

- improving customer end-to-end experience and continue to expand access and adoption of 24/7 online self-service;
- increasing employee productivity through automation, data integration, business intelligence insights and artificial intelligence;
- maximising the use of key business systems and capabilities; and
- an increased focus on user engagement in service design and more community empowerment to provide services which put customers at the heart of provision, improving services and potentially lowering costs.

CONSULTATION & PARTNERSHIP WORKING

31. The progress and ambitions outlined in this paper relate not only to the Council but also to the wider 'family' organisations of the HSCP and the Culture and Leisure Trust. We will continue to work together to progress the key priority areas for digital transformation and to share lessons learned and plan resources.

32. We will continue to work in partnership with SOLACE, the Improvement Service and Scottish Local Government Digital Office to share knowledge and learn from other areas of best practice. We will also explore shared resourcing of expensive or highly specialist skills which one council alone cannot afford.

CONCLUSION

33. In summary, the Digital Transformation programme and platforms are expanding 24/7 access to online services to thousands of customers, increasing staff productivity, helping to reduce costs, generating data insights to improve outcomes, targeting support at the most vulnerable; and supporting improvements in performance.

34. The pace and scale of change across the Council and HSCP remains significant. This is driven by pressures on budgets; statutory and contractual obligations and our own ambitions for digital modernisation and improved user experience. Prioritisation, resource management and good governance will continue to be key to the next stages of our digital transformation journey, with a focus on customer experience, our business systems and processes and the productivity of our workforce as we will not have sufficient resource to pursue all of our ambitions at one time.

RECOMMENDATION

35. It is recommended that Cabinet:

- notes the wide range of achievements delivered across the three programmes of the 2021–2025 Digital Transformation Strategy;
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- notes the intention to bring forward a refreshed Digital Strategy later in 2025.

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Report Authors; Kenny Barr, Senior Programme Manager & Jamie Reid, Head of Communities & Transformation. For further information please contact Jamie.reid@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Local Government in Scotland Overview 2023, Audit Scotland, May 2023](#)
- [Medium Term Financial Strategy 2025 - 2030](#)
- [Revenue Estimates 2024/25, Council 28 February 2024](#)
- [East Renfrewshire Council Revenue Estimates 2025/26](#)
- [Update on the Digital Transformation Programme, Cabinet 5 September 2024](#)
- [Accounts Commission Best Value Report February 2025](#)

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ANNEX 1: CASE STUDIES**CASE STUDY 1 – REVENUES & BENEFITS SERVICES RE-DESIGN**

36. East Renfrewshire Council undertook a comprehensive modernisation of its Revenues and Benefits services. The objective was to enhance service accessibility, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction through the implementation of a new digital platform and redesigned service model.

37. A user centred design approach guided the transformation with engagement activities such as surveys, pop-up events and user testing utilised to gather insights and validate the design. Personas and empathy mapping helped identify user needs and pain points, ensuring the final service was intuitive, accessible, and fit for purpose.

38. Launched in 2022 and progressively enhanced, the new systems have been well received by residents with 13,295 customers, representing 32% of our 41,000 households, registering for the online services. In addition, 10,578 households have switched to e-billing, and approximately 60% of new Council Tax applications are being received online, significantly reducing reliance on paper and postage.



39. The project has delivered measurable improvements in service performance:

- average processing times for Council Tax changes have reduced from four weeks to one, contributing to better customer experience, data accuracy and improved council tax collections.
- in 2023/24, East Renfrewshire ranked 1st in Scotland for Council Tax collection through the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF).
- benefits processing performance moved into the national upper quartile, with accuracy reaching 96%, exceeding the Council's target.

40. These improvements also led to a 26% drop in complaints and a 33% reduction in email enquiries for this service, reflecting successful self-service adoption. Internally, employee satisfaction rose and both internal and external audits reported fewer issues, highlighting stronger controls and service quality.

41. As well as these performance improvements, the transformation delivered significant financial benefits, including a 30% reduction in team size, equating to 18 FTEs. This reduction was aligned with the council budget process, and the savings were delivered over several years, ending in 2024/25, with a net value in the region of £540,000 after investment in service and systems improvements.

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42. This transformation represents a significant step forward in the Council's digital strategy and provides a strong foundation for future innovation in public service delivery.

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CASE STUDY 2: INVOICE PAYMENT DASHBOARD

43. The Management Insight project has delivered significant value over recent years through a suite of dashboards with near-time data to authorised staff. A key success from this project has been the Invoice Payment Dashboard, which was developed to improve invoice processing performance, increase transparency, and reduce manual tracking.

44. This has resulted in a cross Council and HSCP effort to improve invoice payment times, with engagement from every department.

45. The dashboard enables granular reporting by invoice, cost centre, service, and time period, helping finance teams and service managers identify and address risk areas promptly.



46. The introduction of this dashboard has significantly improved the Council's invoice processing performance KPIs. Payment within 30 days has risen to 95.29% in 2024/25, up from 86.03% in 2020/21. This is the Council's strongest performance in this area which, based on previous results, should move us into the upper quartile nationally when data is released.

47. Targeted use of the dashboard led to increases in CareFirst and Servitor performance (from 73% and 85% to 92%), contributing to a 6-point KPI improvement in a single year.

48. KPI performance is now maintained consistently throughout the year. It has helped minimise the usual seasonal dips in performance maintaining KPI targets nearly every day of the 2024/25 year. This supports better supplier relationships and reduces the risk to small businesses dependent on timely payments.

49. The Invoice Payment Dashboard is used daily by key staff. This allows the right information to the right people at the right time to be served up, enabling better decision-making, improving performance, and freeing up valuable staff time. It exemplifies how smart data tools can drive operational improvement, reduce administrative burden, and support service-wide accountability.

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CASE STUDY 3: MODERNISING ICT INFRASTRUCTURE

50. Following an independent ICT Infrastructure Review, East Renfrewshire Council has undertaken a series of strategic improvements to its digital infrastructure. These changes are helping to resolve long-standing issues, improve performance and resilience, and support the Council's long-term Digital Transformation Strategy.

51. The programme has strengthened the Council's capacity to deliver better services to the public, improved day-to-day connectivity for staff and pupils, and laid the groundwork for future innovation, including the adoption of new technologies like artificial intelligence.

52. Key Outcomes:

Improving Customer Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduced a new remote access system that allowed the Customer First Team to work remotely for the first time. Notably, during Storm Eowyn, employees were able to maintain service levels and take telephone calls from home, without compromising staff safety with them having to travel to a workplace. • School pupils and staff can now reliably use Chromebooks and other devices, thanks to improved network connectivity across the education estate. There has been very positive feedback from Headteachers about the improvements in ICT connectivity in schools.
Business Systems and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firewall and server upgrades have improved connectivity across offices and schools, while also removing technical limitations that previously blocked progress to deploying new technologies. • A new setup has simplified how staff connect to the network both onsite and remotely, making access faster and more stable. • All Council email inboxes have been moved to Microsoft 365, increasing reliability and allowing old systems to be retired. • A new cloud platform (AWS) has been set up, opening the door for future cloud-based services. • Improvements to the way staff devices are managed have made it easier to use Council technology and access necessary tools.
Supporting Staff Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the new systems in place, the Council is now ready to upgrade all suitable devices to Windows 11, alongside introducing modern Microsoft tools including AI-powered features like Microsoft Co-Pilot—helping staff work more efficiently and productively.

53. This modernisation programme has improved the everyday digital experience for staff, pupils, and service teams. It has addressed long-standing issues and improved how services stay connected during adverse weather disruptions. These changes not only help deliver better public services today but also provide a foundation for the Council to make the most of new technologies in the future, helping to ensure the organisation can continue to meet the needs of modern services and local communities.

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CASE STUDY 4: ICT SERVICE DESK TRANSFORMATION

54. As part of its broader Digital Transformation Strategy, in early 2023, the Council introduced a new system to modernise how the ICT Service Desk manages support requests and issues.

55. This transformation aimed to improve security, resilience and performance of the Council's network today and lay the foundations to support expanded digital capabilities to meet our ambitions.

56. Key Outcomes:

Improved Access to Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a new ICT Service Desk platform with a built-in help and guidance library. • Enables staff to resolve common issues independently, increasing confidence and reducing reliance on direct support. • Supports a shift toward self-service and knowledge sharing.
Reduced Support Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant channel shift: 90% reduction in telephone calls to the ICT Service Desk since 2019/20. • The system has contributed to a 20% reduction in support requests between 2022 and 2024. • More efficient issue triaging has eased the burden on frontline ICT teams.
Faster Response and Resolution Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New real-time reporting tools improve workload visibility and help improve the prioritisation of incoming requests. • Automatic routing of tickets to the appropriate teams reduces delays. • Average resolution time has improved from 30 hours in 2023 to just over 11 hours in 2025.
Operational Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated productivity saving of 110 staff days annually through streamlined workflows and faster issue handling. • Frees up ICT resources for proactive work and strategic support initiatives.

57. The new system represents a significant step forward in how staff access and resolve ICT related issues.

58. By enabling greater self-service, improving visibility, and reducing resolution times, the system supports more efficient service delivery and contributes directly to staff productivity across the organisation.

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