



IT Strategy

June 2016

We will transform our IT organisation into a strategic asset, with the capability to drive growth and provide the business with a platform for the delivery of insight-driven, innovative and future focused service models.

Contents

Introduction	4
Choice Housing ICT	6
The Need for Change	2
Our Vision	3
Delivering our Strategy	5
New Ways of Working	8
Appendix	10
Portfolio View	11
Prioritised Delivery Plan (100 day)	12
IT Portfolio	13

Introduction

Background

Digital technology is advancing exponentially and its cost is plummeting. At the same time the social housing sector is facing a challenging economic environment and significant housing and welfare reform across the UK and Northern Ireland.

The Choice Housing Corporate plan is framed to respond to the challenges envisaged over the next few years to 2020. In addition to addressing business challenges and identifying opportunities, the plan also recognises the important role that technology can play in shaping the future of the organisation.

The need to adopt technology to help meet these challenges seems obvious, however the housing sector lags behind other industries in using technology to deliver services to tenants and the public.

Our IT strategy has been developed to address two broad objectives:

1. Transform the capability of the IT organisation and creating new ways of working to allow Choice Housing to fully exploit the benefits from new and emerging technologies; and
2. Better engage with the business to create and deliver innovative solutions that support the strategic priorities identified in the corporate plan, (*Harnessing the competitive advantage gained by the merging of strong performing associations; to lead a step-change in the development of social, affordable and market-rented housing; and support services*).

The Choice Housing IT organisation has been well positioned to support the business during recent merger and acquisition (M&A). It has delivered a robust infrastructure and end-user compute environment; providing a platform for the delivery of future initiatives.

The Future

The IT strategy focusses on creating a modern IT organisation and corporate culture that views technology as the way to enable people to constantly adapt and learn, continually create new solutions, drive change, and develop new ways of working.

Our focus is not solely locked on technology but places emphasis on:

Focus	Enabled by
Our people	Process
Our values	Methods
Our customers	Technology
Our partnerships	Tools
Our future	Innovation

Transforming our IT organisation will allow us to evolve our services, capability, tools and methods to enable the business, tenants and partners to accomplish more with technology.

The capabilities of computers are expanding beyond routine work: as a result, tasks once considered too complex for coding will be converted into well-defined problems capable of digital solutions.

Agiletown: the relentless march of technology Deloitte, 2014.

Choice Housing ICT

Digital technology is transforming the business landscape, re-imagining traditional industries and giving rise to new ones. The tidal wave of change is reflected in Tech Nation 2016, which highlights that in the three years to 2015, the number of ads for digital tech jobs in traditional industries grew by 34%.

Like other organisations, Choice Housing will experience an unprecedented transformation in its use of technology to provide services to customers. The 2020 Corporate Plan set out a vision that requires a collaborative approach to evolve ICT services and the delivery of innovative solutions that better meet the needs of our staff, customers and partners.

The IT strategy has been developed with business engagement to ensure that the Choice Housing can fully exploit new and emerging technologies and trends. Our focus is innovation and agility while supporting the 2020 priority areas:

- Customer Excellence
- Internal Business Processes
- Innovation and Learning
- Financial and Business Growth

Customer Excellence

Interacting and engaging with tenants in a variety of new ways including low-cost online channels (24x7) and mobile apps.

Internal Business Processes

Housing Officers and staff will be equipped with mobile solutions, with re-designed processes enabling them to provide a timely and more effective response to tenant needs.

Innovation and Learning

Leveraging relationships with partner organisations to accelerate innovation while developing our internal ICT capability.

Financial and Business Growth

Maximising the value of our digital assets to inform better decisions, proactive service delivery and social

interventions that support our future growth.

Our Strategy

The transformation of technology envisaged in this IT Strategy encompasses all aspects of service and solution delivery. It considers a number of inter-related dimensions that reflect the physical IT organisation, the services it delivers, and the manner of this delivery. The strategy provides a view of how technology is organised, procured and governed to ensure that stakeholders gain maximum value for money.

The IT Strategy provides clear direction to evolve the IT organisation to better support the delivery of the four focus areas identified in the 2020 Corporate Plan.

The Challenge

Consumer technology has transformed the way that the public expects to interact with business.

Increasingly our tenants and customers expect more flexible ways of interacting with us, and to be able to exploit the benefits of Internet and mobile technologies. Our Housing Officers and staff need new technologies that support new processes and service delivery models in areas such as Applications,

Arrears, Voids Management and Responsive Repairs.

Competitive advantage is no longer simply about scale, 'disruptive' technologies are giving rise to new service models.

The growing dependency on technology solutions historically requires that a large proportion of IT funding and effort is required to maintain the effective operation of core systems. This diverts our IT team from focussing on higher value add activities including the development and implementation of innovative business focussed solutions.

Maintaining and refreshing the technology estate should become a lower priority while innovation and development of the IT organisation to perform the role of "Business Leader", driving business growth and profitability.

Recent investment in new technologies has accelerated the integration of the organisation and processes to support the formation of Choice Housing. The technology

environment is relatively stable and provides a solid platform to for future transformation.

Making best use of resources and providing transparency to the business.

A focus on value for money together with increased performance expectations mean that the IT organisation must be more effective in delivering services and solutions to the business.

Technology has a dual role in reducing costs. Through growing our Business Intelligence (BI) capability and integrating core systems we can enable each directorate to better leverage digital assets and external information sources, such as social media sentiment, to transform decision making.

As an insight driven organisation we can ensure that we are providing services that are appropriate and relevant to our customer needs; we will have the ability to better manage the performance of our staff and partner organisations.

The above issues provide focus for the ongoing development of our IT organisation. They also provide the mandate to rethink how we undertake the governance and delivery of technology services in the future to best meet the needs of Choice Housing and our tenants.

The Need for Change

The technology landscape within Choice Housing has evolved rapidly in response to the varying demands, priorities and growth of the business. Our recent IT focus has been providing a stable end-user compute environment with the delivery and maintenance of applications and processes that support core service delivery.

The next stage in the evolution of the business requires greater collaboration in the development of innovative solutions that better meet the needs of the business and which facilitate new ways of working.

User Expectations

The last decade has seen a significant increase in the adoption of technology by both industry and the public. The growth in consumer technologies and the adoption of online and app-based services has raised citizen expectations.

The public have embraced this technology and now depend upon it for a wide range of social and business interactions. Increasingly our tenants expect that they will be able to interact with Choice Housing in the same manner (online), at any time and from anywhere.

Modern technology and the re-design of core processes will enable our staff to deliver more effective and efficient services; it is also critical to meeting the demands of our tenants both now and in our technology-enabled society of the future.

Budgets

The change described within this IT strategy will enable the IT organisation to deliver more effective and efficient services to the business enabling new ways of working and providing a wide range of services.

IT financial management and planning is an area of focus to support our

value for money agenda. If the IT organisation is to evolve into a 'Business Leader' it must provide clear evidence of the positive relationship between IT investment and key business pressures. IT Financial Management will allow the IT organisation to articulate the relationship and role that IT plays in the evolution of the business; it will support the analysis of technology investment effectiveness.

Our IT organisation of the future

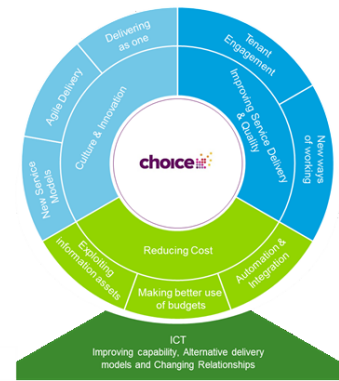
A new IT service model is required to support greater business agility and enable Choice Housing to be more responsive to the needs of tenants, stakeholders and business partners.

The ICT organisation will seek to position itself to respond to the needs of the business and to enable the rapid delivery of ICT enabled business change. A strong delivery capability is important to maintain competitive advantage and confidence in the Choice Housing brand.

Our current service delivery model does not fully meet the current and future needs of the business or support our ability to engage tenants and stakeholders in an effective and efficient way.

IT is a strategic asset essential to driving growth and profitability. IT initiatives will be owned by the business and funded as a competitive differentiator.

Our Vision



Our vision is to transform the IT organisation into a strategic asset that is central to driving business growth and profitability. IT capabilities will be aligned to support innovation and change. We will embrace process redesign and disruptive technologies while being insight-driven and digitally risk-aware. IT initiatives will be owned by the business and funded as a competitive differentiator.

Our future initiatives and service delivery model will seek to ensure that:

Improving Service Delivery & Quality

Tenant Engagement

Tenants can easily access Choice Housing services where and when they want. Processes across all directorates are optimised and available (where appropriate) via lower-cost and more efficient channels.

Our online interaction with tenants and partners provide new insight into behaviours allowing services to be further optimised.

New ways of working (everything everywhere)

Housing Officer's mobile IT systems enable them to be more responsive to tenant's needs; accessing information to initiate (and complete) processes from anywhere.

Culture & Innovation

Delivering as one

Corporate information solutions and practices enable the delivery of services unhindered by our organisational structure.

Data captured once will be repurposed in near-real-time to improve the efficiency of back office functions and improve reporting and business insight.

Agile Delivery

Modern solution development methods are used to support the rapid delivery of capability to the business.

Directorates will have the ability to prototype, assess and experiment with new and emerging technologies.

New IT Service Models

Staff are increasingly self-sufficient and have the ability to complete IT requests via the businesses intranet portal.

Reducing Costs

Making better use of budgets – value for money

ICT projects and initiatives are developed from a 'whole process' perspective to increase impact of project and amplify benefits.

Exploiting information assets

Business Intelligence and analytic tools provide value to the business providing insight to improve decision making and business performance.

Process automation & Integration

Routine business processes and many administration tasks are fully automated allowing staff to focus on higher value activities.

Staff have the tools and knowledge to interrogate reports and models to derive meaningful insight from data.

ICT Capability

Improving Capability

The ICT organisation is a modern future focussed IT service that anticipates and supports the needs of the business.

Choice Housing IT leads and promotes the development of core ICT systems.

Alternative delivery models

Mature supplier management processes and relationships are in place to extract maximum possible value from contractual arrangements that encourage closer service integration.

Changing Relationships

The business and IT work closely to improve service delivery. A strong

Business Analysis capability provides IT with a clearly articulated requirement for improvement and a robust rationale for change.

Talent Development & Retention

Our IT team will be supported by individual development plans that expand their knowledge and skills in the use of tools and techniques that promotes a consistent and high-quality experience for service users.

Through training and providing easy-to-access guidance and knowledge, IT will seek to increase the ability of end-users to maximise their use of technology and self-service tools.

Delivering our Strategy

Achieving our vision requires an IT organisation and infrastructure that can evolve and adapt to meet the needs of a 'Best in Class' Housing Association. We must ensure our technology is agile and flexible; that we can exploit new and emerging solutions and capabilities that maximise business benefit and return on technology investment (Value for Money VfM).

Solutions must be designed with our customers' front of mind. Our IT services must provide the flexibility to support Housing Officers engage with tenants and deliver services in a timely, convenient and effective way; using lower cost and modern communications channels.

A key element of our approach will be to build on recent investments in infrastructure and core systems that have provided the building blocks for core service delivery. Our IT planning and solution design will be architected to enable greater integration of core systems and improve agility, the rate at which solutions can be incorporated into the IT landscape.

The integration of core systems will enable Choice Housing to leverage digital assets, improve insight and decision making and anticipate the needs of tenants and partner organisations.

Orchestrating our systems in a way that provides the ability to deliver new capability to the business in order to allow the business to evaluate or prototype innovative solutions to service delivery or client challenges. Adopting agile methods and ways of working with the business, we aim to be at the forefront of innovation, making best use of our technical resources rather than building on outdated service delivery models.

The use of standardised and joined-up technology will promote efficient housing services. We will seek to reduce re-keying and duplication of data by having common or integrated data stores. Additionally, we will enable partners, customers and the public to pass information to us and access relevant information through technology. We will design our systems to be as accessible as possible across the developments and communities that we serve.

We will seek alternative delivery opportunities and work with solution vendors and partners that are beneficial and which accelerate the delivery of the Choice Housing 2020 strategy, and where they offer the opportunity to deliver savings and increased VfM.

We have identified a number of initiatives and priority areas that are discussed in the remainder of this section.

Customer engagement

Focusing on customer needs

Digital services are disrupting traditional business models across the UK and further afield. The housing sector, like others will be impacted by the challenges posed by new services built around the customer; where automation, the easy flow of data and the growth of information sources are leveraged to provide new services.

Our IT organisation will orchestrate and organise its services to focus on meeting the needs of our customers, developing the tools and techniques that will enable us to quickly develop and deploy new services and solutions to maintain our competitive advantage.

To do this we will:

- Enhance our website and mobile apps to provide an effective gateway for customers to engage and share information. IT will work with the business to optimise processes to facilitate greater self-service for tenants and partners;
- Transform service delivery through process automation – reducing the number of interventions and manual handoffs to partner organisations (for example repair requests), which will improve the timeliness of service delivery and reduce administrative overheads; and
- Improve our use of social media to contact our customers and collect and analyse customer sentiment and feedback.

Insight and Information Management

Insight driven

End-to-end processes generate vast amounts of data at each customer and partner interaction. We will seek to leverage our digital assets, removing or reducing information silos to make better use of data analytics to develop deep customer insight.

With our data we will be able to understand and anticipate tenant needs (and preferences) or where they are having difficulty. Making best use of our data will enable us to better meet the individual needs of our tenants and adapt our services accordingly. This personalised insight is the main driver for competitive advantage and long-term customer satisfaction.

To do this we will:

- Build our capability effectively to manage and update customer data, to model and assess customer needs, profiling trends and demands for existing and new services.
- Integrate our core data sources to provide a richer and deeper data set for exploitation via data analytics and visualisation solutions.
- Introduce appropriate data analytic tools and work with the business to standardise reports, as well as self-service facilities for staff to author directorate specific reports.
- Help Housing Officers to exploit data and information assets by making information available to them via mobile devices.
- Enhance our ability to plan and manage our properties by increasing the visibility of financial, tenant, property data.

Agile Working

Everything Everywhere

Mobilising our Housing Officers will enable them to spend more time with tenants and less time in the office. Initiating workflows and completing processes 'in the field' will improve the quality of service delivery and efficiency thus supporting all four themes from the Choice Housing 2020 corporate plan: Customer Excellence, Internal Business Processes, Innovation and learning, and Financial and Business Growth.

Providing new flexible working capability will transform service delivery that will build the Choice Housing brand of being an exemplar Housing Association.

Delivering services via modern methods builds confidence with our stakeholders, partners and tenants.

To do this we will:

- Enhance our capability to deliver solutions in an agile method;
- Architect our solutions and develop technology standards that enable services to be consumed by staff (and tenants) independent of their mobile devices or platform, reducing our dependency on any particular solution; and
- Equip our staff with the tools to access data and initiate (and complete) processes and deliver a high-quality timely service to tenants.

Support services

Best in class service

Our IT support services aims to minimise disruptions to the IT

Services and to be responsive to future IT demands of the business.

IT Service Operation is at the heart of our IT organisation and the primary contact point for our users. We will evolve our services to ensure that we have the skills, capabilities, processes, and technologies required to deliver and support valued IT services to the business.

To continue to do this we will:

- Understand how IT services delivered to customers underpin business processes;
- Deliver and promote our end-user self-service capability;
- Define and execute IT operational management processes to control and deliver quality IT Services reliably, efficiently and effectively; and
- Identify and implement improvements to achieve the quality of service expected.

The IT Organisation has created a solid foundation for future transformation work. It will adapt its focus and ways of working to allow it to scale quickly to accommodate new service models and future business growth. We will seek to maintain core service, growing internal capabilities while leveraging specialist knowledge from suppliers as and when required. The Choice Housing IT organisation will develop an operating model that provides agility to enable it to grow strategically and deliver efficiently.

New Ways of Working

We seek to enable and transform the business through the adoption of innovative processes and solutions. The IT organisation will be orchestrated to ensure it has appropriate governance and controls, capability and environment in place to deliver the total potential value of planned and future initiatives.

We will evolve new ways of thinking, working and engaging with the business. To do this we will improve our:

Governance

To achieve and maintain our strategic objective, to have 'Best in Class' ICT systems, we will continue to evolve or upgrade systems or deploy new systems. The delivery of strategically aligned ICT programmes and projects will enable new business models, ways of working and improve customer service, reduce cost, improve product or service quality.

These deployments often involve strategic risk for the organisation; they always involve operational risk. Risk management is a board responsibility and, therefore, project governance – from inception through to deployment – must also be a board responsibility.

ICT governance processes will be designed to enable Choice Housing to promote effective, efficient, and acceptable use of IT² in three ways:

- Stakeholder Assurance – providing confidence in the organisation's ICT governance and ensuring that appropriate standards are followed. Assurance should extend to all stakeholders including tenants; shareholders; statutory bodies; as well as employees and providers/vendors);
- Informing and guiding – governance processes to support Choice Housing Board members and Directors in their ICT decision, investments and governance activities; and
- Evaluate and adapt – provide a basis for objective evaluation of ICT delivery and governance activity recognising where change may be required to improve performance.

Architecture

To deliver value from IT, we will be firmly aligned to the corporate agenda. Strong architecture management requires a thorough understanding of the business and its direction, combined with broad knowledge of the key technology components that make up the IS environment, both now and in the future.

Our Architecture management capability will enable us to successfully deliver strategic business goals through established architecture standards, principles, roadmaps and blueprints, with clearly defined, inclusive processes.

To achieve this we will put in place the plans, models and governance controls that ensure the IT strategy is implemented in a consistent and controlled manner. Our focus is to develop a technology roadmap, outlining how an aligned investment in the various technology components (including applications, data, infrastructure, security, networks and end user devices) support the realisation of the IT strategy.

The overall goal is to optimise the value of IT assets. As architectural maturity improves, increased levels of enterprise operational and cost performance are achieved, and business and IT complexity (and therefore risk) will be reduced.

Business Relationships

We will strengthen our relationship with the business and partner with the business to help them define proposed projects that align with the strategy and have a robust business case.

Our strong linkages into the business can play an integral part of future investment management capability demand management. Working with the business, we will provide a single channel for proposed projects, providing the IT organisation and Integration and Communications Committee with the information they need to prioritise all the proposed initiatives that align with the Choice Housing 2020 corporate plan. Developing out business relationship management capability will enable us to support activities such as:

- Refining this IT strategy on a regular basis so that it continues to support the Choice Housing 2020 Corporate Plan;
- Prioritising proposed initiatives;
- Facilitating the use of new technologies to support business innovation and competitive advantage; and
- Developing robust business cases and benefits realisation planning for each proposed initiative.

Supplier Management

The IT organisation will develop effective relationships with suppliers to help deliver business objectives. To develop stronger relationships we will develop our governance processes to continuously assess supplier partnership, contribution and viability. We will formalise our processes to review, monitor and drive supplier performance to meet the agreed targets and instigate actions to eradicate poor performance.

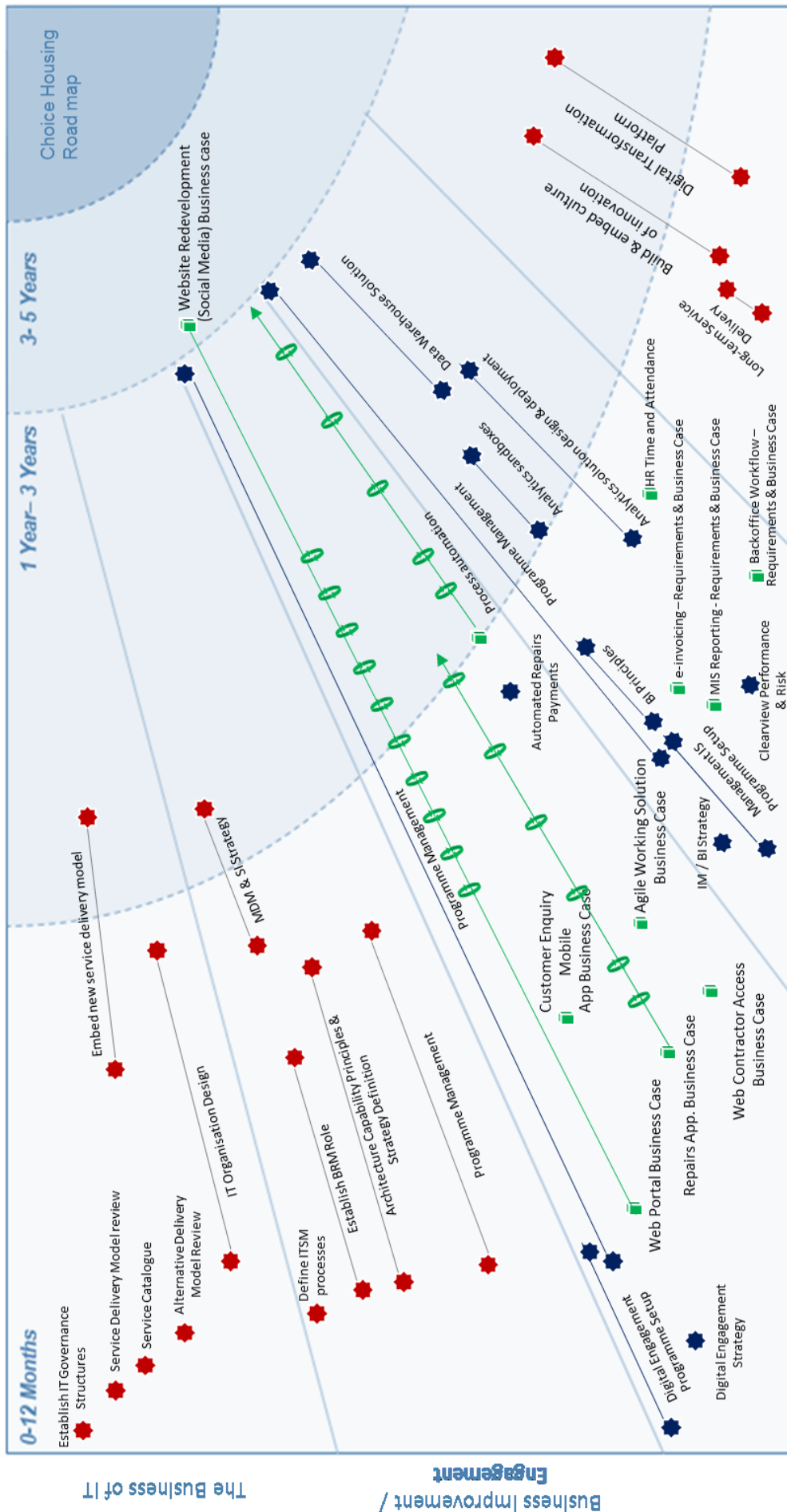
We recognise that Vendor Relationship Management requires new capabilities but will provide Choice Housing with the ability to flex our capability and skills capacity beyond our internal resource.

We will seek to put in place Service Level Agreements and manage these with defined processes and structured governance models to allow suppliers to work effectively in collaboration with the Choice Housing IT Organisation and our new IT operating model.

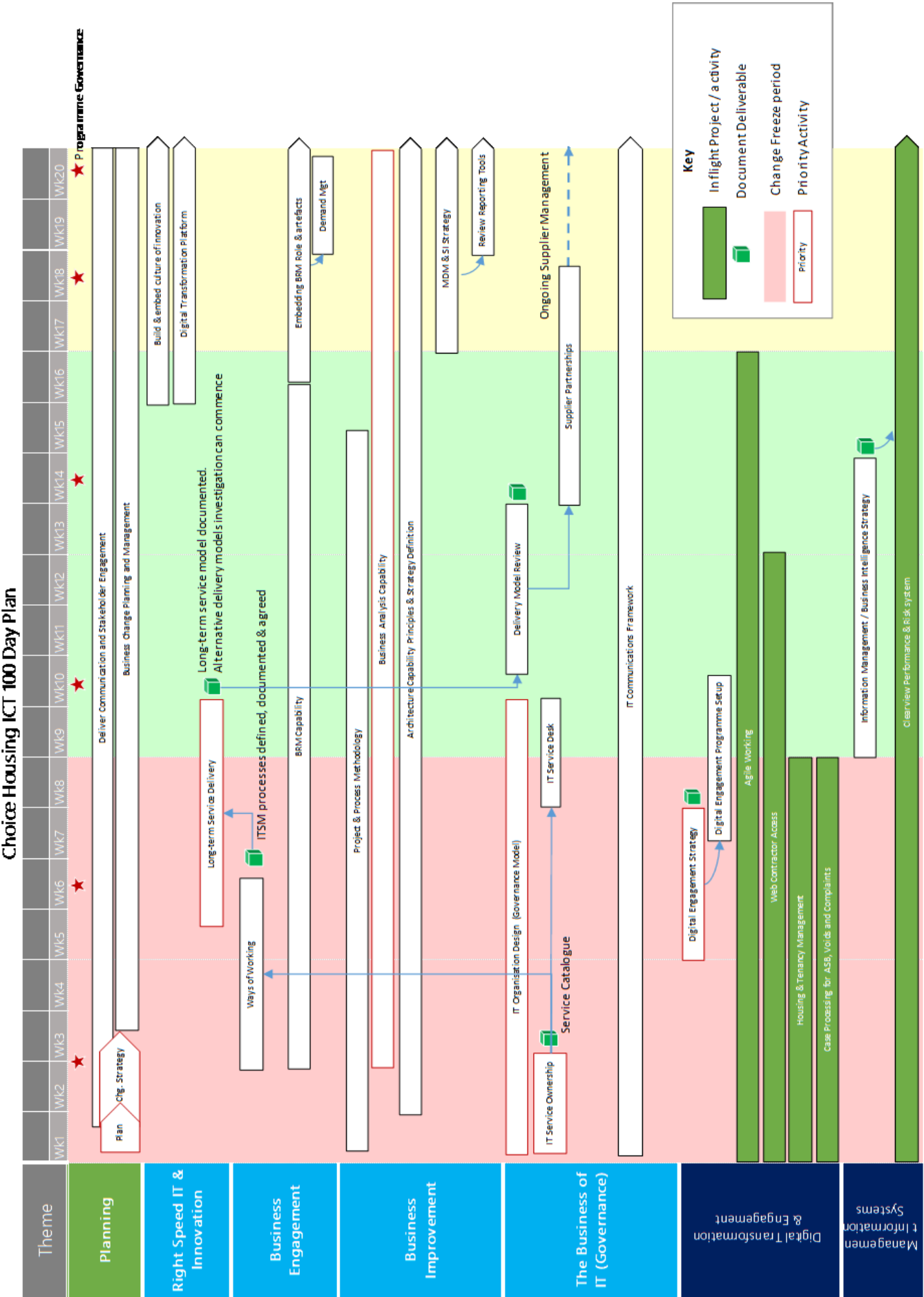
Appendix

Portfolio View
Prioritised Delivery Plan (100 day)
IT Portfolio

Portfolio View



Prioritised Delivery Plan (100 day)



IT Portfolio

The IT strategy will be delivered via a portfolio of three programmes: IT Service Effectiveness; Digital Transformation and Engagement; and Management Information Systems.

The programme structure will bridge the gap between the formulation of the Choice Housing Corporate Plan and the effective execution of the IT strategy. Each programme enables an end-to-end view of change activity and desired outcomes that typically span IT and multiple directorate boundaries.

Each programme will have an established vision that will facilitate in depth planning and decision making; and provides a mechanism to maintain IT and business alignment. Each initiative will be prioritised by the business.

Programme management will increase overall delivery effectiveness by managing projects in a coordinated way to obtain benefits and control not available from managing them individually.

An overview of the three programmes and their intended outcomes is presented in the remainder of this appendix.



Programme I - IT Service Effectiveness

The assessment of the IT service highlighted a number of initiatives to improve IT service management and project delivery. With significant interdependency these activities and initiatives have been grouped into a pragmatic plan of activity to transform the Choice Housing IT organisation.

The delivery of IT Service Effectiveness programme has been prioritised as improvements in IT process, capability, capacity and business engagement will improve the effectiveness of wider technology enabled business change agenda. The four projects within this programme are:

Project	Description
Right-speed IT & innovation	Creating an IT Service Management (ITSM) that supports 'agile' workers. It seeks to create an innovation environment where new products and ideas can be rapidly developed, tested and deployed to Choice Housing users and tenants.
Business Engagement	Increased strategic alignment by enhancing the IT service's engagement with the business to better understand needs and priorities. To educate business users to improve the understanding of IT and the limitations / constraints alongside the 'art of the possible'.
Business Improvement	Ensuring that the IT organisation has the appropriate capability to accelerate the delivery of business improvement initiatives – Architecture management; Programme management; Agile delivery; and assessment of alternative delivery models
The business of IT (Governance)	Improving control of IT through establishing new ways of working and formal governance, reporting and communications processes. Managing ICT demand, expectations and the controlled and co-ordinated introduction of change initiatives.

Outcomes

- Improved understanding of the business requirements and the role of technology in supporting the delivery of the vision detailed in the Choice Housing Corporate Plan.
- An innovation agenda and capability to deliver new products and services at pace using agile techniques and tools.
- Refinement of IT service management processes and policies and publication of the IT Service Catalogue
- Optimised service delivery that fully meets the business needs and is optimised to maximise quality and value for money.
- Development of architectural principles and artefacts that promote infrastructure and solution agility



Programme II - Digital Transformation and Engagement

The rate of innovation and adoption of digital services is transforming how IT services add value and how they enable new business and service models. The Digital Transformation and Engagement programme is structured to encompass all existing and planned business transformation initiatives. A holistic approach to business engagement and end-to-end process optimisation will be established to support Choice Housing to transform the current operating model significantly reducing cost, improve quality and access to services.

The IT organisation will engage with the business directorates to rapidly develop a Digital Engagement Strategy, mapping the future engagement vision for both tenants, suppliers and business partners. The Digital Transformation and Engagement programme has two multi-year projects:

Project	Description
Customer Engagement Channel Shift	The development of an end-to-end business transformation plan to optimise customer engagement and channel shift to a lower cost channels. Improved self-service capability and proactive (push) service notifications.
Partner Engagement Process Automation	The creation of a strong integration capability to provide a secure environment to automate engagement with service delivery partners. Increased sharing of information to improve the timeliness and quality of service delivery by Choice Staff and partner organisations. The capturing of KPI data to improved supplier performance monitoring.

Outcomes

- Digital transformation vision
- Strong business change agenda to maximise solution adoption and return on investment
- Prioritised end-to-end digital transformation initiatives
- Increased self-service and online (mobile) tenant engagement capability
- Extended 'Agile' working capability
- Supplier process (service request) automation and digital engagement

Delivery of these projects will make the world in which Choice Housing operates a different place.



Programme III - Management Information Systems

With the ever growing data volumes available both internally and externally, Choice Housing need to have robust capabilities in place to process data and adopt advanced business analysis techniques and tools for focusing human input on making effective decisions to address complex business problems.

The need to remain competitive compels investment in Analytics and the tools to improve insight into financial, economic, environmental and market information. The goal is to enable Choice Housing directorates to make more informed and responsive decisions. This programme has three projects:

Project	Description
Data Management	Development of Choice Housing's Information Management and Business Intelligence strategy. Development and execution of architectures, standards, policies, practices and procedures that properly manage the collection, quality, standardisation, integration and aggregation of data in line with the IM strategy. Delivery of inflight and planned IM and BI related projects.
Intelligent Reporting	Develop Business Intelligence and/or Performance Management reporting solutions. Using existing MIS and new reporting tools to translate business and technology requirements into process or technical solutions (i.e. forecasts/plans/metrics) and improve insight/decision-making for the business.
Data Analytics and Insight	Enable the querying, reporting, online analytical processing and "alerts" that can answer the complex questions: what happened; how many, how often, and where; where exactly is the problem; and what actions are needed. Providing Choice Housing with the ability to anticipate tenant and market behaviours.

Outcomes

- Accurately recording, managing and reporting transactional data
- Architectural principles and controls within the business to adhere to data standards
- An agile approach to BI and Analytics deployment using principles and techniques specifically designed to accelerate and increase the business value realised.
- The ability to analyse all kinds of data using sophisticated quantitative methods, such as statistics, predicative modelling, data mining, simulation and optimisation.

The Management Information Systems programme will create a platform that will allow Choice Housing to embrace new emerging technologies (such as Cloud, Digital, Big Data / Analytics, Cyber, etc.)

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