Technology Strategy

2024–2026

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Our Purpose

Together with our communities, we create affordable homes and great neighbourhoods that people are proud to live in.
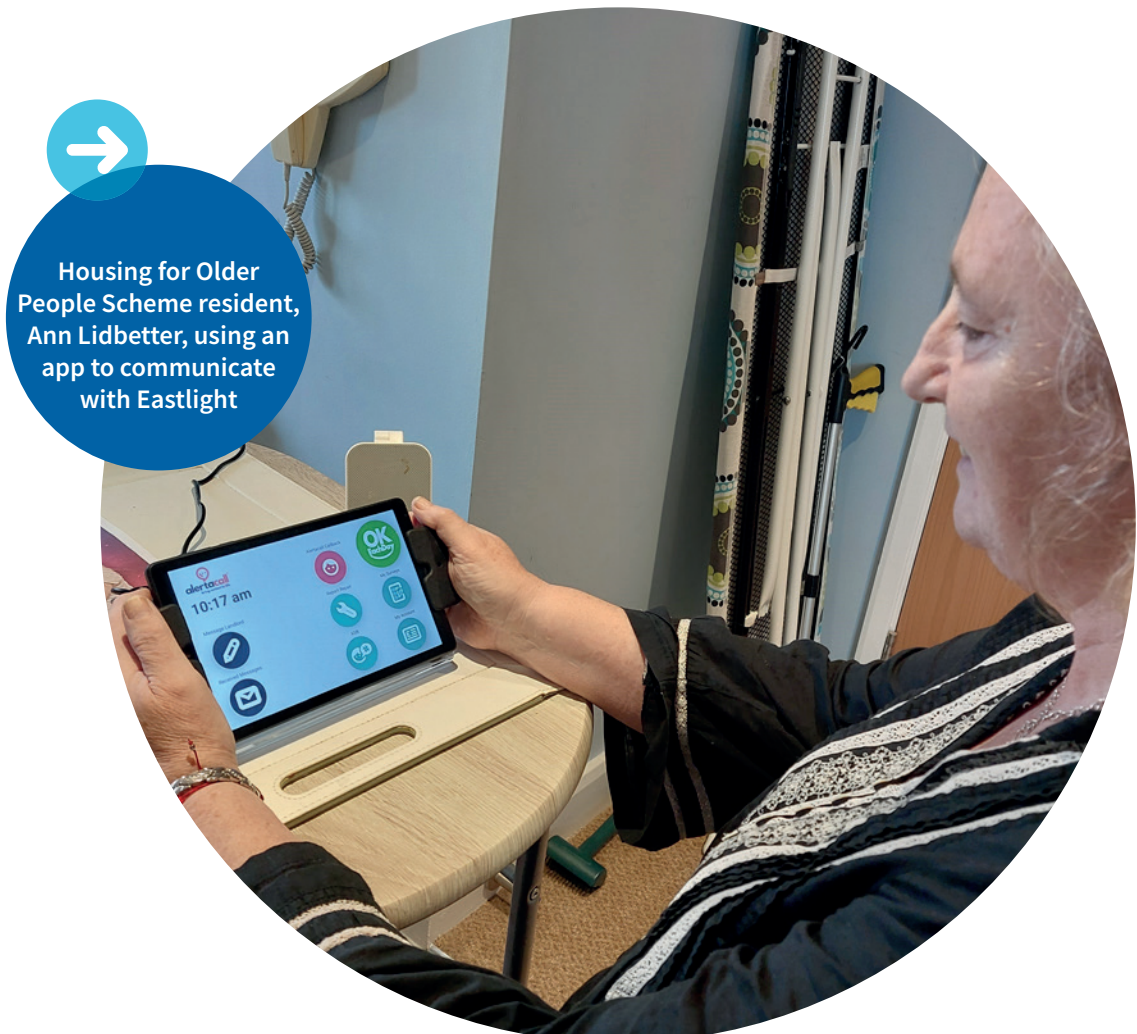
Eastlight homes; and resident Marion Rice

Introduction

To support our core purpose, Eastlight's Corporate Strategy 2024–27 has the following as one of its key principles; *We use data and technology to inform our decision making, our investments and to deliver better customer services.*

The aim of the Technology Strategy is to support the delivery of our Corporate Strategy and provide a set of principles for how we will do that, in a rapidly changing technology environment.

This strategy outlines the approach we will take to meeting our customers', colleagues' and business needs through the delivery and management of our technology products and services. It describes the use of technology; the Data Strategy addresses the use of the data held across those technologies.

Housing for Older People Scheme resident, Ann Lidbetter, using an app to communicate with Eastlight

Objectives of the strategy

Fix the broken customer experience

Customers should be able to communicate and engage with us in the way that suits their needs best. We need to offer a 'front door' to the organisation that allows customers to self-serve if they choose, and to receive and send communications with Eastlight more effectively. Customers should have a seamless experience, whatever their chosen communication route.

Drive digital inclusion of marginalised customers

Customers with additional needs, or who may otherwise be isolated, should be supported in engaging with us. Technology products and services will be designed to support service delivery and communications with customers who might find engaging with Eastlight more challenging.

Address fragmented service delivery

Where our service fails, this is frequently because of how teams work together. We need to give teams the ability to work together more effectively to serve customers.

This requires tools that allows teams to access all the relevant information easily, and to track progress where work is handed off between departments. This will mean we can track customer requests throughout the business, allowing oversight of how we are meeting commitments to customers.

Bring our data together

Currently, much of our data is siloed in separate systems. We will integrate data across key systems like Orchard (Housing), Keystone (Asset) and Connect (Repairs) to create a '360-degree' view of our customers and assets.

This unified view of data will allow better service delivery, better insights and therefore decision-making. Importantly, it allows us to build on our customer segmentation by understanding how customers are engaging with us, allowing us to begin to personalise our services.

Update our aging technology

Aging and end-of-life technologies such as Keystone and Orchard will need to be replaced in a planned and managed way. A more modern and robust architecture will give Eastlight the ability to quickly deliver services and meet the evolving demands of its customers in today's rapidly advancing digital landscape.

Keep our business, customers and colleagues safe and secure

Maintaining system security, and robust recovery processes, is critical in an environment of increasing cyber risk, and Eastlight will maintain a risk-averse approach to cyber security. System design will also support security requirements as well as compliance (for example, with data retention requirements).

Uplift our IT capabilities

Given our scale, risk appetite and the pace of change, we need to consider what we manage ourselves versus what we outsource, in order to optimise our technology spend and manage key risks appropriately. Delivering according to the principles outlined on the following page will require new capabilities.

Drive innovation and efficiency in the business

Eastlight, in many areas, operates manually where tasks can be automated. The Technology Team will actively engage the business to identify where software can eliminate error or automate repetitive tasks, freeing up time and resource.

Support environmental sustainability

While sustainability cuts through the entire business, there are technology opportunities to support both the business and its customers to live more sustainably.

Principles underpinning delivery

Make it easy to use

Focus on what matters to customers, delivered with greatest simplicity. Never forget that the customer is ultimately at the receiving end of all of our technology. 80% functional and simple is normally better than 100% and complicated.

Build in flexibility and scalability

Don't get tied into technology that cannot easily be swapped out – technology evolves, as do customer and business requirements. Similarly, ensure that the technology can scale with growing numbers of customers, colleagues and homes.

Be corporate structure agnositic

Eastlight's Corporate Strategy contains the principle of being 'place-based'. Our systems need to be implemented with flexibility to adapt to changing corporate structures, for instance, to accommodate changes towards geographically-based or functional structures.

Cloud-first approach

We have a preference for Software as a Service (SaaS), rather than owning and managing all systems ourselves. This means that we will outsource management and maintenance of some systems. However, there will remain critical systems that we will always want in-house.
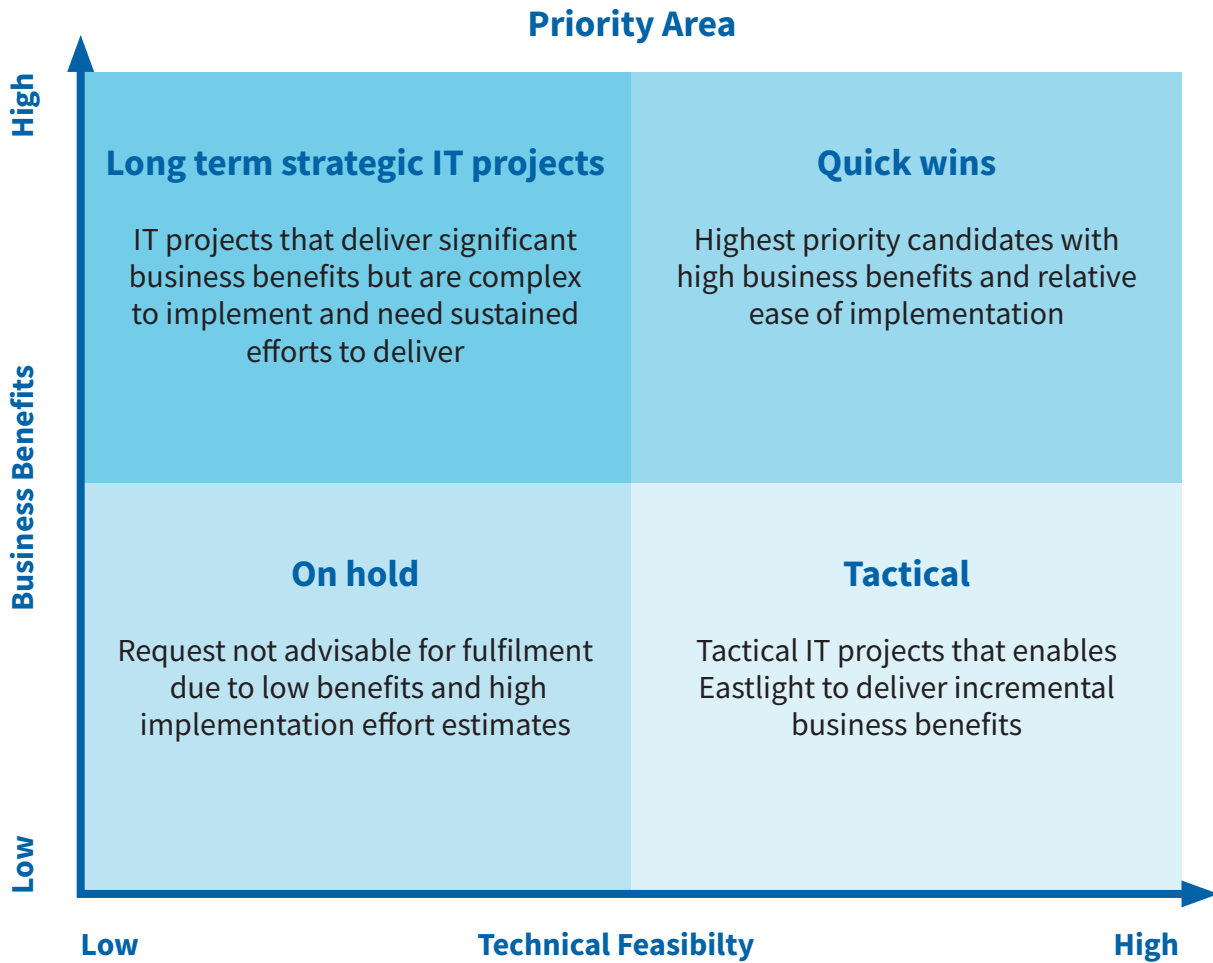
Borrow first, then buy, lastly build

Rather than always solving business requirements with new systems or software, we will use the functionality of systems we already have, where possible. If we have to buy, we have a preference for flexible, open-source technologies.

Use out of the box features

Rather than making bespoke system changes, where possible, we will use what the software provides. This might mean adapting processes, rather than paying to customise systems.

Roadmap

The changes that technology seeks to deliver are being prioritised by looking at the ease or feasibility versus the benefits to the business.

Priority Area

	Technical Feasibilty	
High **Business Benefits**	**Long term strategic IT projects** IT projects that deliver significant business benefits but are complex to implement and need sustained efforts to deliver	**Quick wins** Highest priority candidates with high business benefits and relative ease of implementation
Low	**On hold** Request not advisable for fulfilment due to low benefits and high implementation effort estimates	**Tactical** Tactical IT projects that enables Eastlight to deliver incremental business benefits
	Low	**High**

In order to keep focused on the customer, requirements for technology changes are being captured through the use of user stories. These capture the outcome required for the customers without assuming what the technical solution might be. This has been done to help shape the major initiatives outlined below.

The following key initiatives are being undertaken as priorities in Year 1 of the strategy, with tenders largely being reviewed in Q3 24/25. Delivery (starting Q4) varies by stream from four to 12 months. It should be noted that these initiatives are broad themes tied to our objectives and so further projects will be developed against each.

Fix the broken customer experience

A key focus on developing a self-service portal for customers to manage finding a home, estates management, contact and case management (e.g. complaints, ASB, damp and mould), and payments. This project will also include coordinated customer notifications and communications.

Address fragmented service delivery

This is to deliver a tool (known as robotic process automation) that will better enable us to manage and track packages of work (which are often requests from customers) by linking our various existing systems.

Bring our data together

We aim to build a modern data architecture, and bring all of our data together to deliver a single version of the truth. This will include an enhanced suite of analytical and reporting tools. Critically, this aims to deliver a complete view of the customer – their preferences, transactions and customer service records.

Update our aging technology

The initial focus is on replacing our document management system, followed by the end-of-life asset management system, Keystone.

Uplift our IT capabilities

Having undertaken a review of the Technology Team operating model and capabilities, the technical solutions adopted on the projects above will impact on the capabilities we need to have in-house.

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