The Microsoft Modernisation Mandate: 2026–2027 Strategic Roadmap

Q2 2026
The Legacy Cleanup & The Frontier Launch



2 May 2026. SharePoint 2013 Workflow & Add-in Shutdown
A 'hard' deadline where SharePoint 2013 workflows and Add-ins stop functioning in Microsoft S65: existing processes will immediately break, and workflows will render only as raw ℝML.



KEY_FINDING
4 May 2026: End of CSP Grace Periods
Passive renewals are eliminated; EPB (apprus,) per user, unifying ES security with Agent 365 or moved to an 'Extended Service Term" (EST) which carries a pricing premium of up to 22%.

SUPPORTING_FACT
18 May 2026: InfoPath Publishing Block
Microsoft will block the publication of any new or updated InfoPath forms across all M365 environments in preparation for total retirement.

Q3 2026
The Global Price Pivot & Protocol Cliff



1 July 2026: Global M365 Commercial Price Increase
Global pricing updates take effect across all channels (5% to 39% increase depending on SKU) reflecting added value like the Intune Suite and Security Copilot inclusions.





1 May 2026: M365 E7 & Agent 365 General Availability
M365 E7 becomes Generally Available, introducing Agent 365 and enhanced enhanced security, alongside mandatory adoption for specific enterprise roles.

Q4 2026
The Financial Escalation Window



M365 Pricing Realignment (Effective 1 July 2026)

Imported SBU (No Teams)	New Price (GSU/Estimated)	% Increase	Key Included Capabilities
Office 505 E3	$17.43	14%	Defender for Office Plan 1
Microsoft 365 E3	$30.43	11%	Advanced Intune Suite
Microsoft 365 E3	$31.43	6%	Security Copilot (SCU Allocation)
Windows E3	$7.63	15%	Quick Machine Recovery
Apps for Business	$10.00	21%	Copilot Chat Enhancements

14 July 2026: The '2016' End-of Support Wave
SQL Server 2016, SharePoint Server 2016, and InfoPath Forms Services reach absolute End of Life; no further security patches will be issued.

KEY_FINDING
17–30 September 2026: The 'Silent Killer' Protocol Retirements
Retirement of Service Bus Messaging Protocol (SBMP) and Azure Maps Render V1 APIs will cause immediate connectivity failure for legacy BizTalk 2020 environments and tracking apps.

SUPPORTING_FACT
30 September 2026: Azure Infrastructure Retirements
Azure Virtual Desktop (Classic) and NVv2/NVv4-series VBIs are retired, necessitating a move to ARM-based resources and nawer I3-series instances.

Q1 2027
The Identity & Server Support Cliff



TIMELINE_EVENT
October 2026: Windows 10 ESU & Year 2 Escalation
Commercial costs for Windows 10+, while massive eest vulnerability window.



October 2026: Windows 10 ESU Year 2 Escalation
Commercial costs for Windows 10 Extended Security Updates double (to approx. £122/device), while consumer ESU support espires entirely, creating a massive vulnerability window.



13 October 2026: Office 2021 & Windows 11 24H2 EOS
End of support for Office LTSC 2021 and Windows 11 version 24H2 (Home/Prot, forcing a move to M365 Apps and newer OS feature updates.



10 November 2026: .NET 8 & 9 Dual Support Cliff
Both .NET 8 (LTS) and .NET 9 (STS) reach End of Support simultaneously, mandating a transition transition to .NET 10 for all custom enterprise applications.



Release of the new 2026 Long-Term Servicing Channel oil (LTSC) for Visual Studio, offering a 2-year support lifeccle in preparation for total retirement.



10 November 2026: Visual Studio 2026 LTSC Launch
Release of the new 2026 Long-Term Servicing Channel (LTSC) for Visual Studio, offering a 2-year support lifecycle.



12 January 2027: BizTalk Server 2016 Retirement
BizTalk Server 2016 reaches its final support milestone, organisations must have migrated to BizTalk 2020 or Azure Integration Services.



12 January 2027: Windows Server 2016 Final EOS
The final support 'cliff' for Windows Server 2016; unpatched Domain Controllers and Identity starka represent an existential threat to the enterprise perimeter.



31 March 2027: Unified Security Portal Migration
Final retirement of the classic Log Analytics-based Sentinel portal; all SDC operations must transition to the unified Microsoft Defender security portal.

First Technology Group

Strategic Briefing: The Modernisation Mandate Roadmap (April 2026 – April 2027)

Strategic Overview: The Shift to Agentic Architecture

The enterprise ecosystem is undergoing a fundamental architectural pivot, moving from the "Copilot-assisted" era of individual productivity to an "Agent-driven" operational model. In this new Agentic AI paradigm, autonomous agents are no longer mere features; they are defined as first-class identities capable of executing complex, multi-step workflows with minimal human oversight. This shift mandates a total realignment of enterprise governance, as IT organisations must now secure and manage digital workers with the same rigour applied to human personnel.

Central to this transition is the launch of Microsoft Agent 365 (General Availability: 1 May 2026). Agent 365 serves as the unified control plane for observing and securing every agent across the tenant. Its core governance functions include:

- **Registry:** A centralised inventory of all agents, including those built on Microsoft AI platforms, third-party ecosystem partners, and custom-registered agents.
- **Agents Map:** A visualisation layer to monitor agent-to-agent interactions and ecosystem connectivity, allowing for rapid bottleneck resolution.
- **Agent Analytics:** A performance suite for tracking execution speed, output quality, business impact, and real-time ROI.
- **Life-cycle Management:** Rules-based enforcement for the automatic expiration of inactive agents, flagging ownerless automation, and blocking high-risk behaviours.

This evolution is further signalled by the rebranding of Azure AI Foundry to Microsoft Foundry. The removal of the "Azure" prefix identifies AI models as foundational, cross-ecosystem components integrated natively into Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Crucially, the Entra Agent ID has been established as the definitive mechanism to provide agents with auditable identities, enabling the application of Conditional Access and least-privilege governance at scale.

The Infrastructure Support Cliff: Legacy Decommissioning

The 2026–2027 window represents a terminal support cliff for the 2016-era stack. Architects must prioritise decommissioning these environments to avoid unmitigated security exposure.

Critical Infrastructure End-of-Support (EOS) Deadlines

Product	Deadline	Impact / Risk
SQL Server 2016	14 July 2026	Total cessation of security patches; lacks native vector search for Generative AI.
Windows Server 2012 R2 (ESU Year 3)	13 October 2026	Final termination of all security updates; no further extensions available.
Windows Server 2016	12 January 2027	End of Extended Support; existential risk to Active Directory and identity roles.
Windows Server 2022	13 April 2027	**Mainstream Support Ends**; transition to Extended Support (security only).

The Identity Support Cliff
CIOs must address the existential threat posed by the retirement of Windows Server 2016. As this version remains a common foundation for Domain Controllers and ADFS roles, the cessation of patches leaves the organisation's identity perimeter permanently vulnerable. Any newly discovered vulnerability in the Kerberos or NTLM stacks will remain unmitigated, providing attackers with an un-closable entry point for lateral movement across the internal network.

Microsoft 365: Financial Realignment and the E7 Tier

Effective **1 July 2026**, Microsoft will implement global price increases for commercial suites to reflect the integration of advanced security, management, and AI innovation.

Commercial SKU Impact (Global Price Adjustments):

- **Office 365 E3:** 14% increase.
- **Microsoft 365 E3:** 11% increase.
- **Microsoft 365 E5:** 6% increase.
- **Windows E3:** 15% increase.
- **Apps for Business:** 21% increase.
- **Range:** Specific product increases vary from 5% to 33%.

These price points include significant "Added Value" components, specifically the **Intune Suite** and **Security Copilot**.
Enterprise Architects calculating capacity should note the specific E5 inclusion: **400 Security Compute Units (SCUs) per month per 1,000 users (capped at 10,000 SCUs per month)**.

To simplify AI operationalisation, the **Microsoft 365 E7 Frontier Suite** (GA: 1 May 2026) has been introduced. This premium bundle offers approximately **15% savings** over individual add-ons and includes:

1. **Microsoft 365 E5 Foundation**
2. **Microsoft 365 Copilot**
3. **Microsoft Agent 365**
4. **Microsoft Entra Suite**

Platform Pruning: Legacy Collaboration and Workflow Retirements

Microsoft is enforcing a "hard" retirement of legacy SharePoint components. Failure to migrate to the SharePoint Framework (SPFx) or Power Automate will result in immediate operational failure.

1. **SharePoint Add-ins (2 April 2026):** Add-ins will stop functioning for all existing tenants. Customisations must transition to SPFx.
2. **SharePoint 2013 Workflows (April/July 2026):** Full retirement across all environments. Dependent business processes will break as the underlying infrastructure is removed.
3. **InfoPath 2013 Forms Services (14 July 2026):** Browser-based rendering will cease. **Note: A critical publishing block begins on 18 May 2026**, after which new or updated forms cannot be published to SharePoint Online.

Furthermore, management of **Teams Rooms on Android** must transition to the **Pro Management Portal** in April 2026. Organisations must also migrate from **Office 365 Connectors in Teams** to Power Automate workflows by **30 April 2026** to avoid message delivery failures.

The Intelligent Cloud: AI Model and Azure API Life-cycles

In Microsoft Foundry, AI models now follow a standardised 18-month life-cycle. This ensures the environment remains optimised on the most secure and capable versions:

- **GA Launch:** 18-month support window begins.
- **Deprecation (12 Months):** Model remains available for existing deployments but is hidden from new customers.
- **Retirement (18 Months):** Model is removed from service. Inference requests return a "410 Gone" error.
- **Auto-Upgrade Precedent:** Standard deployments of **GPT-4o** (versions 2024-05-13/08-06) will be automatically upgraded to **GPT-5.1** on 31 March 2026.

Critical Cloud Infrastructure Retirements:

- **Azure Maps Render V1 API (17 September 2026):** Applications must migrate to V2 APIs immediately. On this date, V1 workloads will be deleted, resulting in **total application data loss**.
- **NVv3 and NVv4-series VMs (30 September 2026):** Retirement for Azure Batch pools; migration to newer N-series instances is required to maintain GPU-intensive workloads.

Endpoint Strategy: Windows 11 and the NPU Mandate

The **Windows 11 26H2 (Hudson Valley)** update (October 2026) marks a hardware-dependent shift in endpoint strategy, formalising the **Neural Processing Unit (NPU)** as a requirement for core AI features. For the first time, Task Manager will include dedicated tracking for NPU memory and engine usage.

Architects must recognise a strategic hardware-software convergence: **Windows 11 26H1 (released 10 February 2026)** is specifically designed for **ARM-based devices**. Consequently, the 2026 hardware refresh must prioritise ARM/NPU-native silicon to support the Hudson Valley feature set and offload AI workloads from the CPU.

Developer and Lifecycle Risks:

- **Windows 10 ESU:** Year 1 concludes in late 2026. Remaining on Windows 10 will incur significantly higher Year 2 pricing.
- **.NET Support Cliff:** A high-risk operational collision occurs on **10 November 2026**, as **.NET 8 (LTS)** and **.NET 9 (STS)** reach end-of-life on the same day. This creates a mandatory migration bottleneck to .NET 10.
- **Visual Studio 2017:** Reaches End-of-Support (EOS) on **13 April 2027**.

Security and Identity Governance Consolidation

Security operations are being unified to eliminate "swivel-chair" analysis. The migration of **Microsoft Sentinel** to the **unified Defender security portal** has been extended to **31 March 2027** (from July 2026) to allow for complete SOC transition.

Microsoft Entra (formerly Azure AD) Updates:

- **External Sharing (July 2026):** SharePoint and OneDrive will retire one-time passcode (OTP) sharing. All external collaboration must transition to **Microsoft Entra B2B guest accounts** to ensure centralised governance.

- **SSPR Modernisation (March 2027):** Security questions will be retired as an authentication method for Self-Service Password Reset. Users must be migrated to passkeys or the Microsoft Authenticator app.

Strategic Action Plan: Quarterly Implementation Roadmap

- **Q2 2026 (Apr–Jun):**
  - **Execute Licensing Realignment:** Adopt the **E7 Frontier Suite** to manage autonomous agents.
  - **Conduct Platform Migration:** Finalise **SharePoint Add-in** and **Workflow** transitions before the 2 April deadline.
  - **Enforce Workflow Compliance:** Shift **Office 365 Connectors** to Power Automate by 30 April.
  - **Decommission Legacy Forms:** Block new **InfoPath** publishing by **18 May**.
- **Q3 2026 (Jul–Sep):**
  - **Conduct SKU Rationalisation:** Manage the 1 July price adjustments and ensure **SCU allocations** are utilised.
  - **Decommission SQL Server 2016:** Execute migration to SQL 2022 or Azure SQL before the 14 July cliff.
  - **Mitigate Data Loss Risk:** Complete the **Azure Maps V2** migration by 17 September.
- **Q4 2026 (Oct–Dec):**
  - **Standardise Hardware:** Deploy **Windows 11 26H2** and audit the fleet for **NPU-native silicon**.
  - **Resolve Developer Bottleneck:** Execute the mandatory migration from **.NET 8/9 to .NET 10** before 10 November.
  - **Budget Year 2 ESU:** Account for Windows 10 ESU cost escalation.
- **Q1 2027 (Jan–Apr):**
  - **Mitigate Identity Risk:** Decommission all **Windows Server 2016** domain controllers by 12 January.
  - **Finalise Security Consolidation:** Complete the **Sentinel-to-Defender portal** transition by 31 March.
  - **Modernise Authentication:** Retire **SSPR security questions** and finalise passkey enrolment.