

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Policy and Strategy Committee

Does this report require to be approved?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Ref DM/SL

Date 14/03/24

Programme of Work achievements to date

From Des Murray, Chief Executive

E-mail murraydes@northlan.gov.uk Telephone 01698 302350

Executive Summary

The Plan for North Lanarkshire was established in 2019 with a very clear vision - inclusive growth and prosperity for all to bring equal benefits and a fairer distribution of wealth to all North Lanarkshire's people and communities.

Founded on a place-based approach, The Plan for North Lanarkshire is about enhancing the physical environment of North Lanarkshire in a way that recognises the intrinsic social value gained in doing so and the need to do so by securing a holistic way of working that crosses policy setting and service delivery, that integrates more accessible service systems and solutions, and that targets the growing complexities in the economic, social, and health issues that exist locally.

More importantly, The Plan for North Lanarkshire is about making it real for people, to create (and sustain) the place which local people and communities can identify with - the place where they live, the place where they work, the place where they learn, and the place they care about and wish to protect.

The Programme of Work is the vehicle that is making The Plan for North Lanarkshire real. As such, this latest Programme of Work report - looking back at the foundations that have been built to create the economic, social, and community conditions that are enabling local people and communities (and the place that is North Lanarkshire) to thrive - shows how the *one place one plan one council* approach and ongoing leadership and commitment to the Programme of Work are making a difference:

- New hubs are in place at the heart of local communities to support a much wider offering to people and communities with more direct access to the services they need and access to earlier, more responsive, and more integrated whole family support.
- The range and affordability of homes has been increased through the provision of high-quality housing.
- Environmental enhancements have been delivered to support added benefits to general health and wellbeing, social inclusion, physical and mental health, and public access.
- Transformations to town centres are starting to reshape North Lanarkshire to provide modern, attractive, and multi-use centres fit for local people today and in the future.
- Job creation has been expanded by accelerating and attracting investment to create more and new business opportunities.
- Pathways have been built and skills and knowledge enhanced to smooth the transition to further education, training, or employment.

- This is all supported by more joined up transport links, an enhanced digital infrastructure, and a network of more active travel routes for pedestrians and cyclists, all of which are boosting the local economy and securing improved opportunities and outcomes for employment, education, housing, and leisure, and creating a place where people want to *Live, Learn, Work, Invest, and Visit*.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Policy and Strategy Committee:

- (1) Recognise the key role that the Policy and Strategy Committee play in ensuring the continuing commitment to delivering The Plan for North Lanarkshire through the Programme of Work and ensuring strategic oversight in terms of its ongoing development, co-ordination, and monitoring, and
 - (2) Recognise the extent of the achievements which have been delivered through the Programme of Work to date as set out in Appendix 2.
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The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	All priorities
Ambition statement	All ambition statements
Programme of Work	All Programmes of Work
Programme of Work	Statutory / corporate / service requirement

1. Background

- 1.1 Since The Plan for North Lanarkshire was established in 2019, the vision - for inclusive growth and prosperity for all that brings equal benefits and a fairer distribution of wealth to all North Lanarkshire's people and communities - has provided a clear direction that has been consistently followed in everyday service delivery activities and consistently embedded in strategic and financial decision making, strategy and policy development, and corporate governance approaches across the organisation.
- 1.2 This unwavering approach has been key to enabling the Programme of Work to be the delivery vehicle for The Plan for North Lanarkshire in a way that brings cohesion to strategic planning and community investment and to an integrated *one council one plan* approach that has been instrumental in establishing solid foundations for the place-based approach upon which The Plan is based.
- 1.3 Approvals by the Policy and Strategy Committee, which have seen five iterations of the Programme of Work, have been the catalyst to securing consistency of commitment to the long-term vision and *one plan* direction and, most importantly, to the people and communities of North Lanarkshire. As reported to the Policy and Strategy Committee in March and September 2023, this has led to significant achievements to date that can be evidenced in maximising the potential of North Lanarkshire as a place.
- 1.4 In the face of a fast paced, rapidly changing, and relentlessly uncertain local government environment, the Programme of Work has been instrumental in stabilising the strategic direction of the council, while allowing for appropriate flexibility in the operational delivery of many complex inter-connected programmes, projects, and plans to ensure a dedicated focus on improvement, change, and delivering services that

improve the lives of local people. An annual review process has ensured that the Programme of Work has continued to remain current, relevant, and deliverable.

- 1.5 Approved at Policy and Strategy Committee in March 2023, the latest Programme of Work to 2028 was a change in approach to previous years in that it was reframed within the latest North Lanarkshire context provided by the 28 Health Check Indicators. This new approach was critical to ensure an even greater focus on escalating the pace and depth of change that is essential to ensure a heightened and more strategic focus on not only sustaining the economic and community aspects that will enable local people and communities (and the place that is North Lanarkshire) to thrive, but also on ensuring a more targeted approach to improving social conditions, outcomes, and people's lives.
- 1.6 Traditionally annual Programme of Work updates to Policy and Strategy Committee have covered three related aspects (i.e. (i) looking back at what has been delivered, (ii) providing updated results for the 28 Health Check Indicators to establish the current North Lanarkshire context, and (iii) setting out the Programme of Work for the year ahead). This approach continued in March 2023, albeit separating these three aspects into three individual reports on the agenda for Member's information and due consideration. The approach this year continues with the three individual but inter-related reports; this is the first report in the series of three.
- 1.7 This report herewith therefore looks back at what has been delivered to date, with alignment to the seven Programme of Work priorities for delivery which were approved by the Policy and Strategy Committee in March 2023 in terms of Transforming Places, Invest in North Lanarkshire, Sustainable Futures, Resilient People, Brighter Futures, Digital North Lanarkshire, and One Service. Appendix 1 provides a summary recap in terms of what each of these priorities aims to achieve.

2. Programme of Work achievements to date

- 2.1 As reported to the Policy and Strategy Committee in December 2023, the clear ambitious vision in The Plan for North Lanarkshire was recognised by the Best Value auditors in their new national thematic approach which considered the effectiveness of the leadership of the development of the council's strategic priorities. In this report the auditors noted that the vision has been driven by effective leadership and is supported by a range of performance indicators and performance reporting arrangements.
- 2.2 The report concludes positively on the council's approach to citizen and community engagement and recognises the council's commitment to reducing inequalities and tackling poverty. The report also comments positively on the alignment of strategic and operational delivery plans (with the council's financial, asset, and digital plans), the collaborative working between Elected Members and officers, and the council's approach to self-evaluation which supports continuous improvement.
- 2.3 The extent of this external validation to the *one place one plan one council* approach, and the ongoing leadership and commitment to the Programme of Work, demonstrates the very sound foundations which are now in place across the organisation to support and escalate the pace and depth of change that is critical to realise the successful delivery of the new Programme of Work to 2028.
- 2.4 This is further evidenced by the extent of achievements which have been realised to date through the Programme of Work. Set out in Appendix 2, these demonstrate the extent to which the council has focussed efforts on delivering the priorities approved by the Policy and Strategy Committee in order to improve, change, and deliver services

that improve the lives of local people.

2.5 Appendix 2 demonstrates the extent of these achievements, in summary this means that:

- New hubs are in place at the heart of local communities to support a much wider offering to people and communities with more direct access to the services they need and access to earlier, more responsive, and more integrated whole family support.
- The range and affordability of homes has been increased through the provision of high-quality housing.
- Environmental enhancements have been delivered to support added benefits to general health and wellbeing, social inclusion, physical and mental health, and public access.
- Transformations to town centres are starting to reshape North Lanarkshire to provide modern, attractive, and multi-use centres fit for local people today and in the future.
- Job creation has been expanded by accelerating and attracting investment to create more and new business opportunities.
- Pathways have been built and skills and knowledge enhanced to smooth the transition to further education, training, or employment.
- This is all supported by more joined up transport links, an enhanced digital infrastructure, and a network of more active travel routes for pedestrians and cyclists, all of which are boosting the local economy and securing improved opportunities and outcomes for employment, education, housing, and leisure, and creating a place where people want to *Live, Learn, Work, Invest, and Visit*.

Next steps

2.6 In line with the governance arrangements that have been developed to support progress and performance monitoring of the Programme of Work to 2028 - and the Policy and Strategy Committee's remit to "*oversee the development, co-ordination, and monitoring of The Plan for North Lanarkshire*" and to keep under review such "*programmes as the Committee considers necessary to achieve the council's long-term aims and objectives*" - the Committee will continue to receive an annual report that demonstrates achievements to date. This will be complemented by a six-monthly update providing key delivery highlights in respect of the seven Programme of Work priorities.

3. Measures of success

3.1 Measures of success will be evidenced through progress being made to deliver the Programme of Work and ensure the council's portfolio of programmes, projects, plans, and activities impact positively on the North Lanarkshire context (evidenced through the 28 Health Check Indicators) and thereby achieve the long-term vision of inclusive growth and prosperity for all (as set out in The Plan for North Lanarkshire).

4. Supporting documentation

- Appendix 1: Summary of what the seven Programme of Work priorities aim to achieve (as approved at Policy and Strategy Committee in March 2023).
- Appendix 2: Programme of Work achievements to date.



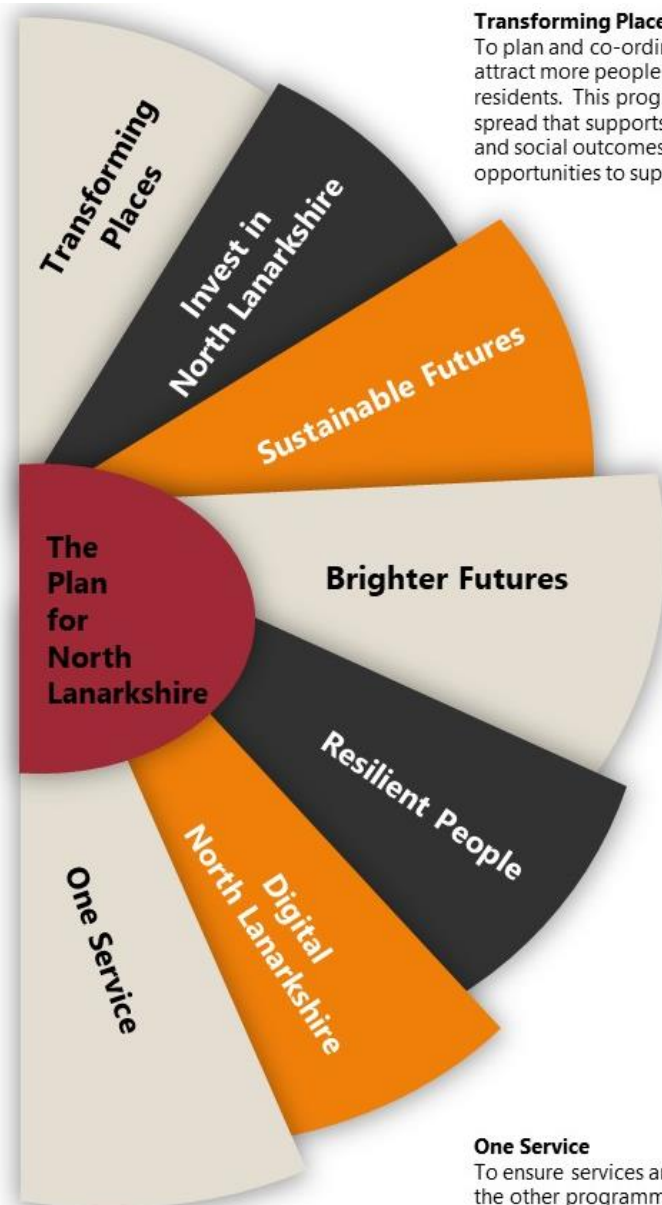
5. Impacts

5.1	<p>Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty</p> <p>Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p>Financial impact</p> <p>Does the report contain any financial impacts?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts have been discussed and agreed with Finance?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
5.3	<p>HR policy impact</p> <p>Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts have been discussed and agreed with People Resources?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p>
5.4	<p>Legal impact</p> <p>Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts have been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic?</p> <p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?</p> <p>The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 introduced the duty of Best Value; this requires that councils "<i>make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in performance</i>".</p>
5.5	<p>Data protection impact</p> <p>Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

5.6	Technology / Digital impact Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? Where the impact identifies a requirement for significant technology change, has an assessment been carried out (or is scheduled to be carried out) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
5.7	Environmental / Carbon impact Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?
5.8	Communications impact Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?
5.9	Risk impact Is there a risk impact? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed? The evidence based strategic planning approach in place through the Programme of Work that is supported by range of performance indicators and performance reporting arrangements contributes to the mitigation of the risks on the Corporate Risk Register for <i>managing strategic change and governance, leadership, and decision making</i> .
5.10	Armed Forces Covenant Duty Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.
5.11	Children's rights and wellbeing impact Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix 1

Programme of Work priorities to 2028



Transforming Places

To plan and co-ordinate public and private sector investment to deliver transformational change across town centres and local communities at pace to attract more people to *live, work, learn, invest, and visit* within North Lanarkshire and to improve economic outcomes and the health and wellbeing of residents. This programme will involve attracting new (and sustaining existing) populations to create sustainable communities and a stable demographic spread that supports economic growth. This will involve enhancing place, greenspace, and housing and integrating services to improve health, wellbeing, and social outcomes, and accelerating investment for job creation. This will involve providing access, physically and digitally, to local and regional opportunities to support business development and survival as well as enable urban and rural families to thrive.

Invest in North Lanarkshire

To support and accelerate investment in North Lanarkshire, and the council's own investment programme, through a collaborative, streamlined, advisory service to help grow and sustain the economy and transform communities. This programme will play a key role in facilitating employment opportunities and the associated infrastructure critical to supporting continued population growth and net inward migration.

Sustainable Futures

To focus commitments to net zero carbon and climate resilience and the associated energy solutions and investments required to make it a reality. This programme will bring essential momentum to the council's commitment to achieve net zero by delivering an integrated approach to carbon reduction through more innovative energy generation and energy efficiency. This will be delivered along with a programme of climate adaptation, in partnership with local communities, to ensure local infrastructure and lifestyles are ready for the impacts already embedded due to climate change.

Brighter Futures

To support and improve educational attainment, employment opportunities, entrepreneurship, and volunteering and prepare young people and the wider community for the future through specialised education, voluntary work, and enterprise. This programme will give them the skills, knowledge, and confidence to successfully transition to further education, training, or employment. This will shape innovative employment pathways and maximise key industry growth sectors to boost economic growth. This will provide opportunities to develop real-world job skills that add value and pathways to specific industries and help to offer choice and inclusive access to jobs and training.

Resilient People

To deliver whole family support locally, when families need it, in a way that addresses the impacts of poverty and reduces inequality. This programme will provide an integrated approach, working with partners, to an earlier and more effective response to need. This includes promoting the strengths and skills of individuals and families, increasing economic activity, and providing practical and emotional support. This will integrate family support with the town and community hubs to maximise opportunities for community-led and strengths-based approaches and ensure families receive the right support when they ask for it and in their own community. This approach will break down referral pathways built around the needs of systems rather than people, which are at best confusing and at worst stigmatising.

Digital North Lanarkshire

To develop a skilled digital workforce, promote an innovative, sustainable culture, and be the digital leader for a transformed North Lanarkshire. This programme will be a key enabler in delivering the other programme of work priorities and driving economic growth as well as transforming the education and abilities of learners of all ages.

One Service

To ensure services are delivered, regardless of owner, in a streamlined, efficient, and supportive model. This programme will be a key enabler in delivering the other programme of work priorities and ensuring the council delivers services (regardless of structures or the alignment of functions) in line with the overall vision of *inclusive growth and prosperity for all*.

Appendix 2

Programme of Work achievements to date

Transforming Places

- (1) £1.3bn of capital investment approved by the Policy and Strategy Committee for delivery in North Lanarkshire (over the five-year period from 2021/22 to 2025/26) has contributed significantly to improving the physical environment of North Lanarkshire's communities and supporting economic regeneration.
- (2) Through the Hub programme, three community hubs were completed in 2023 - Newmains and St Brigid's (February 2023), Riverbank (August 2023), and Chryston (October 2023). Orbiston Community Hub in Bellshill started construction in December 2023 and four are at the design stage (St Kevin's, St Stephen's, and Gartcosh Community Hubs, along with the Chryston High extension). This adds to the 63 new establishments (11 secondary, 36 primary, and 16 family learning centres, including 1140 hours related centres) that have been built since 1996. This demonstrates the significant shift in designing multipurpose Town and Community Hubs that support a much wider integrated service offering in the heart of the local community, bringing education together with other local services, businesses, and partnership organisations.
- (3) The 1,000th new build council home was completed on the site of the Holehills high rise flats in Airdrie in August 2023, which also saw completion of 11 low carbon (net zero) homes which are part of a pilot to deliver sustainable and affordable homes.
- (4) 1,263 new affordable homes have been built through the council's new supply programme since 2010, with a further 347 on site. Additional sites have been identified and approved at committee for a further 1,290 homes across North Lanarkshire, including town centre and phase 1 tower re-provisioning sites. In addition, over 743 homes have been purchased through the council's buy back scheme which, as well as contributing to new supply, helps to prevent homelessness and enable common works to progress in flatted blocks.
- (5) To date 1,246 properties across high rise towers and low-rise blocks have been (or are currently being) demolished to date as part of the phase 1 towers re-provisioning programme (since approved in May 2018). Work is currently on site at Coursington Towers in Motherwell, Gowkthrapple low-rise blocks in Wishaw, and Jackson Court and Shawhead back flats in Coatbridge where a further 4 towers and 30 low-rise blocks are being demolished.
- (6) In May 2023 proposals were approved to consult tenants and stakeholders regarding the second phase of the Tower Strategy re-provisioning which comprises 974 properties, including 8 tower blocks. Following a positive response to the consultation, approval was granted in August 2023 to progress with phase 2 of the re-provisioning programme to create new, high quality, energy efficient housing that will meet the current and future needs of the local area.
- (7) Investment has continued in town centres / edge of town projects, with 58 buildings or vacant sites repurposed or redeveloped since 2018/19. A further 20 town centre properties / sites have been acquired by the council with a view to either converting existing properties to residential developments, building new homes on cleared sites, or upgrading commercial premises. Around 7.7 hectares of vacant and derelict land has been improved or enabled for future industrial use.
- (8) The ten-year Active Travel Strategy (approved in 2021) has put in place - for the first time - a cohesive and holistic framework to prioritise and accelerate active travel interventions across North Lanarkshire. Aligned with the Town Visions and Town and Community Hub developments, these aim to provide better active travel networks between local communities and across the local authority boundary, and deliver improved health and wellbeing as well

as environmental, social inclusion, and public access benefits. A number of major active travel routes for pedestrians and cyclists have been completed in the past year including:

- Between Craigneuk and New College Lanarkshire's Motherwell Campus at Ravenscraig - this includes lighting, seating, CCTV, and tree planting along the route.
- A £1.5m active travel link between Newhouse and Salsburgh - the 3.5km link includes new lighting and improved road drainage.
- A £1.2m active travel link between Wishaw Station and Wishaw General Hospital - the 1km link includes improved street lighting, four traffic signal controlled pedestrian / cycle crossings, and four uncontrolled pedestrian / cycle refuge islands.
- A £2m package of active travel, road safety, and junction capacity improvements along the A73 corridor between the junctions of South Biggar Road / Craigneuk Avenue and Petersburn Road / Brownsburn Road in Airdrie - this includes improved street lighting, three mini-roundabouts, two traffic signal controlled pedestrian / cycle crossings, one uncontrolled pedestrian / cycle refuge island, 450m of new active travel links, new road carriageway and footway surfacing, improved drainage, and enhanced road signs and markings.

- (9) High-level design concepts were created for Town Visions as well as associated Town Prospectuses to inform the future investment strategy for North Lanarkshire's towns and enable town centre action plans to be progressed. Following public consultation, Town Action Plans have now been completed for Airdrie, Motherwell, and Wishaw, and consultation is underway in Kilsyth, Coatbridge, Bellshill, and Shotts. Following the acquisition of Cumbernauld Town Centre in June 2023, work is progressing to develop the future plans for the town centre, including management arrangements for the shopping centre for the interim period.
- (10) £9.225m was secured from the UK Levelling Up Fund to support delivery of the Town Vision for Cumbernauld, including the acquisition of The Centre Cumbernauld. More recently, £20m (over 10 years) has been awarded for Coatbridge Town Centre from the UK Government's Town Fund to support the delivery of the Town Action Plan.
- (11) A £1.6m redevelopment project in Motherwell town centre has seen work to completely re-roof, re-render, re-wire, and refurbish the Motherwell Library building. This investment has enabled the creation of an inclusive and welcoming library space on the ground floor offering a larger space for children and young people, more areas to meet, an accessible care area, and a fresh and welcoming new look and feel. The investment has also helped to create an inclusive digital hub on the first floor that is accessible to local community groups, businesses, schools, and individuals - a space that encourages innovation and effective learning experiences and supports basic to advanced digital skills development.
- (12) An initial award was secured from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for consultation, feasibility studies, and research into a multi-million-pound development project at Summerlee Museum of Scottish Industrial Life in Coatbridge and the Rediscovering Airdrie heritage project. This will hopefully lead to subsequent funding awards to significantly expand and enhance the visitor experiences and attractions on offer at Summerlee, and support the repurposing and refurbishment of heritage buildings within Airdrie town centre.
- (13) £6.5m investment has commenced at Braidhurst Industrial Estate in Motherwell (part funded from the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund) to improve and expand available business space and upgrade the surrounding environment to help create more employment opportunities.
- (14) City Deal investment has seen the completion of two North Lanarkshire infrastructure projects - Glenboig Link Road in 2018 and (more recently) Motherwell Town Centre Interchange improvement works at Motherwell Station. The West Coast main line crossing has also been completed as part of the Ravenscraig Infrastructure Access improvements, and work is at various stages of progression on the remaining projects (Orchard Farm

roundabout A8, Ravenscraig Infrastructure Access North and South, East Airdrie Link Road, and Eurocentral Strategic Active Travel). This investment has started to realise significant changes in North Lanarkshire through improved regional infrastructure, further partnership working, and more joined up transport links. This has helped to connect local communities to new housing, business investment, and employment opportunities as well as access to leisure, and health and wellbeing activities.

Invest in North Lanarkshire

- (15) A pilot project for an Invest in North Lanarkshire advisory service was established in September 2023 to explore the potential to further support development and investment in North Lanarkshire. The pilot project brought together a core team from key services across the council with a diverse range of skills and experience to create a collaborative and responsive environment that can help support investment in North Lanarkshire. The pilot team met once a week between late September and mid-December, with a total of seven projects coming into scope. The service provides bespoke advice to developer identified matters they should take into consideration when developing their planning application and seeking statutory consents from the council. By providing this advice at an early stage in the process this should result in better quality development and a more streamlined process for obtaining statutory consents, thus accelerating investment in North Lanarkshire.
- (16) Over the last two years, North Lanarkshire has attracted more international investment than any other local authority in Scotland bringing new jobs, investment, and supply chain opportunities to the area. The strong industrial profile and sizeable property market has drawn international investors to the region, with 11 property transactions completed to the value of £101.7m since 2021. This investment has seen more than 1,135,036 square feet of industrial space sold, with Motherwell, Coatbridge, and Cumbernauld providing the most attractive locations. This underpins North Lanarkshire's central position in Scotland as an attractive place for business and property investors on the global scale, and highlights the key successes being realised through the range of infrastructure investments in the Programme of Work.
- (17) The attractiveness of North Lanarkshire to inward investors can also be demonstrated through recent figures which show that North Lanarkshire is essentially the most productive local authority within the Glasgow City Region with a gross value added of £37.20 per hour worked. This is higher than the Glasgow City Region average (£34.40) and also the Scottish average (£36.60). Gross value added per hour worked is considered a measure of productivity at a sub-regional level that accounts for different working hours across regions.

Brighter Futures

- (18) The North Lanarkshire Employer Charter was launched in 2023 to offer recognition from the council to local employers and to encourage others to look at becoming members. It is based around four commitments by employers - to pay all staff the Real Living Wage, employ North Lanarkshire residents, use local businesses in the supply chain where possible, and ensure fair work practices which attract and retain employees. Businesses which achieve two or more of these commitments receive a bronze, silver, or gold accreditation. Membership of the Charter is free.
- To date 32 businesses have become accredited members of the Charter with 8 achieving a gold award, 14 silver, and 10 bronze. The council is currently working with those who have not achieved the highest level to support them towards the next level, with accreditations being reviewed annually.
 - 42 other employers have registered interest in becoming an accredited member and the initial evidence gathering process is in place to support these applications.
 - As a result of accreditations, businesses have been working with the council to ensure future vacancies are available to Routes to Work clients. Many have also identified they are keen to engage with local schools as, prior to becoming involved in the Charter, they

were unsure how to get involved in this activity or the benefits that could be provided.

- (19) During 2022/23, 15 young people were employed as part of the Young Person's Guarantee (a paid employment opportunity for those aged 16-24 years old to work across community learning and development). Other work in this area of service led to a total of 44 SQAs achieved (in IT, numeracy, residential experience, first steps to youth work, and first steps to family learning) and a total of 85 qualifications achieved (including autism awareness, Solihull (developing family resilience), Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) food hygiene, first aid, and the Mountain Leader award).
- (20) The council established the Volunteer NL project in May 2023 with support from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. Aimed at building capacity in the council and community groups through volunteering and broader support in terms of active participation, the project has seen success in terms of a number of key outcomes:
- Achieving Chartered Status with Volunteer Scotland. The Volunteer Charter sets out the ten key principles which help to underpin good relations within a volunteering environment.
 - Procuring and developing a new volunteer management system, which holds all volunteer details and provides a one stop shop for volunteer information in the council.
 - Establishing a baseline of volunteers with details of training need and deliverables, this supports projects with specific need that are keen to tap into trained and skilled volunteers.
 - Providing training to a number of groups (internal and external) to support volunteering pathway development.
- (21) Through the Entrepreneurship workstream a series of key developments have taken place during 2023/24 to create and support an inclusive entrepreneurial culture in North Lanarkshire. This includes the following:
- *Business Start-Up Fund* - This is one of a range of business grant funding programmes re-launched by the council which is part-funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The purpose of this fund is to provide grant funding to help pre-start businesses with a robust and viable business idea to start trading earlier than would otherwise be possible. This offers funding for essential business purchases such as IT equipment, infrastructure, website design, and stock costs and the structure of the fund has been devised to reflect the higher start-up costs associated with businesses operating from commercial premises and/or with employees. It also aims to encourage new start businesses to grow their operation earlier. 14 grants have been approved to date.
 - *Launch of the Hive* - A new hub has been established over 2 floors within One Wellwynd in Airdrie to encourage and support more women to get started and grow successful businesses by providing a mixture of desks, offices / meeting rooms, treatment rooms, on-site business advice and support, and events and networking opportunities. Use of the workspace is completely free until August 2024 and the space is available 24/7 to suit business needs. The Hive was launched in February 2024 and is part-funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Scottish Government's Pathways Pre-Start Fund.
 - *Enterprise Pathway Model* - This new model was launched in schools in September 2023 to support young people to develop entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, and to support them to turn innovative ideas into a business reality. The pathway aims to encourage young people to discover opportunities within the start-up sector and understand the mechanics of running a business so that entrepreneurship is viewed as a viable career choice. The approach will see children and young people develop an understanding of enterprise, entrepreneurship, and self-employment as a career opportunity, starting with young children in early years through to S6.
 - *Dragons' Lair* - Three enterprising pupils from Coltness High School won this year's Dragons' Lair competition at the finals held in November 2023 after pitching their business idea to four industry experts. 15 North Lanarkshire secondary schools entered the annual competition which was open to all S3 pupils and aimed to introduce young people to the world of business and a possible career path they may not have previously considered.

21 teams across the 15 schools submitted business plans which were scored by Business Gateway Lanarkshire advisers and pitched to a panel of dragons who were local business owners who brought a great deal of business knowledge and experience to proceedings.

- *Social enterprise support* - Launched in October 2023, this 18-month programme (part-funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund) aims to support more people to set up social enterprises and to support existing social enterprises to grow. The activities being delivered directly support delivery of the council's Social Enterprise Framework and Action Plan. As part of the support available, one accelerator with 15 social enterprises attending has completed and a second with a further 15 social enterprises is underway. The accelerators cover a range of key topics with specialist consultants to guide the development and growth of social enterprise.
 - *Targeted entrepreneurial support for Black, Asian, and other Minority Ethnic people* - Following a tender award in January 2024 to provide targeted entrepreneurial support to Black, Asian, and other Minority Ethnic people and groups, a range of support packages are underway to enable the creation of 75 new businesses and support the growth of existing business in this respect.
 - *Enterprising Schools Award* - Launched to recognise the work being undertaken by schools to promote the value of enterprise activity, this allows for good practice to share with other schools and signposting onto partners to enhance the enterprise offer going forward. To date 35 primary, secondary, and additional support needs schools have achieved this award.
- (22) Supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, NL Academies have 10 projects underway to support North Lanarkshire residents with upskilling opportunities linked to gaining employment, further education, or training. This includes:
- A Built Environment Academy (a low carbon learning programme in partnership with BE-ST (Built Environment - Smarter Transformation) - This has commenced with the first phase of learning completing in October 2023. Over 70 pupils who are carrying out a Foundation Apprenticeship in Construction, and candidates from supported employment, attended phase 1 of the programme.
 - SP Energy Networks (SPEN) and council academy project - Within this area, SPEN identified significant skills gaps within the *jointing* and *civils* areas of engineering which have the potential to impact upon their supply chain and hinder delivery of future programmes of work within (and outwith) North Lanarkshire. This project aims to match underemployed people to jobs within the engineering sector by providing individuals with a fully funded education and training programme. Candidate numbers have been identified and agreed by SPEN, course content developed, potential candidates identified from various sources for a targeted recruitment process, and communications prepared to publicise the opportunity when it goes live in April 2024.
 - Upskilling opportunities for refugees and veterans are being mobilised with a delivery partner sourced to develop future opportunities and identify candidates.
- (23) The expanded pan-Lanarkshire Care Academy is now fully mobilised with a memorandum of understanding in place between North and South Lanarkshire Council and NHS Lanarkshire. The vision is to develop a robust, sustained, vibrant Care Academy attracting and developing a diverse workforce for health and care services in Lanarkshire and promoting the sector as a rewarding choice for careers. This aims to create the health and social care workforce for the future that best services the needs of people living in Lanarkshire. It also aims to help address deprivation and inequalities by helping people live their lives to the fullest, providing pathways to fair work and meaningful employment, and ensure progression across the breadth of health and social care. Building a strong talent pipeline to meet future demand and reduce skills shortages will improve the resilience and sustainability of the health and social care sector across Lanarkshire.
- (24) A Digital Youth Academy project has been developed ready for roll out in April 2024. This involves two four-week-long bootcamps for young people (aged 16-24 years old) that also cover skills such as problem solving, cv building, and preparing for interviews. This

programme will support candidates onto a positive destination of either college or university, or into an apprenticeship.

- A *tech primer* bootcamp will cover an introduction to programming, data management, network infrastructure, cloud computing, IT service requests, technical skills, and an introduction to cyber security.
- The *digital and business skills* bootcamp will include training on office systems, digital marketing, creative content skills, web skills, and pc passport.

- (25) Industry led sector boards are in the process of being commissioned and supported within each NL Academy area (i.e. Built Environment, Health and Social Care, and Digital). The Built Environment Sector Board is now well established and has met on a regular monthly cycle through late 2023 and in early 2024. Led by the industry, this Board has strong representation and participation from key businesses within the sector who are working in North Lanarkshire. The Board has developed a clear statement of intent to drive future collaborative efforts between industry and the local authority to deliver the development of a skilled workforce to meet the needs of a rapidly growing built environment industry.
- (26) The Curriculum Content Creation Toolkit was launched during the school session 2022/23 as a key part of the curriculum re-design action plan in order to leverage change and improvement. In this first cycle an initial set of four training sessions was delivered, each containing a spotlight on success and an opportunity to discuss and share thought and practice. The themes for each session were designed to tie in with the overarching rationale in the council's curriculum. Feedback on these sessions was very positive and has led to further roll out during the 2023/24 school session and development of a five-year action plan for curriculum re-design.
- (27) Progression pathways in literacy, numeracy, and digital learning were developed from early to third level during the school session 2022/23. These pathways were designed to support progression within, and across, Curriculum for Excellence levels, ensuring learners benefit from cohesive and progressive learning pathways that support knowledge and skills development and improve outcomes. A full literature review of the active literacy programme is currently being carried out by the Robert Owen Centre, and the findings from this will inform future revisions to the programme.
- (28) Science, Technologies, Engineering, and Maths (STEM) support continues to be provided for schools across North Lanarkshire. Three secondary schools and 23 primary schools participated in the Scottish Schools Educational Research Centre (SSERC) primary cluster programme with a Mentor nominated for each school. This has led to a STEM leaders programme being developed to support teachers co-ordinating STEM within their setting, and the Young STEM Leader Award being piloted for the Future Fridays Leadership Academy. Closer partnership working with the literacy, numeracy and learning, teaching and assessment Education Support Officers has taken place to ensure that STEM support and training consistently reflects key messages about highly effective practice in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- (29) An updated Developing the Young Workforce Delivery Plan for 2022/25 sets out the universal entitlements and additional and intensive supports available to North Lanarkshire's children and young people. Ambitious improvement targets were identified which include school leaver destinations, the pathways programme for winter and summer leavers, Future Fridays, and Vocational Education for which activities are being progressed during the 2023/24 school session that include:
- The pathways programme, which has continued to evolve to support young people at risk of disengaging from education, entering a negative post school destination, or long-term unemployment and the many associated challenges. In total, 141 young people enrolled on the programme during 2022/23 with 16 returning to school within the first six weeks of the programme. Of the 125 young people who sustained engagement in the programme, 96% have since entered a positive post school destination.

- A blended summer leaver model, which was delivered between January and June 2023 for S4 pupils for those pupils identified as being unable to sustain school on a full-time basis, not attend school at all, or being most likely to leave school with no or few national qualifications and move into a negative post school destination. Working closely with secondary schools allowed young people to work towards national qualifications while also participating in personal development, employability activity, and work-based learning opportunities. Feedback and self-evaluation indicated that this model has been of benefit, and it has since been incorporated into the pathways evolved delivery model for 2023/24.

Sustainable Futures

- (30) £7.8m investment in local nature reserves, country parks, and key greenspace sites has created places where visitors are more active, share better experiences, and stay longer. Such investment has provided opportunities for improvements in physical and mental health, environmental education, outdoor education, and heritage appreciation. Recent improvements include Bellshill-Gateway cycle facilities in Strathclyde Country Park, an improved path and natural play trail network at Palacerigg, improved parking and visitor interpretation at Drumpellier Country Park, peatland restoration at greenspace sites in Cumbernauld, path upgrades at Broadwood Loch, and investment in tree planting and wildflower planting across community greenspaces. Dumbreck Local Nature Reserve received National Lottery Heritage funding in 2023 which enabled the appointment of a project officer to take forward site enhancement and skills development work with the local community.
- (31) The fifth edition of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan was approved in 2023 to ensure continued conservation and enhancement of the habitats and species that contribute to the unique character and heritage of North Lanarkshire while also contributing to the target to halt the current nature emergency. Actions within the plan, contributing to the international target of protecting 30% of the earth's land and oceans by 2030, will continue to be delivered at a local and landscape scale by council and partners to 2027 and beyond.
- (32) A range of council initiatives have been initiated to help businesses trade in a more environmental and sustainable way to aid their growth and improve the sustainability of their operations. This has supported 11 businesses to help them transition to a zero-carbon economic model and facilitate sustainable change and growth. The Expert Help Framework has also provided net zero and low carbon consultancy advice to three other businesses. A Net Zero Business Challenge Fund has been launched to enable small to medium sized enterprises bid for funding in order to reduce emissions and/or make their operations more sustainable.
- (33) A strategic flood risk assessment is being progressed to assist in the prioritisation of flood management activity throughout North Lanarkshire and delivery of the actions continue from the Clyde and Loch Lomond Local Flood Risk Management Plan. Flooding from fluvial and surface water sources are now better understood following the completion of flood studies and surface water management plans in respect of fluvial flood risk within various areas of North Lanarkshire (i.e. Airdrie, Coatbridge, Cumbernauld, and Motherwell). Subsequent phase 2 studies are underway to further investigate the root cause and potential solutions to manage flood risk.
- (34) The council was successful in gaining £4.5m from the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning, and Transport (ADEPT) on behalf of the Department for Transport. This is part of the Live Labs 2: Decarbonising Local Roads in the UK programme, which will run for three years in partnership with the Transport for West Midlands, Amey, and Colas in what is an £8.5m joint programme to deliver the Centre of Excellence for Decarbonising Roads split over a north and south campus. Initial steps have commenced on seeking out the most promising innovative materials from across the globe for assessment

and it is expected that the first innovations will be trialled in a live environment at the start of 2024. A key aim of the programme is to reduce carbon within a road's environment and the carbon baseline for North Lanarkshire has been completed.

- (35) A Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) was approved in December 2023 to provide a framework for taking an area-based approach to heat and energy efficiency planning and delivery (i.e. it does not include wider energy planning). The framework aims to set out how each segment of the building stock needs to change to meet national objectives, including achieving zero greenhouse gas emissions in the building sector, and the removal of poor energy efficiency as a driver of fuel poverty. It will also identify areas where there is potential for heat networks and set out the primary measures for reducing emissions, and prioritise areas for delivery, against national and local priorities.
- (36) Since 2021/22 the council have been awarded over £2.5m by the Social Housing Net Zero Fund (SHNZF) to supplement the programme budget and improve the energy efficiency of the council's BISF (British Iron and Steel Federation) non-traditional type properties. These properties have low energy efficiency with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of E and tenants have advised that the properties were draughty and hard to heat. Thanks to the SHNZF funding and the council's own investment, these properties were able to have external wall insulation and PV panels installed, which improved the EPC ratings of these properties to a band B and made them more comfortable for tenants.

Resilient People

- (37) An inspection of partnership support services in North Lanarkshire has resulted in a highly encouraging report for the positive difference made to the lives of children and young people at risk of harm. The inspection evaluated the services as *very good* following engagement with children, young people, parents, carers, Elected Members, and staff, as well as a review of cases and a staff survey. A key conclusion highlighted that integrated, collaborative support from a range of dedicated agencies was a clear strength in early intervention for children and young people at risk of harm. As part of the inspection, successful projects were highlighted including the virtual school which delivers bespoke services for care-experienced children and young people and has achieved vastly improved attainment and a marked reduction in school exclusions, and the Today Not Tomorrow group which has significantly influenced positive change in North Lanarkshire's care system.
- (38) Earlier in 2024, North Lanarkshire was the first local authority in Scotland to be recognised for its comprehensive and sustained efforts to support and increase breastfeeding. The council has achieved gold status in the first-ever Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland Local Authority Award, recognising its commitment to supporting breastfeeding in the workplace and wider community. It is hoped that a range of measures implemented over the last three years have contributed to a marked increase in breastfeeding rates across the region, with 30.4% of babies now being breastfed by their 6-8 week review.

The council has worked collaboratively with the Scottish Government and NHS Lanarkshire to develop the new evidence-based accreditation process aimed specifically at local authorities in Scotland. A wide range of council services have incorporated breastfeeding into their delivery in order to positively impact on culture and practice in a way that promotes long-term progress in breastfeeding. Changes in this respect have included:

- Significantly improved employer support through the introduction of a corporate breastfeeding policy with workplaces set up for women to continue to breastfeed / express in a private room if required, with refrigeration facilities when returning to work.
- Establishing nine community breastfeeding champions of mixed gender, who work with health colleagues in communities to promote and support breastfeeding.
- All early year's establishments achieving Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland early learning and childcare award and 80% of all school establishments achieved Breastfeeding Friendly Schools award. This includes NHS breastfeeding awareness training, embedding

breastfeeding in the curriculum and play environments in nurseries, and a redesign of early years to promote an environment where breastfeeding is seen as the biological norm for feeding infants and young children.

- All new-build facilities, including community hubs, having breastfeeding facilities designed in at the planning stage.
- Foster carers completing NHS training on responsive feeding and financial support and social work staff trained on infant nutrition and benefits of breastfeeding.
- Libraries, leisure, and sport facilities provide a warm welcome space and facilities for breastfeeding on site.
- Road signage, public buildings, and fleet vehicles have Breastfeeding Friendly Scotland signage in place.

(39) Following a consultation exercise, the North Lanarkshire Children's Service Plan was developed for 2023 to 2026. This sets out the shared priorities of the Children's Services Partnership that will provide a focus for activities so that collaborative efforts ensure children have the best start in life and are supported to fulfil their potential. The delivery of the Children's Services Plan centres on community hubs and school clusters where partnership staff work together with children, young people, and families. Delivery is supported by strength and relationship-based practices (that see a child or young person holistically, and identifies their strengths and assets and the positive factors in their lives) and a trauma informed approach in order to ensure that children, young people, and families are safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included.

(40) The new Towards a Fairer North Lanarkshire Tackling Poverty Strategy for 2023 to 2026 was approved in September 2023 along with the 2023 Local Child Poverty Action Report with associated Action Plans. This sets out the ambition to continue to tackle poverty and child poverty and builds on actions and positive foundations achieved through the previous strategy. The new Strategy:

- Is focused on the key drivers of poverty (increasing income via employment, maximising income via social security benefits, reducing the cost of living, and holistic supports). It sets out an integrated approach to co-ordinating resources across the council (and with partners) to support effective delivery and ensure fairer outcomes for all local people can be achieved and sustained.
- Is a key component of the Programme of Work to 2028 through its intentions to promote the strengths and skills of individuals and families, increase economic activity, and provide practical and holistic support (intervening upstream wherever possible to prevent the longer-term harms associated with poverty).
- Is supported by the latest Local Child Poverty Action report which sets out the commitment of the council and NHS Lanarkshire to tackle child poverty across North Lanarkshire's communities. Embedded within the Tackling Poverty Strategy, this means that the partnership approach recognises the importance of holistic supports and the need to ensure that people and families do not exist in silos where they can often be unaware of the kinds of support that are available through multiple delivery channels. A focus on holistic support to tackling poverty embeds the *no wrong door* approach to ensure that those in poverty, and those at risk of falling into poverty, receive the right support at the right time.

(41) The main focus of the council's welfare rights work is to support income maximisation through provision of direct advice and support for claims, consultation and guidance for fieldwork staff, representing clients at tribunals and hearings, and supporting specialist social work services. Successful welfare rights interventions (where individuals are awarded extra benefit) frequently means that, as a result of increased income, they are better able to manage their own affairs and may not require further social work services. Successful outcomes in terms of income maximisation therefore play a vital role across social work services including those for adults, children and families, justice services, mental health, and addictions as well as supporting associated health inequalities, housing sustainability, and community wellbeing, and bringing further income into the local economy. During 2022/23:

- Council activities generated £35.4m in additional benefit income for the residents of North Lanarkshire.
 - Activity of the external services commissioned by the council under the new commissioning model generated £5.2m in additional benefit income for the residents of North Lanarkshire.
 - In cost / benefit terms, for every £1 invested by the council in income maximisation in 2022/23, this generated £27.81 for local residents and the local economy.
 - Advice surgeries within 4 GP practices across North Lanarkshire have provided welfare rights support to patients referred by the practice. The project has proven to be successful since its inception 18 months ago, generating £1.18m. Outreach surgeries are held monthly in Harthill and since June 2023 in Newmains and St Brigid's Community Hub.
- (42) A number of focus sessions have been held to highlight / raise awareness of community wealth building (a people-centred approach to local economic development, which aims to redirect wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people) and the role of anchor organisations in this respect. 61 delegates participated in the session from local public and voluntary sector agencies, as well as Community Boards and representatives from the business community. The event kicked off the start of activity for a shared approach to community wealth building across North Lanarkshire and through a common understanding of what it means and what work will contribute to its success. A community wealth building statement is under development to be embedded across policy and strategy development areas, and ensure that decision making and practice is developed through a community wealth building lens.
- (43) Progress through the Programme of Work to date continues to be built upon in respect of work to Keep the Promise in the areas of care and family support. The number of care leavers has more than doubled, support is being provided through an After Care Hub, and a responsive and bespoke counselling service has been commissioned for care leavers which is already supporting more than 40 young people. A website (design with local young people) is under development to provide access to information and support. Trauma informed contextual safeguarding continues to be embedded in the approach to addressing extra-familial harm; this was an area of best practice highlighted within recent inspection reports which is being expanding through a current pilot project with two secondary schools. In parallel, a successful bid to Corra's Promise Partnership Fund has been designed and made to support the launch of a peer mentoring service for young people in conflict with the law.
- (44) Following a consultation exercise, the North Lanarkshire Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plan was developed for 2023 to 2028. This sets out the shared priorities of the Community Justice Partnership in planning and delivering community justice services in a way that meets the needs of individuals and local communities, prevents and reduces the risk of further offending, and makes North Lanarkshire safer. To achieve this the approach to delivery includes making the appropriate connections with people with lived experience of the justice system, their families, victims, local communities, third sector colleagues and stakeholders to listen and learn from their views and opinions.
- (45) Following a recent inspection by Education Scotland, the council's community learning and development service has received a positive report that recognises the strong leadership of community learning and development in North Lanarkshire, as well as a clear vision for improvement and alignment to the Programme of Work. It was also noted that the priorities in the community learning and development plan for 2021-24 reflect the council's ambitions for its people and communities, i.e. reducing barriers to participation, engaging children, young people, and their families in reaching their potential, and improving health and wellbeing. The extent of effective partnership working was also recognised in respect of leading to improved co-ordination of services and reduced duplication. Two areas of good practice were identified - these relate to close working relationships between community learning and development and social work staff which was leading to improved safeguarding outcomes for children and young people, and a well-embedded approach to accreditation

and to *growing your own* to ensure that barriers to learners accessing training and employment were removed.

- (46) Over 7,700 children, young people, and adults were directly involved in community learning and development provision provided by the council in 2022/23. More than 1,000 young people have gained accreditations that have included the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Youth Achievement Award, Dynamic Youth Award, and the North Lanarkshire Challenge.
- (47) A multi-disciplinary team of community learning and development, housing, and social work officers have enabled and supported the resettlement of more than 500 Ukrainian Displaced Persons in North Lanarkshire, in collaboration with internal and external partners. In particular, supporting those accommodated through the Towers Project (funded by the Scottish Government) which created capacity to accommodate 200 Ukrainian households within a rapid timescale. Strong support for integration has seen new arrivals quickly develop strong support networks and make a contribution to the local community with many now also finding employment and boosting capacity in priority sectors. At the same time the team has continued to support those previously settled through other programmes as well as young people arriving through the National Transfer Scheme.

Digital North Lanarkshire

- (48) Implementation of the Connectivity contract is already assisting the transformation of the area's digital infrastructure to help ensure that 85% of homes across North Lanarkshire will have access to gigabit capable broadband earlier than planned. Commsworld are in place and building a full fibre backbone that traverses all North Lanarkshire's towns and many villages. To date 340 kilometres of ultrafast, full fibre digital network has been laid to support the delivery of an ultrafast digital network across North Lanarkshire. Benefits of this new digital network include:
- New web filtering provisions and a boost to school internet bandwidth via upgrades for primary school bandwidth to 1Gb and secondary schools to 5Gb with a second resilient 5Gb connection for secondary schools.
 - Providing the capacity to support a free public Wi-Fi network across town centres, libraries, schools, leisure, and community centres.
 - Enhancing the coverage and reach of gigabit-capable fibre networks to businesses, private, and council-owned social housing.
 - Attracting inward investment to local communities from a range of business sectors resulting in increased access to employment, health, and leisure opportunities.
- (49) Advancements in digital technologies across the council and the establishment of digital as a channel for interacting with service users, residents, and businesses has continued to enable the delivery of seamless services and self-serve channels that better meet local needs and expectations, while reducing manual handling for staff and increasing their capacity to provide more help and support for those who need it the most. Processes implemented in this respect have included:
- Reporting an issue in terms of household waste issue (10 options), missed bin pullouts, communal bins, special uplifts, recycling centres, booking a van or trailer into a recycling centre, requesting an additional bin collection, requesting a pull-out service, and requesting a simplified collection service.
 - Development work to support implementation of Covid business grants for the discretionary fund, taxi operators, and taxi drivers.
 - Online processes to allow local people to apply for a business waste collection (including online payment), report an issue with debris or an obstruction, as well as trees, street cleaning, grass, graffiti, overgrown shrubs / bushes or to request the removal of broken glass or a syringe.
 - Online services in respect of housing field services repairs scheduling, business waste, ordering and paying for a grey/recycling/food bin, booking and paying for a special uplift, cancelling special uplifts online with automatic routing to the refunds team, rents

online, debt advice, and waste special uplifts.

- (50) The mass migration of over 4,825 users (employees and Elected Members) was completed to Microsoft 365 during the pandemic. Staff across the council are now using its associated components (Teams, OneDrive, SharePoint) and a range of modern office productivity tools to enhance everyday working practices and gain efficiencies in productivity and improvements in ways of collaborating. One of the key modern office tools that is now operational is the Business Intelligence Hub which is facilitating a significant move away from data collection to data management and analysis that adds value and supports decision making and the identification of areas for improvement. The development of the Business Intelligence Hub aligns closely to the continued development of the Data Custodian model across the organisation and the recently agreed Data Quality Framework which is currently being rolled out. Business Intelligence Hub expertise within service areas continues to develop and embed.
- (51) Three possible locations have been identified as suitable locations for new Immersive Experience Rooms. This follows work to further develop the proof of concept at Muirfield in terms of its use and accessibility for a range of establishments and third parties. Procurement is now complete, and a supplier is ready to commence install.
- This follows on from the success of the first 5G-enabled immersive classroom in Scotland which went live at Muirfield Community Centre in Cumbernauld. This saw a room transformed into an exciting and engaging learning environment to give children, young people, and wider community users a 360-degree digital experience. Users experience what it's like to be in outer space, under the ocean, on a World War 1 battlefield, or even on top of Everest thanks to this learning initiative which was the first of its kind in the UK.
 - More recently, Motherwell Library has celebrated a significant upgrade following an extensive refurbishment programme which means visitors can enjoy a range of brand-new facilities which includes Scotland's only interactive immersive pod in a public library. The £1.6m investment has also seen the children's area doubled, new flexible learning and meeting areas created, and the opening of a new MakerSpace (an area designed to help people develop skills, explore their creativity, and learn how to use new digital and craft resources including 3D printers, sewing machines and a laser cutter).
- (52) A new technical team has been established to support the health and social care workforce in the use of enhanced technology solutions and assessment and planning with regards to safe-tech solutions. The team supports locality teams to maximise the use of innovative technology enabled care and to review the support arrangements for existing clients, considering the potential use of technology enabled care solutions to support better and more independent living.
- (53) A Digital School was established to promote and enable digital learning across North Lanarkshire by supporting schools and families on how to use the digital tools available and establishing a digital pedagogy that engages learners and delivers a high-quality learning experience for all. The use of digital technology in this way aims to enrich learning and teaching, raise levels of attainment, and close the attainment gap. Schools and centres are supported to gain Digital Schools Award Scotland Status with 43 accredited establishments across North Lanarkshire and plans in place to increase this number.
- (54) A Virtual Classroom (containing high quality, moderated e-learning resources) was launched in January 2021 to provide an online and interactive platform for young people; this includes learning areas such as literacy, numeracy, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), and health and wellbeing. Since its launch the virtual classroom has been refreshed with an overhaul being completed to the existing provision to tie in with the new progression pathways and include new focussed computer science content. The virtual classroom now contains the new Tech Tuesdays resources - 6 new videos released every week - that focus on pre-recorded lessons to support pathways. In addition to broad and general teaching and learning materials, the virtual classroom hosts a large range of videos

and materials which support young people's pathways into work. To date the virtual classroom contains almost 4,000 accessible resources and has achieved over one million visits.

- (55) The new North Lanarkshire Progression Pathways for early to third level have now been launched, with the Digital School tracking its impact. Early to third level progression pathways in literacy, numeracy, and digital learning have been developed to support teacher planning and professional judgement. The programme of study in literacy at second level has been revised, with professional learning offered to literacy champions in all establishments to support professional understanding. Digital pedagogy practitioners provide regular, high-quality professional learning, with most schools and all family learning centres being supported by the digital team.
- (56) Two Intergenerational digital skills courses were delivered on the use of iPads - in Drummond Drive Retirement Complex with pupils from Thornlie Primary and at James Dempsey Gardens Retirement Complex with pupils from Greenhill Primary. This increased the digital abilities of the tenants, reducing social isolation and improving pupils' confidence and social skills.
- (57) The Digital sub-group continues to meet monthly with the Chair and Vice Chair having been voted in for another year. Latest consultations have included work with Commsworld as part of the SmartNL programme to shape what community benefits will look like for local communities in the future. This group plays a key role in providing the interface between the council and the public for all things digital.
- (58) Through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the investment plan for North Lanarkshire includes funding for a range of digital support for people, businesses, and communities. Key provision includes:
 - A Digital Communities Challenge Fund which has been developed to support community organisations to improve their digital connectivity is scheduled for launch in early 2024.
 - Grant support for businesses through the Business Growth Fund up to £50K which can be used for digital skills, consultancy, and capex and infrastructure support for digital transformation projects through the adoption and integration of digital technologies and e-commerce.
 - Expert help of up to five days support for digital projects, to build skills and capabilities that increase digital knowledge and provide support with digital marketing that covers areas such as social media platforms, website content and design, data analytics, and search engine optimisation.
 - Funding to continue the delivery of Smart Hub Lanarkshire, a centre of excellence for manufacturing innovation and robotics established to support small to medium sized enterprises active in the manufacturing sector locally.
 - The provision of digital skills training to support the North Lanarkshire Digital Skills Academy. This includes support for the establishment of community based Digital Labs to provide local adults aged 16+ with the relevant skills, confidence, and motivation to get online, a North Lanarkshire Digital Youth Academy aimed at 16-24 year olds, and support to co-ordinate digital career pathways.
 - Establishment of an interactive digital heritage and countryside trail to enhance the visitor experience across North Lanarkshire.

One Service

- (59) The Leadership and Operating Model continues to ensure that a unified approach is underway to maintain effective management, operation, and governance structures within each Hub. The model aims to ensure that Town and Community Hubs operate as a single entity and support a much wider integrated community offer - with communities having more direct access to the services they need and staff closer to the communities they work in. This unified approach puts communities at the heart of the council's model and seeks to ensure

everyone is given equality of opportunity and individuals are supported, encouraged, and cared for at each key stage of their life.

- (60) 7 community hubs have been operationalised following both the reconfiguration of existing assets and handover of new development hubs, with learning being taken forward in the transition towards the council's future operating model as well as the design of new development hubs and council service redesign to support a much wider integrated community offer.
- (61) All council services are now fully engaged in phase 2 Leadership and Operating Model plans for the council to transition towards the longer-term operating model. This work will progress through deep dive operating model service reviews post budget decisions and in line with the capital programme award to develop enabling infrastructure.
- (62) Working in partnership with the North Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership, the council has achieved all deliverables and phase 1 deadlines set out by the Scottish Government relative to the national framework for Getting it Right for Everyone (GIRFE) tied to the place-based approach and underpinning the vision for town and community hubs.
- (63) The commitment to be a trauma informed organisation has been progressed by adopting a trauma lens approach to new development hubs and the reconfiguration of existing assets with a measurement framework aligned to the Equality Strategy to be introduced from 2024.
- (64) A new framework has been introduced, based on best practice and guidance from Sustrans, to promote active travel within the workforce. A survey currently underway with all staff will inform forward plans and priorities that support delivery of the Active Travel Strategy to 2031.
- (65) Work is under development to progress a Corporate Telephony Solution and introduce a single contact number and secure payment portal for the council. This will enhance the overall citizen experience and grow the Customer Services Hub underpinning the future operating model.
- (66) A refreshed hybrid working model has been developed to enhance the council's approach to building a vibrant, mixed use, office and community-based workplace environment in the transition to the future operating model. This will support the council in meeting desired performance and productivity expectations while supporting fair work ambitions.
- (67) Detailed service workforce plans are now in place for each service area to help tackle the demographic challenges faced historically, and provide an opportunity to consider service planning in line with building a future workforce and transitioning the workforce to align with the Programme of Work to 2028 and future operating model.
- (68) Following the introduction of a new approach to auditing Best Value, the key findings from the council's first audit report were extremely positive. This considered the effectiveness of the leadership of the development of the council's strategic priorities which was undertaken as part of a national approach to thematic aspects of the Best Value audit requirements. The auditors noted that the council has a clear ambitious vision as detailed in The Plan for North Lanarkshire which has been driven by effective leadership and is supported by a range of performance indicators and performance reporting arrangements. The report concludes positively on the council's approach to citizen and community engagement and recognises the council's commitment to reducing inequalities and tackling poverty. The report also comments positively on the alignment of strategic and operational delivery plans (with the council's financial, asset, and digital plans), the collaborative working between Elected Members and officers, and the council's approach to self-evaluation which supports continuous improvement.