

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Policy and Strategy Committee

Does this report require to be approved?  Yes  No

Ref AM Date 05/12/24

## Corporate Property Reinforced Aerated Autoclaved Concrete (RAAC)

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### Executive Summary

Following an inspection of the council's corporate estate over a 24 month period, Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) was identified within five council-owned properties:

- Ravenswood Primary School, Cumbernauld
- Pivot Community Centre, Moodiesburn
- Former Housing Office, 124 Main St, Coatbridge
- Rear Annexe- Caldervale High School, Airdrie
- Motherwell Civic Theatre & Concert Hall, Motherwell

One property, Ravenswood Primary School, remains in operational use, as it was possible to implement a RAAC management plan to introduce controlled measures to manage the presence of the RAAC due to a range of specific local circumstances. This is not the case for the remaining facilities due to the scale and nature of findings to date.

This report provides final proposals for matters to be taken forward for properties where RAAC has been identified within the affordability envelope contained within the agreed capital plan.

### Recommendations

It is recommended that Policy and Strategy Committee:

- (1) Recognise the current position with RAAC across the Council estate.
- (2) Recognises the financial pressures, risks and complexities associated with dealing with RAAC.
- (3) Acknowledge the decision of the Strategic Capital Delivery Group to provide funding for the replacement of the roof structure at Ravenswood Primary School.
- (4) Approves the recommendation within paragraph 2.34 to provide funding for the replacement of RAAC at the Pivot Community Centre and the demolition of the other three affected premises at 124 Main Street Coatbridge, Annexe facility within Caldervale High School and Motherwell Civic Theatre and Concert Hall; and
- (5) Recognises that a future cultural offering will be fully considered as part of the proposed Ravenscraig Hub.

## The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	Improve North Lanarkshire's resource base
Ambition statement	(22) Facilitate a North Lanarkshire wide approach to asset rationalisation, including with communities and partners
Programme of Work	Statutory / corporate / service requirement

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### 1. Background

- 1.1 RAAC is a lightweight, bubbly form of concrete which was often used in construction from the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s (although recent information has suggested it may have been in use as early as 1930).
  - 1.2 It is usually found in roofs and occasionally walls and floors and it can be problematic as it can be weaker than traditional concrete and in certain circumstances, can pose a risk to the structural integrity of a property.
  - 1.3 The UK Government, Department for Education issued updated guidance in August 2023 on what property owners should do in terms of RAAC. The guidance can be viewed at the attached [link](#). This guidance is for responsible bodies and education settings with confirmed RAAC. It states that responsible bodies should vacate and restrict access to spaces with confirmed RAAC until appropriate mitigations are in place even where they would have been deemed “non critical” previously.
  - 1.4 The updated guidance provides principles and approaches in relation to managing public buildings and the mitigating actions necessary to ensure continuity of provision of services and outlining a categorisation methodology that is applied to determine a property’s condition.
  - 1.5 The council’s 2024/25- 2028/29 Capital Investment Programme was agreed at the Policy & Strategy Committee on 14 March 2024 and a contingency fund of £14.7m was provided to support demolitions resulting from our asset rationalisation plans alongside addressing issues relevant to RAAC. No other funding is available for RAAC, including Scottish Government, and accordingly any works associated with RAAC must be accommodated from within this budget line.
  - 1.6 This report provides an update on the current position across the corporate estate and the planned projects to be taken forward. It does not cover the Council’s Housing estate and a further report outlining the position of RAAC across this area will be provided to the Housing Committee in February 2025.
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### 2. Report

- 2.1 Over a 24-month period, a full assessment/survey process has been undertaken across the council's education and wider operational property estate. During this exercise 5 council owned properties have been identified as having RAAC present.
  - Ravenswood Primary School, Cumbernauld
  - Pivot Community Centre, Moodiesburn
  - Former Housing Office, 124 Main St, Coatbridge
  - Rear Annexe- Caldervale High School, Airdrie
  - Motherwell Civic Theatre & Concert Hall, Motherwell

- 2.2 The following section provides further detail on each of these establishments together with a recommendation on the future of each property. Each recommendation is based on a number of factors including how the recommendation fits with the Council's Strategic Asset Review and Investment Strategy (SARIS), available capital funding, the future operating model of the Council and how any proposal fits with the various Programmes of Work supporting the overall Plan for North Lanarkshire.

### **Ravenswood Primary School, Cumbernauld**

- 2.3 The survey of the school identified RAAC panels in the roof of the main hall which were categorised as **Low to Medium** risk which allowed for the introduction of a RAAC management plan within these premises. Interim structural works and props allowed the premises to remain in full operational use. However, this arrangement cannot be viewed as a long-term solution and replacement of the school roof has been identified as the only viable option.
- 2.4 In addition to the main school building, the isolated plant room associated with the school was categorised as **High to Critical risk**. Alternative controls are in place to both limit access and manage the risk associated with the RAAC panels in this area and they are also subject to a regular inspection regime
- 2.5 Capital costs to the value of £3m are estimated to progress the necessary remedial works. The Technical & Design Team are progressing a specification and a strategy on how the works can be undertaken as these will impact on the school's operations and off-site teaching and learning provision may be required to allow works to be undertaken. If it is agreed to progress with the remedial works then further discussions will be undertaken with the school and Education service to minimise the disruption to the children and their learning experience.
- 2.6 At present there is no option to merge Ravenswood Primary School with another school within the area and accordingly it is recommended that appropriate remedial works are approved to replace the existing RAAC roof structure. With that in mind, the Strategic Capital Delivery Group, in line with its delegated authority, has been required to agree to allocate £3m of the capital programme's contingency budget to support these costs.

### **The Pivot Community Centre, Moodiesburn**

- 2.7 Following the identification of RAAC in October 2022, the premises remained in operational use until April 2024 as measures could be put in place to manage its presence, however, during the bi-annual inspection of the premises on 9 April 2024, it was identified that the RAAC panels had deteriorated further, and the panels showed concerning signs of water ingress and the premises were re-categorised as **High to Critical risk**. This required immediate closure of the premises.
- 2.8 The community facility supports many community groups and activities, and since the closure of the centre 71% of users have been relocated to other facilities, 12% have cancelled or moved outwith the Council area and the service continues to work with the remaining 17% to find a suitable alternative.
- 2.9 In comparison to other community facilities, the centre has the third highest usage across North Lanarkshire. Due to the localised community demands, and the confirmation that there is no alternative community offering within this area with no immediate plans to replace the facilities as part of the hub delivery programme, it is the

recommendation of officers that the RAAC is replaced, thereby bringing the premises back into operational use.

- 2.10 Capital costs to the value of £4m are estimated to progress the works. The Technical & Design Team are progressing a specification and a strategy on how the works can be undertaken with the facilities remaining closed until the RAAC panels are removed and replaced (subject to agreement).

#### **Former Housing Office-124 Main St, Coatbridge**

- 2.11 These premises have not been in operational use for a considerable period with no market interest in leasing the premises since the outgoing tenants vacated the site in 2012.
- 2.12 The consultants' survey of the premises identified significant water ingress and categorised the premises as **High to Critical risk**. Temporary roof supports have been installed to allow the shops on the lower level to continue to operate in a safe manner in the short term.
- 2.13 The recommendation is to demolish the premises as there is no operational requirements for the site or market interest. The land would then be included within the overall action plan for the town centre and repurposed in accordance with the proposals within the plan.
- 2.14 Capital funds to the value of £350k are required to progress the demolition of the premises.
- 2.15 Wider discussions would be required with North Lanarkshire Properties as this decision will impact on the five business premises on the lower level of the building. The lease terms for each tenant will determine the termination requirements with alternative options for relocation to be explored, although it may not be possible to relocate all within the immediate vicinity.

#### **Rear Annexe- Caldervale High School, Airdrie**

- 2.16 The rear annexe is physically isolated from the wider operations of the school. The area previously housed the Council's Digital Support Team who have now been successfully relocated across the estate with limited impact on their operations.
- 2.17 The consultant's survey of the premises identified significant damage to the RAAC panels which have been over-clad during a historical modernisation programme of the school.
- 2.18 The consultants have classified the condition of the RAAC as **High to Critical risk**.
- 2.19 Due to the absence of any operational requirement for this building following actions under 2.16, it is recommended that the annexe is demolished. It is estimated that a capital allocation of £250K would be required to allow demolition.

#### **Civic Theatre & Concert Hall, Motherwell**

- 2.20 Following an inspection of the Motherwell Civic Theatre & Concert Hall in September 2023, significant evidence of RAAC was identified in the roof area. Due to the identified

condition of the RAAC panels, the premises were required to close immediately. Further detailed information on the subsequent inspections and considerations around the future of the facility are attached as Appendix 1 to this report, with the paragraphs below providing an overall summary.

- 2.21 The independent technical opinion from the initial and subsequent survey, indicated that numerous RAAC panels showed damage including signs of water ingress that could weaken the load bearing capacity of the roof structure and increase the probability of a failure. Areas of exposed reinforcement were also visible on a number of planks.
- 2.22 The presence of water within RAAC panels is considered as a key factor in determining the condition of panels. As with all concrete elements, water ingress can cause corrosion of the reinforcement which eventually leads to future failure of the element. The condition of the RAAC within the premises has been categorised as **High to Critical risk**.
- 2.23 Unlike other properties across the authority which remain in operational use following the discovery of RAAC, it is not possible to install temporary supports or introduce an inspection regime within this property due to both the scale of the RAAC present on the site, the height of the premises and the limitations to undertake future inspections of the area due to the services and suspended ceilings obstructing access to the RAAC panels.
- 2.24 It is estimated that capital funds of between £10.5m and £11.65m would be required to replace and repair the roof section of the building where RAAC has been identified, however significant risks associated with these types of works have been highlighted from other live projects where RAAC replacement has taken place in neighbouring authorities:
- Contract management
  - Budgetary control
  - Exposure to external elements during construction works
  - Contractor capabilities
  - Integrity of existing structure
  - Ability to decommission/re-commission specialist equipment
  - Timescale for delivery
  - Operational impact to the operations within the Civic Centre
  - Recovery period
- 2.25 Due to the risks associated with this type of work and the age profile of the Civic Theatre & Concert Hall, it is recommended that the building is demolished at an estimated cost of £1.65m.
- 2.26 Any demolition will be conditional on the agreement of Historic Environment Scotland (HES). The Civic Complex in its entirety has been assigned Category B listed status by HES. The Concert Hall and Civic Theatre are included within this listing and consequently, any proposal would have to include this within its consideration. In anticipation of a decision needing to be taken, an initial meeting has been undertaken with HES. In summary, HES have advised that they would approach any consideration in line with the guidance associated with listed buildings within National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). The council will require to demonstrate that that the cost of the repair and reinstatement work required is not economically viable and a case made that the concert hall and theatre cannot be marketed for the existing or an alternative use.

- 2.27 Should the recommendation to demolish be agreed, then continued discussion will take place with HES so any future action is in line with the listed status of the complex. This will include any consideration of the alteration of the remaining elements of the civic complex and how they could be altered and enhanced to make best use of the space available for its intended civic purpose, improving use for members, staff and public including options to better integrate the civic centre and civic square facilities.
- 2.28 The last full year of activity within the Concert Hall and Theatre was 2022/23, and the annual costs of operating the Concert Hall and Theatre were higher than the income received from customers, and consequently, the Council is required to provide a recurring subsidy to support the facility. Whilst the budgeted subsidy for 2022/23 was £0.234m, the actual full year subsidy was £0.268m based on observed operational activity during this period.
- 2.29 Since the closure of the facility in September of last year, the Active and Creative Communities team have attempted where possible to reallocate demand elsewhere within the corporate estate. At the initial stages it was expected that around 36% of existing events would be able to be accommodated, however, recent sales of tickets for Airdrie Town Hall have been better than expected, and there is a further review of what additional venues could be delivered through the corporate estate in line with the SARIS review and further positive discussions have now taken place with promoters on what alternative venues would be appropriate. It is fully expected therefore that the 36% value would very much be a worst-case scenario.
- 2.30 If the Concert Hall and Theatre were to permanently close, staffing costs will remain the same as they will be deployed to support operational and event-based activity that has been realigned to other venues within the Council e.g., Airdrie Town Hall / Ravenscraig etc. However, this will be offset against the absence of any running costs associated with the Concert Hall and Civic Theatre.
- 2.31 On balance therefore, although the future financial position is subject to significant uncertainty with changing demand and cost profiles, it is anticipated that the full-year transfer of functions and shows from the Motherwell Concert Hall & Theatre to other Council venues would result in a similar revenue outturn position – a recurring subsidy of around £268K. Therefore, the key financial consideration in evaluating options regarding the future use of the venue is linked to the cost and funding availability for capital works.
- 2.32 Further to the above, and as is clearly demonstrated within the additional information at Appendix 1, the vast majority of people attending the concert hall and theatre come from the Motherwell area. It is accepted that the closure of this facility will therefore have a detrimental impact on the cultural offering within this area and although events may be hosted elsewhere this may be outwith the Motherwell area. To reflect this, it is also proposed that as part of the proposed investment in and around the new Ravenscraig hub facility, that options are presented to a future committee on what cultural offering could be included within this proposal to mitigate the loss of the Motherwell Concert Hall & Theatre. The scale of the offering will obviously be determined by the budget available but also by what size and design would deliver the best all round offering for residents within the Motherwell and surrounding areas as part of an integrated approach to all community assets.
- 2.33 Should it be agreed to pursue this approach, the Town & Community Hub team will work with community operations to commission design studies to understand what cultural offering could be provided on the Ravenscraig site, and what the estimated cost would

likely be. The output from the design studies will be presented to the town & community hub steering group for their consideration and approval with a further report brought to Committee in Cycle two of 2025 outlining the overall the proposal.

### Summary Position

2.34 In light of the information provided above, the table below provides an overall summary position as to the recommendations as to how the RAAC issues are addressed across the corporate estate:

Site	Estimated Cost To Replace RAAC	Proposed Action	Estimated Costs for Proposed Action
1. Ravenswood Primary School, Cumbernauld	£3m	Repair	£3m
2. The Pivot Centre, Moodiesburn	£4m	Repair	£4m
3. Civic Theatre & Concert Hall, Motherwell	£10.9m	Demolish	£1.65m
4. 124 Main St, Coatbridge	£2.5m	Demolish	£350k
5. Caldervale High School, Airdrie (Annexe)	£900k	Demolish	£250K
<b>Total</b>	<b>£21.8m</b>		<b>£9.265m</b>

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### 3. Measures of success

3.1 Retaining assets for operational use where required and also managing and addressing the health & safety issues associated with RAAC.

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### 4. Supporting documentation

4.1 Appendix 1- Motherwell Civic Theatre & Concert Hall briefing note.

**Andrew McPherson**  
Depute Chief Executive

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## 5. Impacts

### 5.1 Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty

Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty?

Yes  No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

The closure of facilities will have an impact on both community and cultural interests.

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>

Yes  No

### 5.2 Financial impact

Does the report contain any financial impacts?

Yes  No

If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance?

Yes  No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

All works associated with the corporate estate will require to be funded within the parameters of the overall capital programme.

### 5.3 HR policy impact

Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts?

Yes  No

If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources?

Yes  No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

Localised staffing issues associated with the closure of buildings is being managed by line managers.

### 5.4 Legal impact

Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)?

Yes  No

If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic?

Yes  No

If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?

Statutory compliance with Building Standards will be required.

<p><b>5.5</b></p>	<p><b>Data protection impact</b>  Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data?  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject?  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to <a href="mailto:dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk">dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk</a>  Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>5.6</b></p>	<p><b>Technology / Digital impact</b>  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"/></p>
<p><b>5.7</b></p>	<p><b>Environmental / Carbon impact</b>  Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?  Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?   The demolition of any property will assist in reducing the council's carbon footprint</p>
<p><b>5.8</b></p>	<p><b>Communications impact</b>  Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?  Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?   A significant communications exercise will be introduced, supported by all key services and users.</p>
<p><b>5.9</b></p>	<p><b>Risk impact</b>  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 issues associated with RAAC are being managed locally by services in relation to service and operational impact. RAAC management plans have been adopted for all relevant buildings where operations continue.   The wider risks associated with RAAC across the property estate remain under review until all aspects and condition of RAAC is fully understood.</p>

Risks are considered, frequently reviewed, and recorded on project-specific risk registers and included within the councils corporate risk register. Risks with an inherently high score are escalated to project board/service level.

There are a number of risks that must be considered and managed as part of this activity, including:

**Operational** – Manage the risk of reduced service delivery where buildings require to close and operations are being relocated.

**Strategic** – Management of risks associated with the wider ambitions of the organisation e.g Town Centre regeneration.

**Economic** – The costs associated with the issue are unknown as yet, and as such remain a financial risk.

**Legal/ Statutory** – The main areas of legal risk for the Council are as the owner and occupier of public buildings.

**Reputational** – The risk to council if the process and operational aspects of this issue remain significant and should be considered alongside each of the other key risk types.

**Commercial Risk-** As the assessment/survey programme develops across the commercial estate, the presence of RAAC has the potential to impact on traders and operators from our commercial premises and any other properties directly associated with council premises.

**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  No

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  No

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  No

# Briefing Note-Motherwell Civic Theatre & Concert Hall

## Executive Summary

Following an inspection of the Motherwell Civic Theatre & Concert Hall complex in September 2023, Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) was identified as the material used for the construction of 95% of the roof area. It was further established that a number of RAAC panels showed damage including signs of water ingress that could weaken the load bearing capacity of the roof structure and increase the probability of a failure.

Given this information, a decision was taken to close the building with immediate effect to all but essential staff and the building has remained closed since this date with all scheduled use of the Civic Theatre & Concert Hall being relocated to alternative venues or cancelled indefinitely.

The purpose of this briefing report is to outline the options available to the council when considering the future of the complex, taking into account the costs associated with any proposed remediation works and the cultural and staffing impact should a decision be taken not to proceed with any remediation and move to demolition.

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## 1. Background

- 1.1 Following the 2019 publication of the safety alert "Failure of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Planks", the Service commissioned an external specialist consulting structural engineer (G3) to identify any properties containing RAAC across the council's non-domestic property estate. This has involved an assessment process of over 400 corporate properties with a further 1000 properties across the commercial estate still requiring to be assessed.
- 1.2 The assessment aims were to identify any properties with RAAC present, and to then record various parameters such as deflections, cracks, moisture content, reinforcement condition and support locations, within each plank. These parameters, when considered together, will form an independent objective assessment of each plank's robustness in terms of its potential risk of future failure. These assessments are then reviewed together with officers from Asset & Procurements Technical & Design Team and the independent structural engineers with the aim of developing an action plan for each affected property.
- 1.3 Following a high-level assessment of each property, a prioritisation system was applied to the order of surveys and inspections, with particular emphasis being placed on the early review of the education and cultural estate. Included within this early assessment was Motherwell Civic Theatre and Concert Hall.

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## 2. Report

### Initial Action

- 2.1 On Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023, during a planned survey and inspection, Reinforced Autoclave Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in the form of Siporex was identified across 95%

of the roof structure for the Motherwell Civic Theatre & Concert Hall. Surveys of the adjoining and adjacent buildings at the Civic Centre and Square confirmed that there were no visible signs of the material.

- 2.2 The immediate opinion from the survey indicated that numerous RAAC panels showed damage including signs of water ingress that could weaken the load bearing capacity of the roof structure and increase the probability of a failure. Areas of exposed reinforcement were also visible on a number of planks. Given this information, a decision was made to close the building with immediate effect to all but essential attendees and the building has remained closed since this date with all scheduled use of the Civic Theatre & Concert Hall being relocated to alternative venues or cancelled indefinitely.
- 2.3 A further survey was undertaken the following day in the presence of officers from North Lanarkshire Council's Technical & Design team that revealed more areas of immediate structural concern, confirming the decision to close the building was the correct course of action. The published survey results further confirms the findings and outlines the recommendations and immediate action required.
- 2.4 In engineering terms, the original design of the Civic Theatre & Concert Hall is very complex, with highly specialised mechanical and electrical systems being present that are dependent upon the structural stability of the building to fully operate and function. Additional capital investment since its construction, such as the introduction of new sophisticated air handling and lighting systems, have added to this complexity.
- 2.5 Further to this, the listing of the Civic Complex by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in 2020, of which the Civic Theatre and Concert Hall are a part, simply adds a further dimension to the considerations.
- 2.6 Immediate solutions to implement a RAAC management plan are limited at this site due to the RAAC condition, accessibility, actual use of the premises and the requirement to have visual sight without obstruction within both the Civic Theatre and the Concert Hall.
- 2.7 Unlike the other property across the authority which remains in operational use following the discovery of RAAC, it is not possible to install temporary supports or introduce an inspection regime due to both the scale of the RAAC present on the site and the limitations to undertake future inspections of the area due to the services and suspended ceilings obstructing access to the RAAC panels.
- 2.8 The Civic Theatre & Concert Hall has been closed since 12 September 2023 with the majority of performances relocating successfully to alternative provision both within, and outwith North Lanarkshire, however, not all performances have necessarily been delivered to the same scale and frequency that the Civic Theatre & Concert Hall could offer.
- 2.9 Active & Creative Communities have successfully relocated the main cultural events previously provided by the council from the Civic Theatre to alternative locations, however, activities provided from the Concert Hall setting have been more challenging, simply due to the nature and scale of the activity provided from this type of facility.
- 2.10 In addition to the alternative cultural facilities at the Airdrie Town Hall and The Theatre, Cumbernauld, the Service are currently reviewing the availability of alternative cultural space available across the secondary school estate. This is an option to support smaller performances, make better use of the school and community estate, further

improve the cultural experience within the teaching and learning environment and contribute towards the Strategic Asset Review and Investment Strategy (SARIS).

### Further Assessment

- 2.11 In view of the complexities surrounding the future of the building, the Asset and Procurement Service commissioned the services of an external consultant to design and cost the removal of the RAAC, replacement of the roof and all associated works to allow the reopening of the facility so that this could inform the options appraisal process for the future of the building.
- 2.12 The council's appointed consultants carried out three visual, non-intrusive spot inspections of the RAAC roof at Motherwell Civic Theatre & Concert Hall to determine its overall condition and have provided guidance on remediation works required.
- 2.13 The Health & Safety Executive issued a Standing Committee on Structural Safety (SCOSS) Alert on RAAC planks, recommending that pre-1980 planks of this type are now beyond their expected service life and that consideration should be given to replacement. The RAAC panels on this building are over 50 years old. The Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE), *Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Investigation and Assessment – Further Guidance April 2023* has been followed which provides risk guidance on RAAC affected buildings.
- 2.14 The presence of water within RAAC panels is considered as a key factor in determining the condition of panels. As with all concrete elements, water ingress can cause corrosion of the reinforcement which eventually leads to future failure of the element. In the case of RAAC, the risk is elevated as the concrete is porous (aerated) and the reinforcement relies primarily on a bituminous or a cement latex coating to the steel. This coating has been proven to be ineffective at protecting against corrosion. Due to the significance of this risk, water ingress is the key factor considered and is used to determine the risk of RAAC failure. Further key risk factors are the presence of cracking in the proximity of plank end bearings, historic alterations/builders work details and narrow plank bearings.
- 2.15 Based on the IStructE "*Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Investigation and Assessment – Further Guidance*", the following risk categorisations are determined:
- **Medium risk or higher**- Signs of water ingress.
  - **High risk**- Water ingress and minor cracking or spalling within 500mm of support.
  - **High to critical risk**- No extensive intrusive investigation of plank bearings can be carried out.
  - **Critical risk**- Cut or modified panels, including where cut panels are supported on historic proprietary hangers.
- 2.16 With the above factors considered, it is the opinion of the consultants that sufficient visual inspection has been carried out to date to determine the overall risk of the building and it is unlikely that further investigations would provide any justification to reduce the risk category for this property which has been classified as **high to critical risk**.
- 2.17 Due to the building being assessed as high to critical risk, the introduction of an ongoing maintenance/ monitoring regime is not a viable proposal and accordingly only one of

two options is available – to remove and replace the roofing and associated supports for the complex or demolition.

### **Option 1- Remove & Replace RAAC**

- 2.18 The consultant's report outlines the design options to remove and replace the RAAC associated with this building. An early costing exercise with a neighbouring authority who have recently undertaken similar type works would indicate estimated costs will be in the region of £6.3 to £7.9m. This is based on a simple area calculation, however, due to the complex and unpredictable nature of the works and the risks outlined within the consultant's report, it would be prudent to estimate further contingency funds in the region of £3m to be allocated to this type of project with actual costs requiring to be confirmed from a live procurement exercise.
- 2.19 Within section 6 of the report, a number of further investigations also require to be considered in addition to the RAAC related works associated with the building in relation to specialist technical & mechanical equipment, the internal furnishings, electrical infrastructure and the risks associated with the age of the building when undertaking these types of works. It has been further confirmed and outlined within the consultant's report that additional contingency funds would be required as the costs to commission/de-commission or replace these items is an unknown at this time and replacement should be assumed with estimated costs in the region of £750K.
- 2.20 The report further highlights within section 6 that the building is believed to have been built circa 50 years ago; therefore, its theoretical design lifetime has already passed, and further intrusive concrete testing of the site would be required.
- 2.21 In addition to the consultant's report, discussions with the neighbouring authority further identified other key factors and risks that require to be considered for these types of works:
- Contract management.
  - Budgetary control.
  - Exposure to external elements during construction works.
  - Contractor capabilities.
  - Integrity of existing structure.
  - Ability to decommission/re-commission specialist equipment.
  - Timescale for delivery.
  - Operational impact to the operations within the Civic Centre.
  - Recovery period.
- 2.22 Should it be determined that the building complex should be retained, it would be prudent to further assume that due to its Category B listing by HES, any works may incur additional costs to ensure the original features and characteristics of the building are retained. Further details of the listing of the entire Civic Complex can be found at the attached link: <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB52545>
- 2.23 Considering all the comments detailed above, the total minimum financial costs for any replacement of the roof structure are estimated to be anywhere between £10.5M and £11.65M with many other factors still to be quantified and which will only be known after the conclusion of a formal procurement process.

### **Option 2- Demolition**

- 2.24 Whilst the facility is part of the wider Civic Complex, it also operates independently and any demolition can be considered in isolation of the other buildings, however, as with any proposed remediation works, any demolition works of the Civic Theatre & Concert Hall will require consultation with Historic Environment Scotland (HES). The listing of the building was prior to the identification of RAAC and was not a considering factor in the assessment process when listed.
- 2.25 Costs associated with the demolition of the Civic Theatre & Concert Hall have been estimated at £1.65m, however, this would be subject to a formal procurement exercise and assumptions have been made in relation to the potential asbestos content that will require to be disposed.
- 2.26 Any future options for use of the area would be limited due to site restrictions at the location, however, it would be anticipated that the site would be utilised to create much needed parking provision and external break out space.

### **Impact on Cultural & Service Provision**

- 2.27 Following the closures associated with the pandemic, against national predictions, the venue and the overall service recovered strongly, and in the first full year since the lockdowns, the team have been able to work against initial hesitation from the public to attend live events to record an attendance of 196,204 in year 2022/23. In that same year the venue hosted 678 events/ productions plus numerous small meetings and rehearsals. An overall improvement of 169% on the previous year.
- 2.28 Household names appear regularly at the venues, resulting in easier access for the community who no longer need to travel far for quality entertainment which is aligned towards the council aim of improving the health and wellbeing of our communities, under the ambition statement of helping to encourage the health and wellbeing of people through a range of social, cultural, and leisure activities. The aim is to enhance participation, capacity, and empowerment across our communities through live events and entertainment shows. Approximately £2.6m of the overall £18m income target for Active & Creative Communities is associated with delivery of our cultural programme.
- 2.29 As noted above, all bookings were cancelled with the closure of the venue in late 2023. However, based on known bookings for 2024 and the option to now use Airdrie Town Hall following the departure of the NHS, work is underway to consider which bookings may be able to be accommodated.
- 2.30 There are three categories of bookings within the venue:
- Community Hires
- 2.31 Based on expected bookings, we anticipate the following outcomes:
- Dance School Lets
- 2.32 Audience capacity and dressing room availability are critical to support these performances and we anticipate 20% of performances will transfer to alternative venues within the authority with other groups requiring to find alternative accommodation either in other council facilities or outwith the Council area.
- 2.33 Initial projections suggest that this will reduce from 195 to 41 business days, retaining 21% of forecast business at alternative council venues.

### Amateur Dramatic Organisations

- 2.34 Whilst it would be expected that the remaining cultural provision will continue to support the localised activity and rehearsal element of these organisations, discussions require to continue with the groups to relocate their annual performances to the Airdrie Town Hall with the consideration of other large school events being integrated within the cultural offering within the existing secondary school estate.

### Conferences & Awards Ceremonies

- 2.35 Due to the large number of attendees associated with such functions, these would require relocating to alternative larger venues. Whilst the council jointly hosts several high-profile annual events with other neighbouring authorities, options within and outwith the authority would require to be costed and considered.

### Professional Shows

- 2.36 Professional shows are delivered over an 80-day period and on reviewing future scheduled performances, it is anticipated that with exception to high profile shows and standing music concerts, all other performances can be accommodated at alternative Council venues:
- High Profile Shows (> 650 attendees) – Performances require to relocate to other large venues
  - Standing Music concerts – Performances require to relocate to other large venues
  - Tribute Acts – Transfer to Airdrie Town Hall
  - Drama Performances – Transfer to Airdrie Town Hall
  - Theatre & Comedy – Transfer to smaller venues
  - Children's Shows – Transfer to smaller venues
  - Original Music Artists – Transfer to smaller venues
- 2.37 The requirement to relocate the larger performances will reduce to 58 performing days, retaining 72% of forecasted business. This will be contingent on the agreement of professional acts agreeing to moving to Airdrie Town Hall.

### Overall Impact

- 2.38 Ticket sales at Airdrie Town Hall are performing very well and significantly better than originally expected. We have also seen increased interest from promoters who are keen to bring a range of performance options to this site. While this increase in activity will ensure a varied culture offer to the people of North Lanarkshire, it is recognised that we will be unable to accommodate many of the larger events previously held in the Concert Hall.
- 2.39 Across both Community Hires and Professional Shows, we expect a minimum of 36% of previous business could be accommodated within the wider Council estate with the remainder rebasing themselves within other facilities within North Lanarkshire or within neighbouring local authorities. Whilst we have limited information on the alternative cultural facilities being utilised outwith the authority, geographically, Hamilton Town House and Lanark Memorial Hall are the closest alternatives for those events with several performances now continuing at these locations.

### Pantomime Provision

- 2.40 The summary above does not include attendance or delivery of the annual Christmas pantomime. The pantomime is the biggest event to take place in the Civic Theatre and is well supported by the community, local schools and community/voluntary groups. In 2023, the Christmas pantomime was successfully relocated to the Ravenscraig Regional Sports Facility with over 31,567 attendees. Whilst this is a reduction from the previous year of 37,685 attendees, relocating to alternative premises both impacted on the advertising campaign and mobilisation of the event.
- 2.41 As the pantomime attracts many school groups, Airdrie Town Hall has restricted parking options. Taking such concerns into consideration, the pantomime is scheduled to return to Ravenscraig Regional Facility for 2024 and the foreseeable future or until a point when a decision is made on the future of the Civic Theatre & Concert Hall. Although this decision may restrict some leisure users, alternative venues are available during these periods. The larger capacity of the Ravenscraig venue may allow for a shorter pantomime season to be offered, thus maintaining projected income levels while minimising disruption in the Regional Sports Facility as much as possible. The Spring Pantomime, as a significantly smaller event, will be delivered from Airdrie Town Hall.

### **Historic Environment Scotland**

- 2.42 As detailed previously, the Civic Complex in its entirety has been assigned Category B listed status by Historic Environment Scotland (HES). The Concert Hall and Civic Theatre are included within this listing and consequently, any proposal would have to include this within its consideration.
- 2.43 In anticipation of a decision needing to be taken, an initial meeting has now been undertaken with HES and their formal response is being considered by officers. In summary, HES have advised that they would approach any consideration in line with the guidance associated with listed buildings within National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). The relevant sections within NPF4 state:
- a) *Development proposals with a potentially significant impact on historic assets or places will be accompanied by an assessment which is based on an understanding of the cultural significance of the historic asset and/or place. The assessment should identify the likely visual or physical impact of any proposals for change, including cumulative effects and provide a sound basis for managing the impacts of change.*
- Proposals should also be informed by national policy and guidance on managing change in the historic environment, and information held within Historic Environment Records.*
- b) *Development proposals for the demolition of listed buildings will not be supported unless it has been demonstrated that there are exceptional circumstances and that all reasonable efforts have been made to retain, reuse and/or adapt the listed building. Considerations include whether the:*
- (iii) repair of the building is not economically viable and there has been adequate marketing for existing and/or new uses at a price reflecting its location and condition for a reasonable period to attract interest from potential restoring purchasers.*
- 2.44 Discussions are now continuing with HES and a copy of all surveys, financial information etc have now been shared.

## Financial Impact of Closure

- 2.45 The last full year of activity within the Concert Hall and Theatre was 2022/23, and the table below summarises the budget and actual outturn position for the facility during this period:

<b>Subjective Classification</b>	<b>Budget £m</b>	<b>Actual Outturn £m</b>
Employee Costs	0.738	0.789
Property Costs	0.118	0.090
Supplies & Services	0.976	0.981
Transport & Plant	0.002	0.006
Admin Costs	0.137	0.109
PTOBs	0.002	0.001
<b>Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>1.973</b>	<b>1.976</b>
<b>Customer Income</b>	<b>(1.739)</b>	<b>(1.708)</b>
<b>Funding Gap</b>	<b>0.234</b>	<b>0.268</b>
<b>Council Subsidy</b>	<b>(0.234)</b>	<b>(0.268)</b>

- 2.46 This information highlights that the annual costs of operating the Concert Hall and Theatre are higher than the income received from customers, and consequently, the Council is required to provide a recurring subsidy to support the facility. Whilst the budgeted subsidy for 2022/23 was £0.234m, the actual full year subsidy was £0.268m based on observed operational activity during this period.
- 2.47 Since the closure of the facility in September of last year, the Active and Creative Communities team have attempted where possible to reallocate hires elsewhere within the corporate estate. As detailed previously, at the initial stages it was expected that around 36% of existing events would be able to be accommodated, however, recent sales of tickets for Airdrie Town Hall have been better than expected, there is a further review of what additional venues could be delivered through the corporate estate in line with the SARIS review and further positive discussions have now taken place with promoters on what alternative venues would be appropriate. It is fully expected therefore that the 36% value would very much be a worst-case scenario.
- 2.48 If the Concert Hall and Theatre were to permanently close, staffing costs will remain the same as they will be deployed to support operational and event-based activity that has been realigned to other venues within the Council e.g., Airdrie Town Hall / Ravenscraig etc. However, this will be offset against the absence of any running costs associated with the Concert Hall and Civic Theatre.
- 2.49 On balance therefore, although it is impossible to accurately predict any future financial position, it is anticipated that the full-year transfer of functions and shows from the Motherwell Concert Hall & Theatre to other Council venues would result in a similar revenue outturn position – a recurring subsidy of around £268K. Therefore, the key financial consideration in evaluating options regarding the future use of the venue is linked to the cost and funding availability for capital works.

## Staffing Impact

- 2.50 The operations team at Motherwell Civic Theatre & Concert Hall is made up of 16.97 FTE. At present, whatever the option taken on the future of the venue, we do not

anticipate that any employees will be at risk of redundancy or require to be redeployed and will work in Airdrie Town Hall and other locations throughout the corporate estate which will become our primary delivery vehicle for cultural activities.

### **Summary and Recommendation**

- 2.51 The Civic Theatre and Concert Hall have been an integral part of the Council's cultural offering over the past 50 years and its closure over the past 9 months has obviously impacted on the events delivered within the Motherwell area. The decision on whether to close the facility permanently or fund any remediation works must therefore be based on a balance between the cultural impact of closing the venue and the financial cost associated with the remediation works.
- 2.52 As described above, the financial impact of closing or refurbishing the facility is very much based on the availability of capital funding. This is estimated at anywhere between £10.05M and £11.65M – but with many other factors still to be quantified and which will only be known after the conclusion of a formal procurement process. At present there is insufficient capital allocation within the Council's five-year programme to cover this cost, and if a decision was taken to commit to the refurbishment, then other areas of the capital programme would have to suffer as a result.
- 2.53 The cultural impact that would be associated with any closure is at present not fully known. It is accepted that there has been a significant impact immediately following the closure last September, and this position has not been helped due to the uncertainty surrounding the long-term future of the facility. Although an immediate assessment of the impact estimated that around 36% of current events would be able to be accommodated, this was done at a time when the long-term future of the facility was unknown and in the absence of a long-term strategy for the cultural offering in its absence.
- 2.54 Ticket sales within Airdrie have been much better than expected and a further review of the current corporate estate (community hubs etc) is now being considered in line with the SARIS review.

### **Conclusion**

- 2.55 The recommendation from Officers would be:
- (1) That the costs associated with the refurbishment of Motherwell Concert Hall and Theatre are at a level which is not financially viable.
  - (2) That steps are now taken to move towards the demolition of the facility through talks with Historic Environment Scotland and the submission of an application for Listed Building Consent.
  - (3) That a future offering is considered as part of the future Hub Delivery Programme.