

Motherwell, 28 March 2019 at 1 pm.

A Meeting of the **AUDIT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

PRESENT

Councillor Gallacher, Convener; Councillor Stevenson, Vice-Convener; Councillors Anderson, Burrows, Graham, Hogg, Hume, T. Johnston, Morgan, Alan Valentine and Watson.

CHAIR

Councillor Gallacher (Convener) presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

Robert Steenson, Executive Director (Enterprise and Communities); Derek Brown, Joint Interim Executive Director (Education and Families); Paul Hughes, Head of Financial Solutions; Archie Aitken, Head of Legal and Democratic Solutions; Fiona Whittaker, Head of People and Organisational Development; Ken Adamson, Audit and Risk Manager; Linda Johnston, Business Solutions Manager; Elaine Kemp, Business Finance Manager (Resource Solutions); Susan Lawrie, Business Manager (Performance and Resource Allocation); Paula Hendry, Principal Auditor, and Kirsty Brown, Committee Officer.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Carole Grant, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

CONVENER'S REMARKS

The Convener welcomed all new Members to the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Panel.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN TERMS OF THE ETHICAL STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE ETC. (SCOTLAND) ACT 2000

1. There were no declarations of interest.

AUDIT AND RISK RELATED ITEMS: ACTION LOG

2. There was submitted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (1) advising that the purpose of the report was to enable Members to track the implementation of requests and recommendations made by the Panel in respect of audit and risk related items in the previous 12 months, and (2) detailing, within the Appendix to the report, the current status of the audit and risk related requests and recommendations made by the Panel including when these had been addressed or were expected to be addressed.

Ken Adamson spoke to the report and, thereafter, the Panel agreed to note the report.

RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

3. There was submitted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (1) providing an overview of the Council's Risk Management arrangements and the progress made in implementing improvements to those arrangements; (2) summarising, within the Appendix to the report, the current status of the Corporate Risk Register; (3) advising that, since the previous update, the Corporate Management Team had approved a new 'Live' Corporate Risk related to the potential impacts of a "No Deal" Brexit, which brought the current total of Corporate Risks to 26; (4) detailing (a) that "deep dive" documentation had been completed for all but one of the 25 risks originally noted on the Corporate Risk Register, and (b) that Risk S4: Health and Social Care Integration was currently on hold, pending the review of Health and Social Care Integration within North Lanarkshire; (5) highlighting that good progress continued to be made in respect of a wide range of improvement actions designed to ensure that the Council could demonstrate mature and effective risk management arrangements, and (6) intimating (a) that there remained a focus on the implementation of a new Risk Management Information System, and (b) that support continued to be provided to Services to enable current Risk Registers to be migrated to the new system.

Ken Adamson spoke to the report and answered Members' questions. Members requested that the inherent risk scores, in respect of the Corporate Risks at Appendix 1, be included in future reports and Ken Adamson confirmed that this would be detailed within future Risk Management Update reports to the Panel. Members also sought confirmation in relation to the effectiveness of arrangements relating to the identification, assessment and management of risks at a Service level. Robert Steenson advised (a) that within the Enterprise and Communities Service there was a Programme Board in place to monitor this aspect and, in addition, separate risk focus management meetings were held where required, and (b) that further details in relation to this matter would be included in future reports to the Panel.

Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) to note the progress made in the completion, monitoring and review of Key Corporate Risks; (2) to note the progress in taking forward planned improvement actions; (3) that the inherent risk scores in respect of the Corporate Risk Register be included in future Risk Management Update reports; (4) that details regarding the specific risk management arrangements and measurement at a Service level be included in future reports, and (5) that the report be otherwise noted.

RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE: KEY CORPORATE RISK S1 - INABILITY TO MANAGE STRATEGIC CHANGE

4. There was submitted a report by the Chief Executive (1) advising that the Corporate Management Team had identified a number of Key Corporate Risks which were subject to periodic review by Management to ensure that each risk was properly understood and being adequately controlled; (2) summarising Management's current assessment of Corporate Risk S1: Inability to Manage Strategic Change; (3) highlighting the current key management processes and controls designed to mitigate the risk, as well as any planned actions which were intended to enhance current controls or to mitigate the risk further; (4) providing, within the Appendix to the report, the current "deep dive review" of this Corporate Risk, and (5) intimating that the documentation in relation to this risk had significantly changed since the previous review in order to reflect the considerable degree of change which had occurred in recent months and the ongoing actions which continued to be progressed.

Robert Steenson spoke to the report and, thereafter, the Panel agreed to note the content of the report.

RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE: CORPORATE RISK 07 - SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME, FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

5. There was submitted a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Solutions (1) advising that the Corporate Management Team had identified a number of Key Corporate Risks which were subject to periodic review by Management to ensure that each risk was properly understood and being adequately controlled; (2) summarising Management's current assessment of the management of Corporate Risk 07: Serious Organised Crime, Fraud and Corruption; (3) highlighting the key controls designed to mitigate this risk, as well as a number of planned actions which were intended to either enhance current controls or to mitigate this risk further, and (4) providing, within the Appendix to the report, the current "deep dive review" of this Corporate Risk.

Archie Aitken spoke to the report and answered Members' questions and, thereafter, the Panel agreed to note the report.

FOLLOW UP ACTIONS PREVIOUSLY AGREED BY MANAGEMENT IN RESPONSE TO INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

6. There was submitted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (1) detailing the extent to which Management had implemented actions previously committed to in response to recommendations in Internal Audit Reports, where those actions were due to be completed by the end of November 2018; (2) advising that Internal Audit had concluded that four of the 16 agreed actions in response to Internal Audit outputs had been completed, two were no longer relevant and seven of the ten relevant issues, not yet fully implemented, required to be highlighted to the Panel; (3) providing, within Appendix 1 to the report, a detailed update of the previously agreed planned actions which were categorised as 'not yet complete' and assessed by Internal Audit as having a High or Medium residual risk; (4) highlighting (a) that 53 of the 56 agreed actions in response to External Audit outputs had been completed; (b) that two of the three actions, not yet fully implemented, required to be highlighted to the Panel, and (c) that one remaining action was no longer relevant, and (5) setting out, within Appendix 2 to the report, management actions 'not yet complete' and where the residual risk was assessed as High or Medium.

Ken Adamson spoke to the report and answered Members' questions and, thereafter, the Panel agreed to note the content of the report.

INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

7. There was submitted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (1) setting out an overview of Internal Audit activities; (2) outlining the results of Internal Audit outputs finalised since the last progress report submitted to the meeting of the Panel on 13 December 2018; (3) highlighting the most significant issues arising from recently completed audit work, and (4) providing (a) within Appendix 1 to the report, a brief summary of the scope and key findings of each substantive audit report, and (b) copies of the Internal Audit Reports in relation to each substantive audit within the executive summaries appended to the report.

The Convener advised that, due to the significant interest surrounding this report, this item would be processed in two parts, as follows:- (1) the Internal Audit reports for Corporate Governance (Principles A and B), Management of Strategic Change, DigitalNL – Financial Business Case, and Financial Savings and Financial Sustainability, and (2) the Internal Audit report regarding the Compliance Investigation: Recruitment Issues (Education).

- (1) Ken Adamson spoke to the Internal Audit reports included within the first part of the item and answered Members' questions. Members requested assurance that further reports specifically focused on the scrutiny and governance of DigitalNL would be submitted to future meetings of the Panel. Robert Steenson confirmed that reports in relation to DigitalNL would

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be submitted to the Transformation and Digitalisation Committee, which had responsibility for monitoring the DigitalNL programme, and also, where appropriate, to the Audit and Scrutiny Panel. Ken Adamson also highlighted that work on DigitalNL was likely to be included in the 2019/20 Internal Audit Plan, which would be submitted to the Panel for approval in June. Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) that further reports be submitted to future meetings of the Panel in relation to the scrutiny and governance of DigitalNL; (2) that Internal Audit submit reports to future meetings of the Panel on the progress made by Management in implementing agreed Management actions in relation to all audit recommendations categorised as Red or Amber, and (3) that the content of the report be otherwise noted.

- (2) Ken Adamson provided an overview of the Internal Audit report in relation to the Compliance Investigation into Recruitment Issues within Education. Members requested clarification as to the level of redaction contained within the report and the reasons for this. Ken Adamson confirmed that, following discussion with the Monitoring Officer, the report had been redacted in accordance with the Internal Audit Charter and associated reporting protocol agreed by the Panel at its meeting on 5 February 2018.

Fiona Whittaker, Derek Brown and Robert Steenson answered Members' questions in relation to the report. Members requested clarification in relation to how many of the employees listed within the report were still employed by the Council and it was agreed that, following the meeting, this information would be circulated to Members of the Panel.

Following extensive and detailed discussion, Members agreed (1) that details be provided to the Panel in relation to how many of the employees listed within the report were still employed within the Council; (2) that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Panel scheduled for 16 May 2019, which would focus on the actions undertaken since the investigation and any further planned actions; (3) that the Convener meet with the Chief Executive and relevant officers to discuss the concerns expressed by the Panel during the course of the meeting and to define the focus of the report, and (4) that the potential submission of further reports to the Panel in relation to this item, particularly in relation to procedural matters, be considered at the next meeting of the Panel on 16 May 2019.

EXTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL PLAN 2018/19

8. There was submitted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager setting out Audit Scotland's planned audit activities and how it intended to discharge its responsibilities, in its audit of the Council as laid out in its Code of Audit Practice and relevant International Standards on Auditing, for the year-ending 31 March 2019. A copy of the Audit Scotland Annual Audit Plan 2018/19 was appended to the report.

Carole Grant, Audit Scotland provided an overview of the External Audit Annual Plan. After discussion, the Panel agreed (1) to note Audit Scotland's commentary on its planned audit approach, and (2) to note the work proposed in undertaking the 2018/19 audit of the Council.

CODE OF PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY REPORTING 2018/19

9. There was submitted a report by the Head of Financial Solutions advising of any significant changes to the accounting requirements and format of the Council's 2018/19 Annual Accounts, which required to be implemented prior to the submission of the Unaudited Accounts to External Audit by 30 June 2019.

Paul Hughes spoke to the report and, thereafter, the Panel agreed to note the content of the report and actions being taken to ensure that the Council submitted a fully compliant set of Annual Accounts.

ACCOUNTS COMMISSION REPORT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL OVERVIEW 2017/18

10. There was submitted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (1) providing the findings of the Accounts Commission Report 'Local Government Financial Overview 2017/18' and the Management assessment of, and responses to, the issues raised by the Accounts Commission; (2) detailing (a) that the report was one of two overview reports that the Accounts Commission published each year, and (b) that the second report commented on the wider challenges and the performance of Councils and would be published at the end of the financial year; (3) advising that the Accounts Commission report provided (a) a high-level independent analysis of the financial performance of Councils during 2017/18; (b) their financial position at the end of 2017/18, and (c) commentary on the financial outlook for Councils; (4) highlighting, within the Appendix to the report, examples of questions that Elected Members may wish to consider asking in order to help understand their Council's financial position and to scrutinise financial performance; (5) setting out North Lanarkshire Council's position in relation to the key issues highlighted by the Accounts Commission, and (6) intimating that the Management response to the issues raised provided assurance that the Council was aware of, and was responding appropriately to, the issues and risks identified by the Accounts Commission.

Ken Adamson spoke to the report and answered Members' questions. Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) to note the findings of the Accounts Commission report and the Management response to the issues raised within the report, and (2) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel in order to provide assurance that any actions arising from the matters received by the Accounts Commission had been appropriately progressed by Management.

NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE 2018

11. There was submitted a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (1) detailing that the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) was a biennial data matching exercise organised in Scotland by Audit Scotland and in which the Council had successfully participated since the first exercise in 2004; (2) highlighting (a) that the NFI was widely recognised as an important tool in detecting and preventing fraud; (b) that the exercise involved comparing different datasets using defined criteria which enabled the identification of inconsistencies and anomalies and which could indicate potential fraud and/or error, and (c) that the information identified during this exercise enabled public bodies to investigate whether fraud had occurred and, where appropriate, to take relevant action; (3) advising of the output from the 2018 NFI data matching exercise which had been recently received by the Council and the actions to be progressed by Services to review and investigate the matches arising, and (4) providing, within the Appendix to the report, details of high category reports identified during the NFI 2018 exercise.

Ken Adamson spoke to the report and answered Members' questions. Thereafter, the Panel agreed (a) to note the outputs from the NFI 2018 data matching exercise, and (b) to note the actions which would be progressed by Services to review and progress matches identified during this exercise.

SELF-EVALUATION - ELECTED MEMBERS

12. With reference to paragraph 4 of the meeting of the Panel held on 30 April 2018, when the Strategic Self-Assessment Framework had been presented to the Panel, there was submitted a report by the Business Solutions Manager (1) intimating that the Strategic Self-Assessment Framework aimed to ensure that the Council had a way of regularly assessing practice, recognising strengths and identifying areas that could be improved; (2) advising that the Strategic Programme had commenced in 2018 with a self-evaluation exercise undertaken with Senior Leadership and Management through the Corporate Management Team; (3) detailing that the next stage in the Strategic Framework had been to capture wider perceptions and feedback from Elected Members; (4) highlighting (a) that an online survey had been issued to all Elected Members in January 2019; (b) that the survey had comprised 14 statements and Elected Members had been asked to review each statement and indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with them, and (c) that 36 responses had been received

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from the 77 Members, and (5) providing, within the Appendix to the report, the results from the Elected Members self-evaluation exercise.

Linda Johnston spoke to the report and answered Members' questions. The Convener thanked those Members who had completed the survey, but also expressed concern regarding the number of Members who had not participated in the survey, and highlighted the importance of participation as Members' feedback played a crucial role in identifying strengths and improvements within the Council. Thereafter, the Panel agreed to note the content of the report.

Motherwell, 16 May 2019 at 1 pm.

A Meeting of the **AUDIT AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

PRESENT

Councillor Gallacher, Convener; Councillors Anderson, Burrows, Graham, Hume, T. Johnston, Morgan and Watson.

CHAIR

Councillor Gallacher (Convener) presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

Des Murray, Chief Executive; Archie Aitken, Head of Legal and Democratic Solutions; Fiona Whittaker, Head of People and Organisational Development; Ken Adamson, Audit and Risk Manager; Anne Hanlon, Facility Support Services Manager; Linda Johnston, Business Solutions Manager; Susan Lawrie, Business Manager (Performance and Resource Allocation); Charles McCabe, Forward Planning and Specification Manager, Paula Hendry, Principal Auditor, and Andrew Rose, Democratic Services Manager.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE

Carole Grant, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland.

APOLOGIES

Councillors Hogg and Alan Valentine.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN TERMS OF ETHICAL STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE ETC. (SCOTLAND) ACT 2000

1. There were no declarations of interest.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE - COMPLIANCE INVESTIGATION: RECRUITMENT ISSUES (EDUCATION)

2. With reference to paragraph 7 of the meeting of the Panel held on 28 March 2019, when the Panel agreed to a further report in relation to the Internal Audit report on Compliance Investigation: Recruitment Issues (Education), there was submitted a report by the Chief Executive (1) detailing the recruitment procedures identified in the Internal Audit Report that deviated from the Standard Council Recruitment Policy and Procedures with regard to the recruitment of teacher vacancies; (2) providing an update on the actions by Education and Families and Human Resource (HR) Management following receipt of the Internal Audit Report, and (3) outlining (a) the Council's existing recruitment procedures and control measures, and (b) the corrective actions implemented, and the controls being applied, to remedy and regulate all recruitment within the Education and Families Service.

Des Murray spoke to the report and answered Members' questions. He also provided (1) re-assurance that all officers were now fully aware of the proper standards and expected processes, and (2) confirmation that no Elected Member had received an unredacted copy of the report issued as agenda item seven at the meeting of the Panel held on 28 March 2019.

Following a detailed discussion, the Panel requested that a further report be submitted to a future meeting providing assurance on the robustness of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy. Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) to note the content of the report, (2) to note the corrective actions taken and controls put in place by the Education and Families and HR Management Teams to address the findings of Internal Audit; (3) to note that a further internal audit would be undertaken as part of the 2019/20 action plan in order to verify the effectiveness of the controls put in place, and (4) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel providing assurance on the robustness of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

ADJOURNMENT

The Convener adjourned the meeting at 1.50 pm for 15 minutes.

PRESENTATION - SCHOOL OCCUPANCY RATES

3. Charles McCabe gave a presentation providing an overview of how school occupancy rates were calculated. The presentation provided information in relation to measurements, the number of available spaces, optimum utilisation, statistics for primary and secondary sectors, and managing changes moving forward.

Charles McCabe answered Members' questions and thereafter the Panel agreed to note the content of the presentation.

SICKNESS ABSENCE OUTTURN 2017/18

4. With reference to paragraph 4 of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Panel on 1 March 2019, when the Panel had noted the Performance in Improving Local Services – Follow-up report and requested further details in relation to a number of performance measures detailed within the report, including the sickness absence outturn position for 2017/18, there was submitted a report by the Head of People and Organisational Development (1) advising that the absence results for the Local Government Benchmarking Framework showed that, whilst the Council position for teachers had improved from 31st out of 32 local authorities in 2016/17 to 23rd in 2017/18, the position for local government employees had deteriorated from 11th in 2016/17 to 22nd in 2017/18; (2) providing a comparison of the Council's performance in relation to other local authorities of a similar size or geographical location; (3) detailing (a) the 2017/18 outturn position per Service, and (b) the contributory factors to be taken into consideration in relation to each Service position, including the changes in the delivery model of the Waste Solutions Service and the uncertainty over workforce changes and the future role of the Health and Social Integration Joint Board, both of which may have contributed to increases in sickness absence within their respective Services; (4) setting out the actions and improvements taken in order to reverse the trend for local government employees and to build upon improvements for teachers; (5) intimating that the People and Organisational Development Team was working with Services to ensure that all Managers were aware of the importance of dealing with sickness absence and that each Service had a dedicated team of Employee Relations Advisers who offered advice and assistance in managing short term and long term absence cases, and (6) highlighting that, based on current projections, as at March 2019, it was anticipated that the Council outturn position (for teachers and local government employees) for 2018/19 would be 10.40 full time equivalent (FTE) days, which represented an improvement of 4.24% against the previous year's outturn position of 10.86 FTE days.

Fiona Whittaker spoke to the report and answered Members' questions. The Convener proposed that, following the establishment of the Council's Mental Health Policy, a further report be brought back to a future meeting in relation to this Policy and that Trade Union representatives also be invited

to attend the meeting. The Panel requested that a historical analysis exercise be undertaken to assess whether there had been any movement in relation to sickness absence over previous years.

Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) to note the outturn position of sickness absence for 2017/18; (2) to note the actions which had been taken and those further planned actions; (3) that, once the Council's Mental Health Policy had been established, a report in relation to this matter be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel and that representatives from the Trade Unions also be invited to attend that meeting; (4) that a historical analysis exercise be undertaken to assess whether there had been any movement in relation to the sickness absence position over previous years, and (5) to otherwise note the content of the report.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION LEVELS - FACILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

5. With reference to paragraph 4 of the meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Panel on 1 March 2019, when the Panel noted the Performance in Improving Local Services – Follow-up report and requested further details in relation to a number of performance measures detailed within the report, including the customer satisfaction details for building cleaning, janitorial and catering services, there was submitted a report by the Head of Asset and Procurement Solutions (1) advising that Facility Support Services (FSS) utilised three delivery questionnaires, copies of which were appended to the report, in order to obtain customer feedback in relation to building cleaning, catering and janitorial services; (2) setting out the process for the issue of the questionnaires and actions taken upon their return; (3) highlighting, in Appendix 1 to the report, that (a) from January to June 2018, the number of questionnaire returns was at an all time low, and (b) for the period July to December 2018, FSS undertook an exercise to contact all schools which had not returned questionnaires by the due date, which resulted in a significant extension to the return rate; (4) detailing (a) that following up on survey returns put a considerable strain on staff time and was not a viable use of resources, and (b) that FSS was looking for alternative options in relation to this matter, including the potential engagement with other sections across Enterprise and Communities in order to utilise one questionnaire across the Service, and (5) intimating that, as an interim measure, a letter would be issued to all Head Teachers to remind them of the importance of completing the returns for quality and evaluation purposes.

Anne Hanlon spoke to the report and answered Members' questions. The Panel expressed concern regarding the poor response rate received and stated that they did not accept the proposal detailed in paragraph 2.8 of the report that a non response would be taken as a satisfactory return. The Panel advised that they wished to see an increased rate of completed questionnaires and that Head Teachers be instructed to complete questionnaires. The Convener agreed that she would contact the Chief Executive in relation to the points raised by the Panel.

Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) to note the next steps, as outlined within paragraph 2.7 of the report; (2) that the Convener write to the Chief Executive (a) expressing the concerns of the Panel in relation to the poor response rate; (b) advising that the Panel did not agree with the proposal in paragraph 2.8 of the report that a non response would be taken as a satisfactory return, and (c) requesting that Head Teachers be instructed in future to complete questionnaires, and (3) to otherwise note the content of the report.

THE PLAN FOR NORTH LANARKSHIRE AND THE ROLE OF THE AUDIT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

6. There was submitted a report by the Business Solutions Manager (1) providing an overview of the three frameworks, ie the Strategic Policy Framework, the Strategic Performance Framework and the Strategic Self Evaluation Framework, which supported The Plan for North Lanarkshire; (2) highlighting that the frameworks were designed to enable a regular and structured approach for assessing progress, measuring success, and identifying, where necessary, any areas for improvement; (3) advising that the frameworks would support the scrutiny function of the Panel, in particular with reference to reviewing and monitoring the performance of the Council and delivering upon its

priorities, considering the Council's public performance reporting arrangements to ensure appropriate public accountability, and ensuring the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's performance and improvement arrangements; (4) outlining that the next steps were to focus on the development of levels two and three of the Strategic Performance Framework, including confirmation of the performance reporting schedule and content, and (5) intimating that discussions were underway with the Training and Organisational Development Team in terms of engagement with Elected Members, tailored around the scrutiny and challenge process for The Plan for North Lanarkshire, the Programme of Work and the supporting Policy, Performance and Self-Evaluation Frameworks.

Linda Johnston spoke to the report and advised the Panel that there would be a presentation in relation to level two measures in the Strategic Performance Framework, with baseline data, at the meeting of the Panel scheduled for 5 September 2019.

Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) to note the content of the report; (2) to note the next steps as detailed within the report; (3) to note the integral role of the Panel and the challenge and scrutiny function for The Plan for North Lanarkshire, and (4) to note that there would be a presentation in relation to level two measures in the Strategic Performance Framework, with baseline data, at the meeting of the Panel scheduled for 5 September 2019.

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

7. There was submitted a report by the Business Solutions Manager (1) advising that, as a result of the self-evaluation exercise undertaken in 2017 by the Corporate Improvement Team, 17 areas of improvement were identified for inclusion in the Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP), details of which were outlined in the Appendix to the report; (2) intimating that, in order to facilitate a joined-up approach to common areas of work, it was now deemed appropriate to map all improvement activities from the CIP to the Programme of Work that supported The Plan for North Lanarkshire, and (3) highlighting (a) that the Panel had a key challenge and scrutiny role to play in terms of The Plan for North Lanarkshire and the Programme of Work, and (b) that, in order to enable oversight and monitoring, these items would be a recurring agenda item on the Panel's Scrutiny Programme.

Linda Johnston spoke to the report and answered Members' questions. Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) to note the content of the report, and (2) to note the role of the Panel in the future oversight and monitoring of the Programme of Work.

STRATEGIC POLICY FRAMEWORK - UPDATE REPORT

8. There was submitted a report by the Business Solutions Manager (1) intimating that a review had revealed an accumulation of 81 individual high level strategies, plans and policies across the Council; (2) highlighting that many of the strategies, plans and policies had been created in isolation and in certain instances, there were no explicit links to corporate goals or planned corporate outcomes, which had resulted in fragmentation, overlap, duplication and gaps; (3) advising that, in order to address the issues identified during the review and following consultation with Managers and Officers across the Council, a Strategic Policy Framework had been developed; (4) providing, in the Appendix to the report, a copy of the Strategic Policy Framework which reduced the high level strategies from 37 to 23, and policies and plans from 44 to 9, and (5) detailing that the majority of the strategies included in the Strategic Policy Framework were now on a timetable for review, with a copy of the timetable included as Appendix 2 to the report.

Linda Johnston spoke to the report and answered Members' questions. Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) to note the progress in relation to the review of the Strategic Policy Framework, and (2) to note the timetable for the review and development of individual strategies, policies and plans.

BENCHMARKING REVIEW

9. There was submitted a report by the Business Solutions Manager (1) advising that, during the Corporate Management Team's self-evaluation exercise in 2017, the Council's use of benchmarking was identified as an area for improvement; (2) detailing that a review of the Council's approach to benchmarking had been undertaken; (3) intimating that the findings from the benchmarking review would be integrated into the Strategic Performance Framework in order to supplement performance reviews, inform the identification of improvement areas, where required, and ensure contributions to service redesign, change and decision making processes, and (4) outlining the next steps, including the submission of further updates to the Panel on the alignment of benchmarking information to The Plan for North Lanarkshire, the Programme of Work, and integration into the supporting Policy, Performance and Self-evaluation Frameworks.

Susan Lawrie spoke to the report and Linda Johnston answered Members' questions. The Convener advised that training in relation to benchmarking would be provided at a future meeting of the Panel.

Thereafter, the Panel agreed (1) to note the content of the report and the accompanying Appendices; (2) to note the planned next steps to support the Panel in fulfilling their role in terms of ensuring the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's performance and improvement arrangements, and (3) that training in relation to benchmarking would be provided at a future meeting of the Panel.