

North Lanarkshire Council

Report

Transformation and Digitisation Committee

approval noting

Ref KH/LB

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DigitalNL Intelligent Automation

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Executive Summary

As members are aware, the development of the successful deployment of a robot (bot) into production is contained within Workstream 4 - Intelligent Automation' (Robotic Process Automation).

The deployment of the bot(s) will enable a number of the Council's manual and repetitive processes to be automated.

This report provides Committee with a further update regarding this work package and illustrates the actions taken since the previous Committee of 13 November 2019.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (1) Note the successful deployment of the robot into production.
- (2) Approve the next steps outlined within the report.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority All priorities

Ambition statement (21) Continue to identify and access opportunities to leverage additional resources to support our ambitions

(23) Build a workforce for the future capable of delivering on our priorities and shared ambition

(24) Review and design services around people, communities, and shared resources

(25) Ensure intelligent use of data and information to support fully evidence based decision making and future planning

1. Background

- 1.1 Members will recall previous reports to the Transformation and Digitisation Committee which advised on the high-volume, repetitive and manually intensive tasks carried out across council services.
 - 1.2 By embracing the technology available through Intelligent Automation (IA), data entry errors would be eliminated, completion times for processing improved and future financial savings identified.
 - 1.3 Opportunities to test the aforementioned technology through the implementation of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) were identified following a review of the options available. It was agreed that a proof of concept project would be designed for work carried out within the Revenues and Benefits function of Financial Solutions. The development work was carried out to design the RPA 'bot' and this first 'bot' went live in November 2019 utilising UiPath market leading technology.
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2. Report

As members will recall, details of the implementation development and implementation of the proof of concept 'bot' was submitted to the Transformation and Digitisation Committee in November 2019. Early predictions identified a reduction in processing times from 4 minutes (manually) to 10 seconds by utilising the bot.

Following implementation of the bot (AMI – Automating Manual Interactions) the feasibility and value of RPA has been proven. 3,002 cases have been processed since November 2019, with a processing time of 8 seconds per case. Appendix 1 to this report provides an outline of the process created.

The proof of concept was developed utilising a test licence which was valid until 31 December 2019. In order to continue running the bot and to allow further developments to fully utilise the bot, RPA licenses have now been procured from technology leaders, UiPath.

2.1 Identification of Phase 2 processes - Stakeholder Engagement

During November 2019 – January 2020, engagement took place with various stakeholders; including services, ICT staff and leadership teams to identify suitable processes for automation. Engagement activities included:

- Process assessment workshops held with teams from Revenue and Benefits, Housing and Adult Social Care to walk through potential processes and understand their suitability for automation.
- Further discovery and reimagine workshops were carried out with Revenue and Benefits, Housing and Adult Social Care.
- Intelligent automation awareness sessions were carried out with all Business Solutions staff during a lunch and learn event and a separate awareness session was also carried out with the 'Digital Transformers'.

An awareness and positive appetite for RPA has been created across all service areas, through the digital transformer network and strategic communication efforts.

2.2 Opportunity Assessment

As a result of the stakeholder workshops detailed in 2.1 above, over 30 specific processes from Revenue and Benefits, Housing and Adult Social Care were analysed against a set criteria to identify suitable opportunities for applying AMI. This Opportunity Assessment created a detailed list of processes with a further assessment carried out to identify high value automation opportunities.

To fit with slots in the robot – 7 processes have been identified within Revenues & Benefits and Housing Services as meeting all the set criteria. Developed work is now underway with implementation of phase 2 of AMI scheduled for April 2020.

A project team has been created to deliver this programme of work and to design the infrastructure to host and maintain the growing robot estate.

2.3 Knowledge and Skills Transfer

Through this programme, up to 4 Council staff will work alongside PwC automation experts to learn Intelligent Automation skills. A formal knowledge transfer plan has been developed to ensure NLC receive both software and technical training through on the job training and support.

2.4 Next Steps

Following completion of the Proof of Concept and Opportunity Assessment projects the next steps are to develop further priority automation processes into a live production environment and establish intelligent automation into the authority. This will include the following activities:-

- Define and build intelligent automation solutions for a further 7 priority processes within the Revenues and Benefits and Housing Service areas.
- Continue the development work within Business Solutions to co-create the technical design of a robust infrastructure required to support the new processes and growing robot estate.
- Work with Revenue and Benefits to reimagine service area processes and look at how we can transform how they deliver outcomes and improve access and speed for consumers, through the automation efforts.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

There are no requirements for an assessment under the Fairer Scotland duty arising from this report, however, members should be assured that The Fairer Scotland assessment process will be undertaken as appropriate when designing services for customers, businesses and residents.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

Specific equality impact assessments will be undertaken by council services, as appropriate, when developing the phased implementation programme.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

The year one budget 2019/20 for this work package is £468,555. All costs are contained within the overall indicative five year investment (£28.8m) and in line with the Council's Financial Governance arrangements regular monitoring, control and reporting on revenue and capital is carried out.

Further information and costings in respect of the programme will be submitted to committee as projects progress.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

There will be changes to some employee roles as a result of the DigitalNL programme. The DigitalNL team continues to collaborate with the People and Organisational Development (POD) Team regarding early stakeholder engagement and consultation, as these are key to the successful implementation and delivery of the HR related aspects of this iterative transformation programme. With a view to taking this forward, detailed plans are presently being drafted in respect of the initial implementation releases.

4.3 Environmental Impact

Environmental impacts will be identified as appropriate when designing services for customers, businesses and residents.

4.4 Risk Impact

Effective identification and management of risk is considered critical to the success of this programme. A comprehensive risk assessment and Risk and Issue Log (RAIDE) is being managed and monitored throughout the programme with high level risks and all programme level issues being reported to the SRO and Delivery Board on a monthly basis.

5. Measures of success

- 5.1 Success will be evidenced through savings (in time, quality and cost) due to the deployment of automation technology.
- 5.2 Specific measures of success will be identified and evidenced as The Plan for North Lanarkshire and all Programmes of Work (including DigitalNL) progress.

6. Supporting documents

Appendix 1 – Intelligent Automation Diagram.



Head of Business Solutions

