

# North Lanarkshire Council Report

## Transformation and Digitisation Committee

approval  noting

Ref KH/LJ/FM

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## DigitalNL Communications and Engagement Activity

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### Executive Summary

Through the DigitalNL Programme, North Lanarkshire Council is committed to becoming the leading digital local authority in Scotland, providing innovative, secure and flexible ways to access and manage public services.

This will allow us to meet customer expectations and deliver service level efficiencies and essential cost savings.

The Communications Strategy, as previously shared, is in place to support the DigitalNL work packages within the programme and ensure stakeholders are informed, involved and able to benefit from the changes planned.

This report summarises the communication efforts that have taken place to support the programme, however, as a result of the crisis situation that the country is facing in relation to Covid-19, some events and activities scheduled to take place during April and May have been postponed.

In response to Covid-19, a key priority has been to support the working environment changes and the impact on the health and wellbeing of colleagues during this challenging time.

### Recommendations

It is recommended the Transformation and Digitisation Committee:

- (1) Note the contents of this report.
- (2) Acknowledge the work in response to the Covid-19 crisis.
- (3) Acknowledge continued efficiencies implemented through the roll out of Robotic Process Automation in the current challenging times.

## The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	All priorities
Ambition statement	(18) Ensure our digital transformation is responsive to all people's needs and enable access to the services they need (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

### 1. Background

- 1.1 As members are aware the DigitalNL programme was approved in March 2019 with approval of the initial Communication and Engagement Plan in May 2019 which focussed on setting the foundations for early engagement activities with employees and stakeholders.
  - 1.2 As the digital programme has developed, additional methods of communication and engagement to inform and involve users in the digitisation of services have developed.
  - 1.3 Members of the Transformation and Digitisation Committee, at the meeting on 26 February 2020, approved the second Communication and Engagement Plan covering the period January – June 2020.
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### 2. Report

- 2.1. In line with the approved Communication and Engagement Plan, a number of planned activities have taken place since the last Committee.

#### Communications Overview

##### Revenue and Benefits Portal

- 2.2 To promote the Portal, an A5 leaflet highlighting the benefits and how to register was included in the annual council tax billing mailer, which took place at the end of March, 2020. Various other communication channels, both internal and external, have also been used to raise awareness and encourage the use of on-line accounts. To help provide extra guidance to customers setting up an online council tax account, a short animated video has been produced to provide step-by-step instructions.

The video is available via the following link: [www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/doitonline](http://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/doitonline)

- 2.3 Account registrations for the Council Tax, Benefits and Business Rates Portal continue to rise. As members will be aware, the Portal provides residents and business owners with the opportunity to carry out a range of transactions online such as making payments, arranging e-billing and viewing and applying for benefits. This is particularly valuable at the moment given Government advice to stay indoors to minimise the spread of Covid19.
- 2.4 The platform is making positive progress, with over 5,000 on-line accounts. Future communication activity will continue to support and increase uptake.

## **Robotic Process Automation**

- 2.5 The council's first 'BOT' to process Direct Debit updates was introduced within the Revenue and Benefits team at the end of last year. Our desire to make further use of automated technology has continued.
- 2.6 Since early January, the development team has been working to build an additional nine process automations.
- 2.7 One was an additional Direct Debit BOT, known as ADDACS, which has been developed to update bank changes. It went into live production on 7 April 2020, and to highlight the efficiencies being gained, this BOT processed 1,600 Direct Debit bank changes in one day - saving the team 162 hours or just over 20 man-days.
- 2.8 Furthermore, the existing unpaid Direct Debit BOT (Ami) processed 1,000 cases of unpaid Direct Debits in 3.5 hours. This volume of updates would have taken the team over 100 man hours to process, which is equivalent to 13 working days.
- 2.9 Internal channels have been used to share these milestones with staff and communication plans are in place to profile staff working with this technology and the benefits that are being gained.

## **Service Redesign**

- 2.10 As members are aware, Waste Solutions, the Employee Service Centre, Fleet and Built Environment were the first services to be re-designed. The new processes have been handed over to the System Integrator to build on the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The build phase commenced mid-April 2020 and this development will continue in line with the planning programme of service redesign. The DigitalNL Team has worked closely with service staff to develop the new processes and this engagement will continue during User Acceptance Testing (UAT) and training on the new processes.
- 2.11 Work has commenced on the re-design phase of Environmental Assets, Licencing, Revenue and Benefits and Protective Services.
- 2.12 The new processes have been designed to allow customers to apply, make enquires and book and pay for services online. The introduction of new online functionality will also keep customers up-to-date with the status of their queries and transactions. Customers will also be involved in user testing of the CRM system.

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

### **Yammer**

- 2.13 Yammer usage throughout April was particularly strong with the volume of read messages up 79% on the previous month. Member numbers also grew by 10% to 2,163.
- 2.14 This can in part be attributed to changes regarding working environments with many staff working remotely and using the platform to keep in touch with colleagues and access news. Furthermore, to help staff use the site to stay better connected, staff can now also choose to download the free Yammer App onto their personal devices.

- 2.15 On 2 April 2020, the Chief Executive held a live Q&A on the platform dedicated to the Covid19 crisis to provide information and reassurance to staff across all services. It was the most successful Q&A held on the site to date in terms of staff involvement before, during and after the live session.

### **DigitalNL Staff Newsletter**

- 2.16 Three editions of the bi-monthly DigitalNL newsletter have been shared internally, with the most recent issue circulated at the end of April. It provided a round-up of the development work underway, including Robotic Process Automation (RPA), service re-design, website development, M365 and the high level design for the Customer Services Hub. Along with providing staff with the latest information, it also highlighted the work, progress and commitment that is continuing within the DigitalNL Programme during this challenging time.
- 2.17 To ensure we share information about the DigitalNL Programme that is of interest to staff, a notice was circulated with the latest newsletter asking for feedback and highlighting how staff can get in touch if there is a particular topic they would like us to feature. All comments and suggestions are being received and monitored via the dedicated DigitalNL mailbox.

### **Cyber Scotland Week**

- 2.18 At the end of February, DigitalNL took part in Cyber Scotland Week and worked with the Training and Organisational Design (TOD) Team to share information and tips with staff about how to stay safe online. Across the five days, a variety of communication formats were used to keep the messages fresh and engaging, including cyber security quizzes, posters and animated videos that focussed on creating strong passwords and how to spot and defend against 'phishing' scams.
- 2.19 The links to the videos are below and these were also shared with the public and business owners through the council's Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.

#### [Password Security](#)

#### [How to check if websites are genuine](#)

- 2.20 The week was also used to promote LearnNL and the range of training modules that are available to help staff gain a better understanding of online security.
- 2.21 To help promote the learning and development opportunities that staff can access, North Lanarkshire Council will once again take part in 'Learning at Work Week'. This was scheduled to take place 18-24 May. However, in light of the current situation, the event will now be held in October 2020. DigitalNL will continue to collaborate with the TOD team in the planning and communication activity required to make the week a success.

### **Disability Access Panel**

- 2.22 The DigitalNL Programme is now actively involved with the Disability Access Panel. The Annual General Meeting that was scheduled to take place on 26 March was postponed as a result of Covid19 and will be reconvened in due course.

## **Trade Unions**

- 2.23 A regular exchange of information regarding the progress of the DigitalNL Programme takes place with Trade Union Representatives. The latest meeting took place on 16 April and the intention is to hold them on a monthly basis going forward.

## **Elected Member Engagement**

- 2.24 The Communication and Engagement Plan highlighted the need to engage further with elected members. Initially this contact will be with the Convenor of the committee and a monthly programme of meetings commenced in February 2020 to ensure contact is maintained and full sight of all communication activity is provided.

## **Website Redesign**

- 2.25 The council's new website will be launched later this year and with the structure and visual design work complete, the focus over the last two months has been on the content design and development of the Content Management System (CMS) that our web authors will use to create and monitor the information available on the site.
- 2.26 A small number of staff, from each service area, will be trained as web publishers to ensure all website content is of a consistent standard and a Tone of Voice document has been developed to guide the style, language and structure that should be applied when creating content.
- 2.27 Further to this, the wider Content Migration Plan to move information across to the new website over the coming months is being finalised. The first two service areas involved in this work are Waste Solutions and the Schools and Learning pages within Education.
- 2.28 Our engagement with external partners including The Tenant Participation Group, Digital North Lanarkshire, The Disability Access Panel and the Communications Scrutiny Group (North Star Consulting & Research) has helped to gain valued contacts for the User Testing stage, which again in the current climate, has still to be agreed.

## **Youth Involvement**

- 2.29 It is essential that the new website meets the needs of all demographics. Research suggests that young people spend an average of nine hours a day online – and children as young as 10 are accessing and using websites and social media. Therefore engaging and gaining feedback from our younger audience groups during the User Testing stage of the website will be a priority.
- 2.30 To gain advice and make this happen we are working with a Senior Education Officer within Education and Families and we will also seek to provide workplace experience days to pupils interested in a career in web development.
- 2.31 We are also in discussion with our Modern Apprenticeship Team to evaluate potential opportunities for young people to support DigitalNL internally and within local communities.
- 2.32 Wider engagement to share the council's digital ambitions with our young people and gain their thoughts, feedback and involvement digital transformation had recently been put in place through the Children and Young People Steering Group.

- 2.33 This group was originally set up in response to the Climate Emergency Response and provided an ideal opportunity to engage with representatives of the Youth Parliament and school age children and young people across North Lanarkshire.
- 2.34 The first meeting took place on 18 February with further engagement due to take place at the Climate Emergency Response Seminar in the Motherwell Concert Hall on 17 March. However, as a consequence of Covid-19, the event has been postponed and we will work with the organisers as and when the event is re-scheduled.
- 2.35 To further expand this level of engagement, we are working with Community Learning and Development to get involved with the North Lanarkshire Youth Council to ensure young people are aware of the digital advancements underway and those planned over the coming years and are part of the conversation.
- 2.36 Although face-to-face meetings are not taking place due to Covid-19, the Youth Council is maintaining contact through social media platforms - and the digitisation of council services and channels will be a feature of the online forum that is scheduled to take place in May. It is envisaged that the Modern Apprentice within the DigitalNL team will be involved and help lead this work.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

- 2.37 During the current crisis, a key priority has been to support the working environment changes and the impact on the health and wellbeing of colleagues during this challenging time.
- 2.38 To help provide advice and guidance on a vast array of potential issues that employees may be experiencing an easy to access digital platform called 'WorkWellNL' has been established on Connect. Links to the site highlighting the information and activities available are being shared regularly through council-wide staff announcements and the main Yammer page.
- 2.39 In addition to this, through the council's existing LearnNL site, a digital skills toolkit dedicated to agile working is being shared internally, to ensure staff are aware of the resources available to work safely and securely from home.
- 2.40 Furthermore, in collaboration with Corporate Communications and our business partner, PwC, the DigitalNL team is helping to coordinate and manage an internal communications campaign focussed on virtual working. Once again, the objective is to support the mental and physical wellbeing of staff and use communication material and interactive platforms such as Yammer, to help staff embrace new ways of working and learn behaviours to maintain and improve productivity.
- 2.41 The campaign got underway at the end of April and will continue to evolve in terms of style and messaging throughout the Covid-19 crisis.

### **Digital Transformers**

- 2.42 North Lanarkshire Council will be introducing Microsoft Office 365 during 2020 and as previously advised, our Digital Transformer team will be early adopters with training commencing in June 2020 with full roll out planned from September 2020 onwards.

## 2.43 **Next Steps**

- Maintain advice, support and guidance to staff in light of Covid-19 crisis
  - Support the content design and migration programme for the new website in line with the release plan
  - Develop website user testing plan, incorporating work underway to involve all age groups
  - Produce communication content to share ongoing RPA advancements
  - Maintain communication continuity throughout service redesign sprints
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## 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.

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## 4. **Implications**

### 4.1 **Financial Impact**

Budget spend in relation to communication activity for 2019/20 was £7,212. In terms of overall outputs and achievements gained to raise awareness and encourage both staff and customers to embrace digital platforms and options, this financial outgoing represents value for money.

To help deliver the communication objectives of the year ahead - which will include an additional focus on external promotion, as more public-facing digital options are introduced - a £10,000 communications budget for 2020/21 has been agreed and all future spend will be reported within the wider DigitalINL financial plan.

### 4.2 **HR/Policy/Legislative Impact**

There will be changes to some employee roles as a result of the DigitalINL programme. The DigitalINL 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.

### 4.3 **Environmental Impact**

There are no environmental impacts arising from this report.

#### 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. Due to the Covid-19 emergency, individual risk assessments will be completed for each individual project, to identify any potential risks and develop suitable mitigation and control measures.

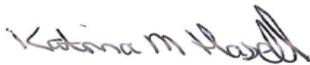
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#### 5. Measures of success

- 5.1 During 2020/21 success will be measured through The Plan for North Lanarkshire and the supporting Programme of Work. With a range of digital milestones set to be achieved over the coming year, the communications and engagement plan will be in place to support and share the successes with all stakeholders.
  - 5.2 Specific focus will be placed on sharing the remit and successes associated with the council's Digital Workforce and Skills Programme. A core aim from the outset has been to provide staff with learning and development opportunities to gain the digital skills and confidence required to embrace new technology and boost productivity through virtual ways of working.
  - 5.3 Along with skills development, using tailored communications to share the benefits of training platforms such as LearnNL, will provide user-friendly ways to reinforce the council's digital ambitions and help staff understand the role that they will play during the transformation.
  - 5.4 The introduction, and more importantly uptake, of digital service options will be monitored against communication activity and successful outcomes as a result of stakeholder engagement – both internal and external – will be shared to maintain awareness and reinforce engagement in the DigitalNL Programme.
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#### 6. Supporting Documents

None



**Head of Business Solutions**



## Communications and Engagement activity

The roadmap below highlights communication and engagement activity completed and scheduled during February – July 2020.

### February 2020

#### Cyber Scotland Week

Used to share information and tips with staff about how to stay safe online, including how to create strong passwords and spot and defend against 'phishing' scams.

### March 2020

#### Council Tax, Benefits & Business Rates Portal

A5 leaflet promoting benefits and how to register included with annual council tax billing mailer. Animated video produced to provide step-by-step instructions on setting up an online council tax account.

### April 2020

#### Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

Additional Direct Debit 'BOT' introduced to update bank changes. Capable of processing 1,600 updates in one day.

### April 2020

#### Service Redesign

New processes as a result of service redesign work are with the Systems Integrator (SI) to build on the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Customers will be involved in user testing of the CRM system.

### April 2020

#### Yammer

Volume of read messages up 79% on March. On 2 April, Des Murray held a live Q&A dedicated to the Covid19 crisis to provide information and reassurance to staff.

### April 2020

#### DigitalNL Staff Newsletter

Most recent issue circulated at the end of April. Highlighted work and progress that is continuing within the DigitalNL Programme during this challenging time. Next edition is due end of June.

## Communications and Engagement activity

The roadmap below highlights communication and engagement activity completed and scheduled during February – July 2020

### ● April 2020

#### **Website Redesign**

Focus has been on the content design and development of the Content Management System. Waste Solutions and Schools and Learning will be the first involved in the content migration process, which will get underway in early May. User testing will also be a priority.

#### **Youth Involvement**

Wider engagement to share the council's digital ambitions with our young people and gain their thoughts, feedback and involvement is being achieved through involvement with the NL Youth Council and the Children and Young People Steering Group.

### ● May 2020

#### **Health and Wellbeing**

To provide advice and guidance on issues that employees may be experiencing as a result of Covid-19, an easy to access digital platform called 'WorkWellNL' has been established on Connect. A digital skills toolkit dedicated to agile working is also being shared internally.

## Communications and Engagement activity

The roadmap below highlights communication and engagement activity completed and scheduled during February – July 2020

### ● May 2020

#### **Learning at Work Week**

This was scheduled to take place 18-24 May. However, in light of the current situation, the event will now be held in October 2020.

### ● May 2020

#### **Trade Unions**

Next consultation with TU due May 2020 – date to be arranged.

### ● June 2020

#### **Bi-annual update**

Extended DigitalNL Newsletter to be cascaded to highlight programme milestones achieved and future focus areas, particularly on service redesign and the roll out of MS 365.

### ● June - Aug 2020

#### **Website Migration**

Support the content design and migration programme for the new website in line with the release plan, including user testing involving all age groups.

### ● July 2020

#### **Digital Workplace**

First pilot user stage live for migration to MS 365. Digital Transformers will be early adopters with wider roll out planned from September.