

North Lanarkshire Council

Report

Transformation and Digitisation Committee

approval noting

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DigitalNL – Digital Skills and Inclusion

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update on progress to establish the Programme of Work to drive forward digital skills in North Lanarkshire. The nature of work and the range of jobs across North Lanarkshire is changing rapidly through digitalisation. Digital technology is revolutionising how we live and how we work. It is rapidly transforming the way that public services are delivered and driving new business models, markets and processes.

A Digital Skills and Inclusion Working Group has been established to drive forward the digital skills agenda across the Council's own workforce, our education establishments, our communities and our businesses. The building of digital skills across all these areas is fundamental to the overall success of the council's Digital NL programme and the future growth and success of North Lanarkshire.

The Working Group consists of a multi-disciplinary team from services across the Council which will take forward a comprehensive digital skills programme, including the establishment of a Digital Skills Academy; a key recommendation from the Council's Employability Review to address current and future skills gaps and shortages. This comprehensive digital skills programme will include working with our staff, young people in education, residents, businesses, third sector providers and other delivery partners to transform digital skills and create a digital learning infrastructure and environment, to improve digital skills, reduce the digital skills gap, and to create high quality and engaging digital learning curriculums and content.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Transformation and Digitisation Committee:

- 1) Note the contents of the Report.
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The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority	Improve economic opportunities and outcomes
Ambition statement	(5) Grow and improve the sustainability and diversity of North Lanarkshire's economy
Priority	Enhance participation, capacity, and empowerment across our communities
Ambition statement	(18) Ensure our digital transformation is responsive to all people's needs and enable access to the services they need
Priority	Improve North Lanarkshire's resource base
Ambition statement	(24) Review and design services around people, communities, and shared resources

1. Background

- 1.1 The council's DigitalNL transformation programme has three key aspirations: to digitise council services, upskill staff and residents, and stimulate economic growth. It has been recognised within the council's Digital and IT Strategy that alongside the council's own digital transformation, the development of a digital economy and place will improve connectivity within North Lanarkshire's communities and support inward investment and economic regeneration. Through digital transformation and responding to technological change, North Lanarkshire will become a SMART region to Live, Learn, Work, Invest and Visit.
- 1.2 The Digital and IT Strategy identified that digital transformation both internally within the council and externally across North Lanarkshire is central to the council achieving its priorities and ambitions within The Plan for North Lanarkshire. The council requires to effectively embrace, expand and use technology to ensure council services are designed and delivered to support the changing needs of local communities and businesses. Ensuring our workforce, communities and businesses have the digital skills to utilise and exploit this digital transformation and existing and emerging technologies and connectivity is fundamental to the success of the programme.
- 1.3 To support this, an initial piece of work was carried out in late 2018 to produce a Digital Economy and Place Ambition report for North Lanarkshire as part of the Digital NL programme. The Digital Economy and Place Ambition aims to improve connectivity within the council's own estate and our communities in order to support inward investment and economic regeneration through the following three strategic objectives:
- **Smart People, Health and Education** – eliminating areas of low connectivity, increasing access to education, and training. Tackling inequalities and exclusion.
 - **Smart Economy and Digital Jobs** - creating an environment that fosters innovation and makes new digital markets and delivery models possible. Pulling down structural barriers to growth.
 - **Smart Living and Working** – providing the underlying infrastructure to support people living and working in a Smart and Digital way

1.4 To achieve the three strategic objectives, four key inter-related projects were identified:

- Project 1 - **Delivery of a world class digital infrastructure**
- Project 2 - **Digital Business** - to support local businesses to build digital capability and exploit new models, enable smart working environments and support digitisation of key sectors
- Project 3 - **Digital Skills and Inclusion** – to improve digital skills and reduce the digital skills gap for our communities, those in education, businesses and the Council's own workforce, and
- Project 4 - (Commercialisation of) **Data**.

This report focusses on the delivery of Project 3, Digital Skills and Inclusion, which is critical to the effective delivery of the other projects and the wider roll-out of the DigitalNL transformation programme and The Plan for North Lanarkshire.

1.5 Considerable progress has also been made to take forward Project 1. Following committee's approval of the Outline Business Case for a Digital Connectivity Partner in September 2019, the council issued a Prior Information Notice (PIN) to establish market interest and capability and to validate our thinking in the forming of a 'Partnership' approach between an experienced service provider and the Council for the provision of digital infrastructure, connectivity services and digital communications. This has involved a well-attended market engagement day followed up by a questionnaire and one-to-one sessions with interested suppliers. A further report has been submitted to this cycle to summarise the outcomes of the market engagement and to seek approval for next steps.

1.6 An inter-related piece of work carried out over 2019 was the first phase of the Council's Employability Review and the accompanying Workforce for the Future Strategy. This was approved at the March 2020 Policy and Strategy Committee. The Review recognised that there remain real challenges within the local labour market. North Lanarkshire has one of the fastest growing economies in Scotland, but we know that this growth is not yet fully inclusive and that our residents and young people still face many skills and employment barriers and challenges. These include lower than average weekly pay levels, high levels of in work poverty and one of the lowest levels of qualifications of any Local Authority area in Scotland. All of this is in an environment where we know we have both job growth and critical skills shortages in industry sectors which are vital to our economy and the delivery of The Plan for North Lanarkshire.

1.7 The rapid advance of technology, automation, artificial intelligence, innovation, data and other digital ways of working requires our current and future workforce (internally and across North Lanarkshire) to be adaptable and have a wide range of digital skills. However, there is a well-documented issue nationally with concerns over the lack of digital skills and the digital skills gap. The local digital skills gap was highlighted in a skills survey carried out in 2017 by Skills Development Scotland and presented in their 2019 Regional Skills Assessment for Lanarkshire which reported that 54% of businesses in Lanarkshire anticipate a need to upskill their workforce's digital skills compared to a Scottish average of 49%.

1.8 One of the Employability Review's key actions is to ensure we are developing the workforce to meet future skills needs and help grow our economy. This included the recommendation for the further development of an "Academy NL" model with initial focus on the following 3 areas:

- Health & Social Care
- Construction

- Digital Skills

- 1.9 Aligned to this, in May 2019, the Education and Families service published their Digital NL Classroom – Learning for the Future ambition, in a report to the Education and Families committee. This set out the digital future for North Lanarkshire’s Schools, with a plan to deliver enhanced digital classroom arrangements aligned to the needs of young people and better linked to key employment sectors. This report was updated in December 2019. The Digital NL Classroom has five principal objectives which will underpin future activities to expand digital learning in schools:
- develop the skills and confidence of educators – and build on the particular strengths of key practitioners
 - improve access to digital technology for all learners – and maximise their efficacy in using it
 - ensure that digital technology is a central consideration in all areas of curriculum and assessment delivery
 - empower leaders of change to drive innovation and investment in digital technology for learning and teaching
 - provide all students in the senior phase with equity of curriculum personalisation and choice
- 1.10 In relation to the council’s own workforce, since the launch of the Digital NL programme in late 2018, there have been a number of digital workforce and skills development activities undertaken, beginning with the completion of an ‘essential digital skills’ survey in November 2018 which was sent to all employees across the Council. This was followed by the establishment of a community of “Digital Transformers”, drawn from a cross service range of employees and designed to support each of the services as they progress on their digital transformation. This community will act as an ongoing support network to assist in embedding digital skills and new ways of working within all services. An ongoing programme of development and engagement will support our Digital Transformers to increase their impact and change management capabilities.
- 1.11 In May 2019, the Council launched a very successful “Learning at Work Week” focused on Digital Skills. This event saw a number of different digital skills activities take place over the week; it also provided valuable further insight into the likely future digital skills which will be required as the Digital NL programme gathers pace. Following this, Future Operating Model sessions have taken place where service managers mapped the specific digital skills gaps which will emerge as they implement the digital transformation of their processes and work systems, and these will be taken forward to develop programmes and solutions which will support delivery.
- 1.12 In relation to the community aspect, in 2014, North Lanarkshire Partnership approved the NL Community Learning & Development Partnership Strategy 2014-18. This included a joint commitment from local learning and skills providers to work towards a ‘*Digitally Included North Lanarkshire*’. As a result, a paper was presented at CMT in August 2014 recommending the creation of a co-ordinated community-based learning offer called ‘Digital North Lanarkshire’. Through funding from NLC, New College Lanarkshire and other partners, a Digital NL learning programme for residents and staff has been in place since 2016 via over 40 learning providers. The initial pilot is now being reviewed and the future direction, model and funding will be agreed.
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2. Report

2.1 As the DigitalNL programme progresses, there has been a growing need to ensure that all the work streams related to digital skills are fully integrated and there is a common consideration of best value around key elements such as digital learning technology investment, funding models, provider strategies and the development and procurement of digital skills content. To ensure that this happens, a multi-disciplined Digital Skills and Inclusion Working Group has been created to oversee the co-ordination of the overall digital skills programme and establishment of a NL Digital Skills Academy. The Working Group will also be responsible for reporting progress to the wider Digital NL Delivery Board, Corporate Management Teams, the Transformation and Digitisation Committee and other relevant Committees.

2.2 The Working Group has identified the following overall objective for this Programme of Work:

To develop and deliver digitally confident communities with people and businesses that have the connectivity, confidence and skills to use digital services. To build a digital ready workforce across North Lanarkshire.

2.3 Aligned to this objective, the working group has identified the following 5 workstreams which are being developed to deliver against this objective creating the NL Digital Skills Academy approach:

- **Digital Teaching and Learning** – building digital skills and capabilities in our children and young people and delivering digitally enhanced learning environments
- **Digital Communities** – supporting residents, communities and the third sector to improve their digital skills and capabilities and access digital learning environments. Maximise inclusion so that everybody benefits from investment in digital
- **Digital Business** – continually building digital skills, innovation and capability within the North Lanarkshire business community and workforce that drives inclusive economic growth
- **Digital Council** – enabling a modern workforce who embrace a culture of innovation and change supported by leadership and capabilities to deliver the Council's shared ambition
- **Digital Health and Care** – supporting our residents and workforce to embrace and adopt digital solutions to support the delivery of care within our communities

2.4 Detailed workplans are being established to deliver activity in each of these five workstreams identifying priorities, actions, deliverables, timescales and project leads.

2.5 The Digital Skills and Inclusion Working Group is being led by the Council's Enterprise Team, with Communities, Education and Families, Talent and Organisational Development, Health and Social Care, Culture and Leisure North Lanarkshire (CLNL) and Business Solutions functions all appropriately represented. In recognising the Group's outputs will be heavily dependent upon the wider DigitalNL Programme and the required skills, expertise and community benefits therein, the council's digital partners: PWC and Agilisys, as well as in-house staff from the key Business Solutions functions of Business Change and Business Partnership are also represented on the group. It is envisaged that additional representatives and organisations will join the

group or sub-groups on a permanent or temporary basis as the definition and plans for each of the individual workstreams are further defined.

2.6 A Terms of Reference for the Digital Skills and Inclusion working group has been drafted as follows:

- Oversee the co-ordination and delivery of the overall digital skills & inclusion programme of work
- Ensure activities are aligned to the Plan for North Lanarkshire, Ambition Statements and relevant Programmes of Work
- Oversee stakeholder, community, staff, business and key sector engagement
- Oversee (and establish where required) appropriate sub-groups around Digital Skills and Inclusion programmes of work
- Explore relevant labour market information and wider digital skills research and, where appropriate, commission additional research
- Explore and develop funding models and provider strategies for digital skills
- Report against activities and outcomes to the Digital NL Delivery Board, Corporate Management Team and the Transformation and Digitisation Committee
- Shape and oversee the delivery of community benefits in relation to digital skills and inclusion

2.7 To support the initial development and thinking of the group, a piece of research was carried out for the Working Group by a post-graduate student placement from the University of Strathclyde. This piece of work explored the many and various definitions of digital skills, the digital skills gap and the current and future demand for digital skills. One of the key outcomes of this piece of work is the establishment of a digital skills survey for the local business base to complement the internal survey carried out of the council's own workforce. As outlined in the background to this report, employers in Lanarkshire are reporting a wider digital skills gap than the Scottish average. However, there is no detail on the specific digital skills that collectively form this gap. The survey is therefore essential for the Working Group to understand current and future digital skills requirements across different business types and our key sectors to inform the development of our education curriculum, our business support packages, training required for those seeking employment and training required to upskill those currently in employment. It is anticipated that this survey will be released as part of the recovery actions following the current crisis.

2.8 The working group will also oversee the implementation and maximisation of the community benefits related to digital skills development from the council's digital partners – PwC and Agilysis. This has already seen the consideration of adopting the Tech We Can/Tech She Can programmes to improve digital skills which are promoted through our partner PwC. The aim of the Tech We Can lessons plans is to teach children all about how technology is evolving and advancing in different areas of work. They seek to broaden children's knowledge of technology careers and the types of people who work in them to increase awareness of the kind of roles and careers which will be available to them when they leave school. To augment this, the Tech She Can programme has specifically been designed to address the gender balance in digital skills and technological roles. As part of this, the council will consider signing up to the

Tech She Can Charter which is a commitment by organisations to work together to increase the number of women working in technology roles in the UK. It aims to tackle the root cause of the problem at a societal level by inspiring and educating young girls and women to get into tech careers and sharing best practice across the organisations involved.

- 2.9 In order to progress activity, key actions will be prioritised over the next quarter. Detailed workplans for each workstream will be further defined and concluded, and presented to the group. This will ensure oversight of all aspects of the digital skills agenda and to maximise synergies within the workstreams. A further area which will be taken forward is the business skills survey. The timing of this will be sensitively arranged given the pressure the current Covid-19 crisis is putting on businesses but also recognising the importance of digital requirements during the crisis and recovery. Similarly with digital education, opportunities to explore delivery models such as Tech We Can/Tech She Can and Digital Classrooms will continue.

CONCLUSION

- 2.10 In driving forward the digital skills agenda, the council, residents and businesses within North Lanarkshire will be able to benefit significantly from improved connectivity, whilst also enabling North Lanarkshire to drive forward its ambition to be *the* place to live, learn, work, invest and visit. It is essential that we continue to develop digital skills across our young people, communities and businesses to take advantage of technological advances both in the way we live, the way we work and in the future delivery of public services including health and social care. Our future economic growth and prosperity, and our recovery from the current crisis, will require us to continue to attract and develop a workforce with the required digital skills to achieve increased efficiencies and productivity, and to continually drive innovation.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland

The work to build digital skills, reduce the digital skills gap and develop a digitally ready workforce supports the recommendations of the fairness commission and the Fairer Scotland Duty to reduce the inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage.

3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

Specific equality impact assessments will be undertaken, where appropriate, in line with Council policy and the fairer Scotland duty assessment process noted above.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Impact

Costs associated with delivering digital skills internally within the Council are reflected within the overall Digital NL Programme investment and our Workforce for the future plans previously approved by the Policy and Strategy Committee. We continue to focus on maximising our drawdown of funding through the Apprenticeship Levy, Scottish Government's Flexible Workforce Development Fund, and other sources to ensure best value for the Council.

4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

There are a number of Council wide impacts on existing HR policies and processes. This will be managed through the programme governance.

4.3 Environmental Impact

Increased use of Digital Technologies will have a positive environmental impact in terms of reducing travel and there will be efficiencies around use of material resources.

4.4 Risk Impact

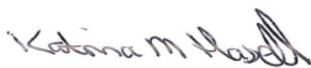
Effective identification and management of risk is considered critical to the success of the DigitalNL programme. A comprehensive risk assessment and Risk and Issue Log is being managed and monitored throughout the programme.

5. Measures of success

- 5.1 Ongoing measurable progress against our ambitions to build a Workforce for the future and achieve our Digital Transformation plans
- 5.2 Measurable increase in digital skills, capability and confidence across our workforce, residents, businesses and communities.

6. Supporting documents

- 6.1 The Digital Economy and Place Ambition Report and Digital and IT Strategy are all available on request.



Head of Business Solutions