North Lanarkshire Council
Report

Finance & Resources Committee

☐ approval ☒ noting   **Ref** FW/ST   **Date** 24/09/20

PO61.1 - LearnNL progress update on 2020/21 programme of work

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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of progress against the planned 2020/21 programme of work that continues to enhance and build on the Council's successful Learn NL provision.

LearnNL is incorporated within our Workforce for the Future Strategy and aligned to The Plan for North Lanarkshire and is aligned to PO62 Digital Workforce and Skills and PO64 Employee Engagement and Wellbeing. Learn NL is critical to supporting our employee learning and development ambitions and building our leadership capacity and capability to deliver the plan for North Lanarkshire. The report summarises work to date and upcoming plans, including the ongoing delivery of a digital skills programme to support Digital NL.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Finance and Resources committee:
- Endorse the continued high level strategic direction for this work
- Note the progress to date and support plans to further transform and digitise our learning approaches
- Otherwise note the content of the report.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority   Improve North Lanarkshire's resource base

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

1. Background

1.1 Members will recall the Workforce for the Future strategy 2020-23 that was approved at Policy and Strategy Committee on 19th March 2020.

1.2 The strategy made reference to a continued focus on how employee learning and development and continued investment in workforce development is vital to the delivery of our ambition and the plan for North Lanarkshire. Given our known demographic and skills challenges, this is especially important to encourage lifelong learning, enable 'in work' career progression, identify and strengthen our pipeline of future leaders and officers, and deliver digital transformation through improved digital capabilities.

1.3 In the last 12 months we have completed a full review of our learning assets and digital learning infrastructure, and made significant progress in the replacement of our Login to Learn Platform that was no longer compatible with our future needs. We are in the second phase of implementing 'Totara' our new digital learning platform which significantly improves our ability to reach and provide an enhanced learning provision to all employees across the Council.

1.5 In line with this work we have taken the opportunity to revitalise our leadership and management development provision. We have established the 'LearnNL Leadership Academy' that provides bespoke development programmes for our managers to gain specific development for future Leadership roles. Each route provides a blended learning programme that includes a series of workshops, masterclasses, training courses, online learning, accredited qualifications and reflective development sessions as well as access to appropriate networking opportunities.

1.6 We have refreshed our e-learning offer in line with individual and organisation needs and introduced updated compliance training e-learning modules. We are also in the process of facilitating the delivery of an 'Office365' digital skills programme through the new platform to support the Councils migration to MS365. This ensures that employee records for learning and development are up to date, managers are able to track the progress of learning in their teams and the rigour around reporting on Learning and Development across our services will be much improved.

1.7 Both the progress made against the programme of work and the forward plans for 2020/21 are captured within the report.

2. Report

2.1 Implementation of a new digital learning platform

2.1.1 As the demand for traditional classroom learning changes, we are continuing to make sure we have the best approach to delivering more flexible learning solutions using modern technologies. Following approval from the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group in June 2019, we are now making good progress with the implementation of 'Totara' a new cloud based digital learning platform. This platform is a key enabler for our Digital NL and Digital economy and place ambitions, supporting us to take a more inclusive approach,

improving digital literacy across the workforce and equipping our workforce with the with necessary skills for the future.

2.1.2 Our new platform offers a much broader reach of access to learning across all services, and an improved end to end learner experience in addition to increased governance and rigour. It now contains a catalogue of quality online learning content that can be used for all employee populations and agreed client groups.

2.1.3 During phase 1 (from November 2019 to June 2020) we have built the new platform, established an interface with i-trent to ensure that employee records are transferred across and kept up to date, branded the platform appropriately with support from colleagues in strategic communications and transferred all e-learning content and compliance training to the new platform.

2.1.4 We have provided employees with an account that enables them to undertake all appropriate e-learning and compliance training, provides access to a suite of free learning resources and toolkits such as the new 'Mentally Healthy Workplace' learning space, and introduces a new learning 'dashboard' that shows all employees the progress of their learning either completed or underway. See Appendix 1 for an overview of what the new platform looks like.

2.1.4 During phase 2 (July to December 2020) we are working with the DigitalNL team to establish learning pathways to support migration to MS365, with approximately 200 participants in the technical and open pilot groups having received this during August and September and over 500 hits on these learning resources overall. The wider rollout, which encompasses up to 5000 employees, who will be working in agile ways, is planned to be complete before the end of the year.

2.1.5 Phase 2 also involves developing a full curriculum of blended learning that is aligned to individual needs as well as the Council's direction, ambition and plans. This includes the launch of the LearnNL Leadership Academy, the migration of all operational training courses onto the platform and developing new and improved training programmes for statutory roles such as Child Protection, which was recently approved by the Child Protection committee. We will also work closely with the DigitalNL team in the establishment of the customer services and business intelligence hubs to build associated learning pathways on the platform to support all affected staff as they transition into new roles.

2.1.6 During phase 2 we are also continuing to focus on the upskilling and continuous professional development of our Talent and Organisational Development team. This includes the ability to convert traditional classroom instructor led content into engaging and interactive e-learning and the ability to design and deliver interactive virtual training sessions on platforms such as WebEx and MS teams.

2.1.7 During phase 3 and beyond, we will establish role and service specific learning pathways to ensure that all staff are able to access routes and qualifications they need to progress into fulfilling careers, such as the new model for Home Support and Early Years. We will also introduce dynamic tracking and reporting functionality and provide improved tools and support for line managers to track progress of L&D with their team members.

2.2 **Leadership and management development provision**

2.2.1 We have continued to progress with our 'We Aspire' leader development programmes, with 43 participants having completed the programmes, gaining formal accreditation with CMI and qualifications at SCQF Level 7 and 9. 54 staff are currently participating and another 70 staff are registered to take part. In response to COVID-19 we are now taking steps to re-model these programmes into a blended programme of activity that will replace the face to face classroom element with online virtual classroom teaching.

2.2.2 During 2019 we also developed pathways and programmes for leadership and management in Social Care to support qualified practitioners who may be aspiring to a management role and those with a professional qualifications e.g. social work, teaching, nursing who need a qualification for registration. There are currently 28 candidates involved in these programmes, with 21 doing work to complete a SCQF Level 7 award and 7 individuals working towards a SCQF Level 9.

2.2.3 We have also supported colleagues in Education and Families with a refresh of the Education Leadership Framework and programme and this will continue in terms of both design and delivery. The launch of the new Digital learning platform within Education and Families, means that we now have a consistent platform across all of our services for the first time. This will also enhance rigour around attendance and budget monitoring and strengthen support for records of continuous professional development in line with Education Scotland requirements. This includes the introduction of an 'Innovation and Improvement hub' that is designed to provide easy access to latest research and learning, provide information and support for practitioners to enhance their professional practice. See Appendix 2 for an illustration of this.

2.2.4 During early 2020 we carried out a review of needs through a series of behaviour workshops, a cross service working group and have also taken into account the feedback from recent employee surveys around mental health and wellbeing (from our Employee Assistance Provider and the NLC home working survey). Later this year we will release a comprehensive programme of virtual masterclasses, workshops and interactive e-learning and webinars designed to maximise the potential of our managers through enhancing their skills and behaviours. We will supplement this through the provision of associated toolkits so that managers are fully equipped to tackle any issues or challenges constructively, such as the Mentally Healthy Workplace manager toolkit and supporting policies and guidance available on MyNL.

2.2.5 In response to COVID and in line with feedback from the above mentioned surveys, during our virtual Mental Health Awareness week we introduced a series of webinar sessions for staff and managers. The content of these has included; building resilience, working from home effectively, managing and motivating your remote team and running effective virtual meetings. These have been well received with 89% of participants responding favourably to the sessions and 87% of participants saying they would like to attend future sessions.

2.2.7 During September and October our Autumn webinar series will continue to offer the hour long sessions listed above, and also introduce new bitesize 15 minute webinar sessions to promote and remind staff of the resources and support available to them. These short sharp sessions are an important way to allow

staff to connect and ask questions, particularly as they continue with new ways of working, including homeworking. We will continue to assess need and demand for these in the coming months and year ahead in line with service recovery plans. See Appendix 3 for an overview of the evaluation and some comments.

2.2.8   Going forward we are planning to consolidate all of the above programmes into one 'LearnNL Leadership Academy'. The Academy will be launched during Q3 and 4 of 2020 and this means a more flexible and just in time approach to development.

2.2.9   In recognising the significant challenges our managers are facing, the 'LearnNL Leadership Academy' is organised into 3 key areas, as below, to make it easy for them to navigate and access learning relevant to their needs. Once launched, a further report will be presented to Committee, which will look at evaluating the impact of this learning.

- 'Our Council' which is development to help build business capabilities such as finance and budget planning, project management, reporting and compliance, risk management, performance monitoring techniques and procurement essentials

- 'Our People & Performance' that offers a range of blended learning resources to support managers to effectively lead, grow and develop their teams and handle day to day management challenges such as managing attendance, managing the disciplinary process, investigation skills, creating high performing teams, recruitment and selection, coaching and developing your team, having challenging conversations and managing difficult relationships. Understanding equality and diversity, creating a mentally healthy workplace and managing multi-generational teams will also feature.

- 'Our Leaders' which offers bespoke development programmes for managers to gain specific development for routes through to Leadership roles across all of our services. This includes accredited programmes, professional development and qualifications, masterclasses and workshops, networking events and forums to enhance leadership capabilities, support career transition and development.

2.3   Digital Skills development

2.3.1   We will continue to work in partnership with the Digital NL team to build a digital ready workforce across North Lanarkshire. During 2019/20 we fully invested the Scottish Government's £15k Flexible Workforce Development Fund to provide Digital upskilling opportunities for over 280 staff and we will continue to use this investment wisely.

2.3.2   Following last year's success, we will engage with all services during National Learning at Work week (5th to 11th October 2020) with an underpinning focus on Digital Skills. During this week, we will offer support on digital skills and further understand what support employees need as the Digital NL programme and MS365 implementation gathers pace. The Digital Transformers from across services will be a key resource to support this week of activity.

2.3.3 Our 'Digital Transformer' community has now grown to around 40 employees, and has actively been supporting ongoing digital skills development across the Council. They will continue to play a key role in the implementation of MS365 and providing support to colleagues across services.

2.3.4 As well as the work outlined in section 2.1.4 support the organisations migration to MS365 we will continue to promote the 'Digital Skills' toolkit on LearnNL signposting all of the free resources available to support employees to develop their digital skills. The Office365 learning pathways, that have received over 500 hits to date, have been designed so that staff are not overwhelmed with what is required, with core learning for all users, learning for staff to delve a bit deeper based on their needs and more in-depth learning relevant to specific roles.

2.3.5 A key part of our digital workforce strategy is to improve staff experience and workforce productivity by increasing digital literacy with existing Council systems. A practical example of this being our I-trent HR and payroll workforce system where our aim has been to increase use of employee self-service functionality, enabling employees to access 'Myself' anywhere using their own mobile devices. To make this more accessible 'MySelf' and 'MyNL' are now available directly as shortcut icons on workplace mobile devices.

2.3.6 We are also supporting the DigitalNL team in the establishment of the customer services and business intelligence hubs to build associated learning pathways on the platform to support all affected staff as they transition into new roles – the learning will not only focus on the new systems and processes being introduced, it will include much more focus on the customer experience which is fundamental to the Council's future operating model. This targeted training programme commenced on 15th September for the first group of staff affected.

2.3.7 We are also working directly with the Digital Office team as they review the wider Digital Data and Technology profession in the public sector to see how this might apply in Local Government. The project will identify what future roles will be needed and will evaluate potential models to deliver this capability. We will seek to build this research into our workforce plans.

2.3.8 As our digital transformation agenda continues to gather pace the Digital Skills and Inclusion steering group, led by the Council's Enterprise Manager, will offer 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- reporting on progress to the wider Digital NL delivery Board, CMT and Committees.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

This work directly 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**
We continue to focus on maximising our drawdown of funding through Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Government's Flexible Workforce Development Fund 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. These have been fully managed in accordance with agreed procedures any change subject to assessment and Committee approval.

4.3   **Environmental Impact**
Increased use of Digital Technologies will have an environmental impact in terms of reducing travel required to attend learning, and there will be efficiencies around use of material resources typically used for learning events.

4.4   **Risk Impact**
Continuing to invest in leadership development and in work career progression will reduce workforce and operational risks around capacity and continuity.

Progressing our programme of work will support us to live up to external challenge on accreditations we have been awarded such as Investors in People, Investors in Young People and Disability Confident Leader.

5.   Measures of success

5.1   Ongoing measurable progress against our ambitions to build a Workforce for the Future
5.2   An increase in uptake of learning and completion of e-learning
5.3   Positive feedback from learners in evaluations carried out
5.3   Increased employee flexibility, productivity and engagement across the Council creating better leadership and management capacity to improve outcomes
5.3   Measurable increase in digital skills, capability and confidence across our workforce, residents and communities

6.   Supporting documents

6.1   None
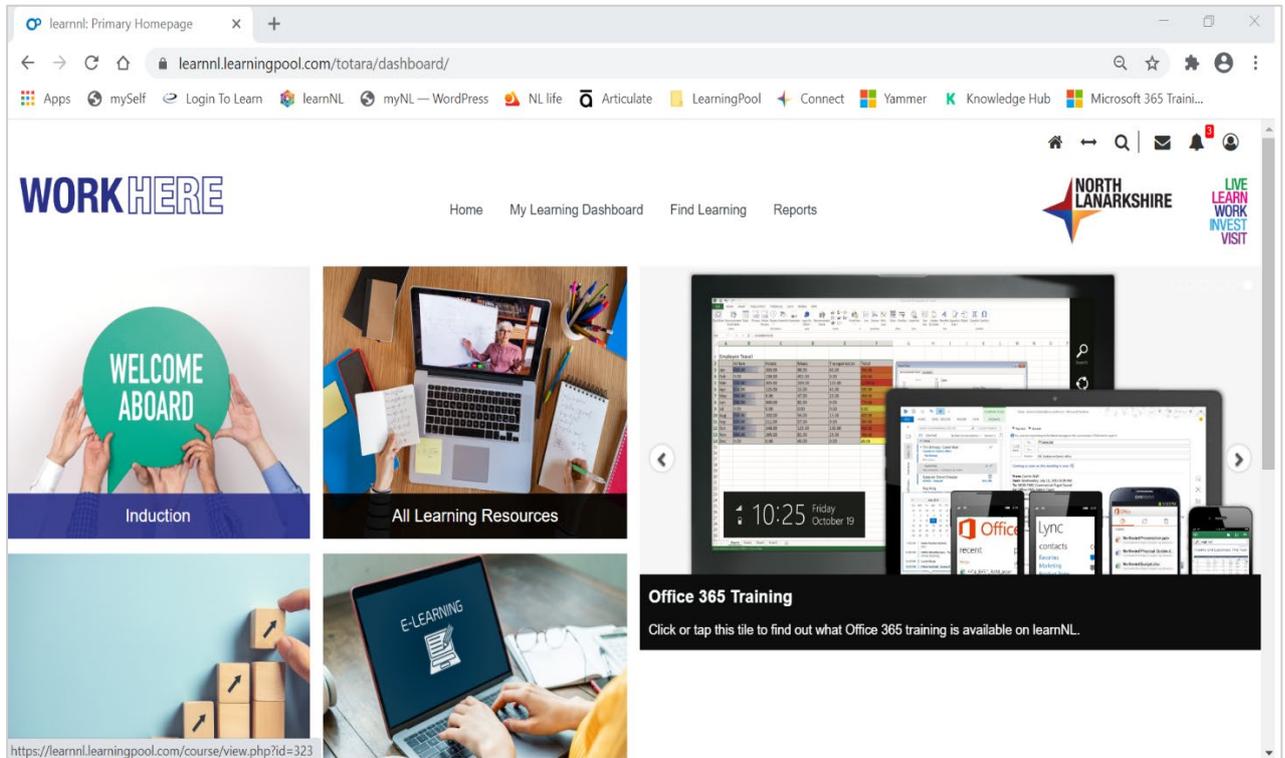
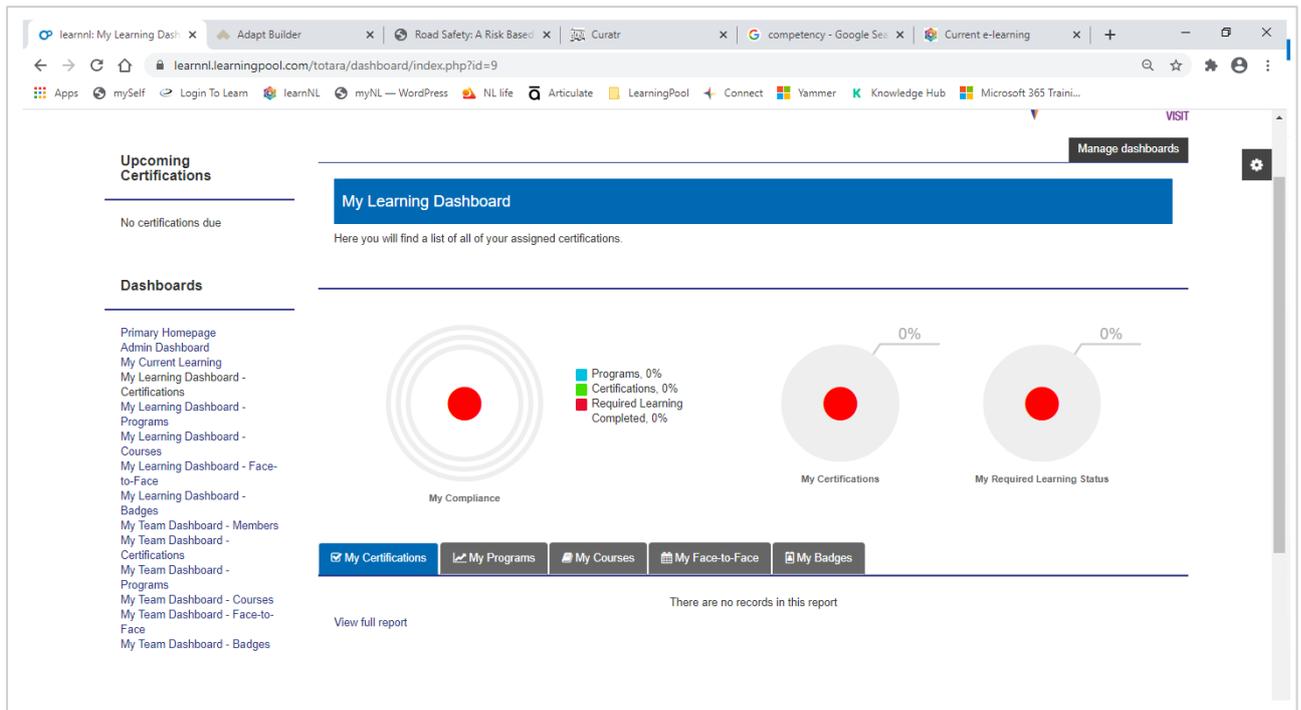**Fiona Whittaker**
Head of People and Organisational Development

Appendix 1

LearnNL – our new digital learning platform, also hosting our MS365 training

1.0 Landing page – easier to access and navigate and styled in line with our NLC branding

2.0 New 'My Learning dashboard' for staff to track their progress and record CPD

Appendix 2

Education and Families Innovation and Improvement hub

Each topic has a selection of available learning resources, documents, online articles, videos and training.

Appendix 3

Participant reactions and comments from new webinar sessions delivered in May and June in response to COVID-19