

East Ayrshire Council

Best Value thematic management report

Transformation – How councils are redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes



 **AUDIT SCOTLAND**

Prepared by Audit Scotland
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Key messages

- 1** Transformation is about radically changing how councils operate and deliver services to achieve planned outcomes in a financially sustainable way. The council has been innovative and demonstrated its commitment to transforming its services. In 2024 it set up a £40 million ten-year reserve to support a programme of change focusing on early intervention and prevention. The Early Intervention and Prevention Fund aims to reshape future demand on council services.
- 2** In 2023 we reported on the council's long-established culture of self-assessment and improvement, maintaining its focus on continuous improvement reported in previous Best Value reports. We noted the council's robust arrangements in place to secure Best Value and its clear understanding of areas where it could improve further.
- 3** We reported that the council has demonstrated a commitment to manage resources effectively over the medium term to support service delivery. After delivering two five-year transformation strategies over the period 2012-2022, in 2022 the council moved to embedding transformation in the delivery of its services, giving services direct responsibility for delivering change.
- 4** With the council moving to a position where transformation was embedded within service delivery. The council decided it no longer required a stand-alone plan setting out how it intends to transform its services. The council's commitment to transformation is set out in its Strategic Plan 2022-27. It does not articulate what its plans are for transformation. Instead, it sets out information about ongoing activity designed to support transformational change across its supporting plans.
- 5** In December 2024 the council reported a budget gap of £8.75 million for 2025/26. Services were assigned savings targets to close this indicative budget gap. The latest update to East Ayrshire Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) shows a cumulative budget gap of £32 million to 2026/27. As transformational activities are embedded in services it is not clear from monitoring reports how much they will separately contribute to achieving these savings. Instead, the results of transformational activity are

included in the efficiency savings targets reported to elected members in East Ayrshire Performs reports, with the driver for transformational change being the council's medium term financial strategy.

- 6** A permanent team overseeing change and project management across the council has been in place since 2022. The council's Programme Management Office provides project management support to transformational activity. While the PMO reports extensively on the council's progress against its strategic priorities it does not currently compile an overview of progress specifically on transformational activities. The council is working to develop a new reporting framework which is intended to include an overview of this information.
- 7** There is scope for the council to improve how it reports progress on transformational activities to CMT and elected members. The council has informed the audit team that it is developing a new framework of consolidated reporting on transformational activities for CMT and elected members.
- 8** In 2022 the council put in place improved arrangements to better identify and capture the impact, including savings, improvements to service delivery and outcomes, of its transformational activities. This benefits realisation approach has been slow to develop. To date the audit team has seen limited evidence of it in practice. The council's proposed reporting framework is to include information on realised benefits where appropriate. To demonstrate to elected members and its communities how it plans to improve services for the future, planned and realised benefits of its transformational activities should be reported.
- 9** The council has a proven track record of working effectively with its partners and communities and has provided the audit team with sound examples of developing and delivering transformational activity alongside them.
- 10** There are discussions ongoing across the senior leadership of East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils to explore further opportunities for public sector reform and collaboration including the Ayrshire Economic Strategy. These developments as they progress will be subject to scrutiny by elected members.
- 11** There is limited evidence that timely equality impact assessments have informed the council's plans for transformation. We have not seen a full equality impact assessment for any of the five cross-cutting reviews or one

that relates directly to the two case studies. The reason for not carrying out a full equality impact assessment is not always clear as 'Assessing for relevance' forms are not always available. A recommendation from the 2024 Best Value report on Leadership and Strategic Direction was intended to ensure that equality impact assessments are completed at an early stage to inform policy and strategy development.

Introduction

1. Transformation is about radically changing how councils operate and deliver services to achieve planned outcomes in a financially sustainable way ([Transformation in councils](#), Accounts Commission, October 2024). The [2023 Local Government Overview \(LGO\)](#) notes that councils have never faced such a challenging situation. Service demands have increased after the Covid-19 pandemic and funding is forecast to reduce in real terms.

2. The Accounts Commission's [Transformation in councils](#) report recognises that, while work has been ongoing in relation to local government transformation for decades, a step change is required and the pace and scale of transformation must increase significantly. Transformation, through greater collaboration with partners, will be key for councils to deliver more sustainable service models in challenging financial climates.

3. This report sets out how the council is redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes.

4. [The Accounts Commission's Strategy \(2021-26\)](#) sets out its priorities to focus on inequalities, funding, communities and recovery. The [Code of Audit Practice](#) sets out the Best Value work required to report on these priorities.

5. This report covers the thematic aspect of the Best Value audit requirements. The Commission has directed auditors to report on transformation and how councils are redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes. In carrying out the work auditors have considered the following questions:

- To what extent does the council have clear plans for transformation that link to its priorities and support long-term financial sustainability?
- To what extent do the council's programme management arrangements facilitate effective oversight of its transformation plans?
- To what extent are partners and communities involved in the development and delivery of the council's plans for transformation?
- To what extent has the council considered the impact of its transformation activity, including on vulnerable or protected groups?

6. An improvement action plan is included at [Appendix 1](#) of this report. This sets out audit recommendations in key areas, and the council's

planned response including responsible officers and dates for implementation.

7. The coverage of the work is in line with the expectations for council's arrangements for the seven Best Value themes in the [Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, Best Value Statutory Guidance 2020](#) and we have considered the Accounts Commission's transformation principles set out in [Transformation in councils](#).

Principle	
Vision	<p>Have a clear vision that sets out the intended end state of any transformation activity, focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivering large-scale recurring savings or generating income for the council, contributing to its longer-term financial sustainability • improving outcomes for citizens in line with council priorities • taking a whole-system approach to see and realise opportunities both within councils and more widely • meeting the needs of the people who use services and reduce inequalities • focusing on preventative activity, where applicable, to reduce the demand for services and to make them sustainable in the longer term.
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear on the scale of the change required and ensure transformation plans are sufficiently ambitious to credibly respond to the scale of the challenge. • Commit staff with appropriate skills, time, and resources to ensure transformation occurs at the scale and pace required and that there is enough capacity for the changes to be embedded. • Be clear about the timescales, costs, outcomes, and anticipated impacts of transformation projects. • Show urgency and progress projects at pace without compromising appropriate governance on projects.
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a clear process for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting progress. • Put in place effective governance and escalation processes so that the transformation activities are well managed in their own right, but also able to be given priority alongside other business-as-usual activities.
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop better working relationships with communities and/or partners to achieve a sustainable model of service delivery. • Actively consider the opportunities offered by regional or national sectoral collaboration, or by integrating services locally with partners, or by supporting individuals and communities to achieve desired outcomes in place of an existing service. • Learn from good practice across Scotland and beyond.
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new ways of thinking, including innovation, creativity and a desire, willingness, and action to change and do things in new and different ways that achieve the outcomes needed. • Embed the right culture and behaviours to manage change and help maximise the contribution of all the team.

Transformation planning

8. The council needs to ensure it can deliver sustainable services now and in the future, and difficult decisions will need to be made to achieve this. The Accounts Commission's [Local government budgets 2024/25](#) briefing noted that councils' cumulative funding gap between 2025/26 and 2026/27 is £780 million. This means that, cumulatively, councils need to identify and deliver recurring measures such as savings or increased income of five per cent of their overall revenue budget to be financially sustainable in the short-term.

9. In 2023 we noted that achievement of the council's transformation programme, overseen by the Programme Management Office (PMO), would be key to the delivery of the council's plans. In 2024 we highlighted the council's innovative approach in using one-off resources to create a ten-year £40 million Early Intervention and Prevention Fund to shape the future of the council and its communities.

10. The latest update to East Ayrshire Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) shows a cumulative budget gap of £32 million to 2026/27. In December 2024 the council noted a £8.75 million budget gap in 2025/26 – [Medium-term financial strategy Budget Strategy Report – 2025/26 – December 2024](#).

Findings	Evidence
<p>After delivering two five-year transformation strategies over the period 2012-2022, in 2022 the council moved to develop a more mature approach to the delivery of transformation activity within services, giving services direct responsibility for delivering change.</p> <p>With the council moving to a position where transformation was embedded within service delivery, the council decided it no longer required a stand-alone plan setting out how it intends to transform its services. The council's commitment to transformation is set out in its Strategic Plan 2022-27 which also describes ongoing activity designed to support transformational change across its supporting plans. The strategic plan 2022-27 does not articulate what its plans are for transformation. Instead, it sets out information about ongoing activity designed to support transformational change across its supporting plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2022 the council, under the direction of a new Chief Executive, decided to move away from having a separate transformation strategy, the approach taken between 2012 and 2022. • Instead, the Strategic Plan 2022-27 sets out the council's six priorities and the council's intention to achieve these by embedding transformation in the delivery of its services. • The council provides information on what activities are being taken forward to support transformational change across a number of different plans including the Digital Strategy, Financial Strategy, Workforce Strategy and Service Improvement Plans. It does not differentiate these from business-as-usual activities. • The new approach involves transformational activity being owned by each Head of Service with the Council Management Team providing oversight. • Previously the council had a separate Transformation Team led by a Head of Transformation. The council has acknowledged that having a separate transformation team whilst successfully supporting the stage 2 previous Transformation Strategies, meant that over time transformational activity became something that was seen as the responsibility of others.

- The Strategic Plan 2022-27 sets out key actions to achieve each of its six priorities. It does not specify which actions are transformational.
 - The council lists activity designed to support transformational change in its October 2024 update on the council's Strategic Framework. This includes its cross-cutting reviews, the Innovation Fund, the Early Intervention and Prevention Fund, the Workforce Strategy, the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Data and Analytics Strategy.
 - At a service level the council notes drivers of transformational change in its October 2024 Strategic Framework update. These include service improvement plans, Best Value service reviews, service redesign, identification of savings and digital service provision.
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The council has been innovative and demonstrated its commitment to transforming its services. In 2024 it set up a £40 million ten-year reserve to support a programme of change focusing on early intervention and prevention. The Early Intervention and Prevention Fund, aims to reshape future demand on council services.

It has also established a £3 million Innovation Fund to support services to take forward improvement projects. The Fund requires any financial savings from projects be repaid to the Fund.

- As noted in our [2023/24 Annual Audit Report](#), two significant financial events, financial flexibilities in relation to service concession arrangements and a two-year reduction in employer pension contributions, occurred during 2023/24 that enabled the council to establish a reserve to support a programme of change – the Early Intervention and Prevention Fund ([Exhibit 1](#)).
 - The Innovation Fund is a £3 million fund that was set up to support services to take forward projects that aim to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility of council services ([Exhibit 2](#)).
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The council's programme of strategic cross-cutting reviews, introduced in October 2023 and clearly aligned to its strategic priorities, is a key aspect of its transformational activity. Project briefs for these reviews included success criteria, noting that benefits would be identified as part of the reviews.

- The council's programme of strategic cross-cutting reviews was agreed by the Council in October 2023.
 - Five cross-cutting reviews have taken place: Children and Young People's Services; Leisure and Culture Services; Financial Inclusion; Employability; and Wellbeing. These are clearly linked to the council's strategic priorities.
 - Four out of the five were finalised in 2024. The Leisure and Culture Services review is being taken forward over two phases and is projected to realise total savings of £1.8 million by 2029/30 and protect services.
 - Their purpose was to drive out inefficiencies, remove duplication and identify opportunities for improvement and streamlining to maximise the available resource and delivery of effective outcomes.
 - The council developed a project brief for each of the five cross-cutting reviews that included details of review sponsors, scope, goals and objectives, constraints and assumptions and success criteria.
 - The Employability and the Leisure and Culture Services project briefs noted that benefits would be identified as part of the respective reviews. No budget was set out for the reviews.
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In December 2024 the council reported a budget gap of £8.75 million for 2025/26. Services were assigned savings targets to close this indicative budget gap. The latest update to East Ayrshire Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) shows a cumulative budget gap of £32 million to 2026/27.

As transformational activities are embedded in services it is not clear from monitoring reports how much they will separately contribute to achieving these savings. Instead the results of transformational activity are included in the efficiency savings targets reported to elected members in East Ayrshire Performs reports, with the driver for transformational change being the council's medium term financial strategy.

- Ensuring financial sustainability and resilience is one of six overarching themes within the council's Strategic Plan 2022-27.
- The council recognised in its 2022 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) that transformational change and service redesign would be needed to close its budget gap.
- The latest update to the MTFS shows a cumulative budget gap of £32 million to 2026/27.
- In December 2024 the council reported a £8.75 million budget gap in 2025/26. This represents 2.6 per cent across all services' budgets. Services were assigned savings targets, ranging from two to almost five per cent, to close this indicative budget gap.
- The extent to which the council's transformational activity will address its budget gaps is not clear as this information is reported as part of overall efficiency savings.

Exhibit 1

Early Intervention and Prevention Fund

The council has demonstrated a commitment to manage resources effectively and has been innovative in its decision to use £40 million of one-off resources to shape the future of the council through benefits realisation from early intervention and prevention activities.

The council has committed £40 million to be spent over the next ten years on prevention and early intervention or other innovations to benefit communities. Consultation is taking place with local communities and community planning partners as to how best to spend this money.

The council's decision to spend the £40 million generated from the service concession flexibility and the reduction in employer pension contributions for two financial years shows its commitment to invest resources to improve strategic outcomes.

Source: East Ayrshire Council

Exhibit 2

Innovation Fund

The Innovation Fund is a £3 million fund that was set up to support services take forward projects that aim to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility of council services. The fund is a self-sustaining model which allows for reinvestment in continuous innovation and improvement.

Staff are invited to submit proposals for projects that will bring about tangible improvement to service delivery as well as ensure financial savings that will then be repaid into the fund at the conclusion of the project. Applications are received and assessed by the Programme Management Office in the first instance before being taken to Council Management Team for evaluation. The final decision to approve funding is made by elected members.

To date 10 projects have been approved by the council, including proposals for sustainable material in road construction, education waste and e-learning. All projects receive support from the Programme Management Office and are subject to regular monitoring to ensure they are on track to make the proposed savings.

Source: East Ayrshire Council

Programme management

11. It is essential that the council has good programme management arrangements in place to ensure it is making sufficient progress against its transformation plans. It is important that the council has the structures and the staffing resource in place to deliver its transformation ambitions. In addition, the council must ensure that both senior officers and elected members have appropriate oversight of progress.

Findings

A permanent team overseeing change and project management across the council has been in place since 2022. The council's Programme Management Office provides project management support to transformational activity.

While the PMO plays a key role in reporting extensively on the council's progress against its strategic priorities, it does not yet compile an overview of progress specifically on transformational activities. The council is working to develop a new reporting framework which is intended to include an overview of this information.

Evidence

- The council approved the creation of its Programme Management Office (PMO) to oversee change and project management across the council in February 2022.
 - The CMT approved the PMO's project management framework in March 2023.
 - Heads of Service are responsible for delivering transformation within their area, with support from three members of staff in the PMO. The PMO is a permanently resourced team within the council.
 - The previous transformation team were all seconded and either returned to their substantive posts or were appointed to new positions before the last Transformation Strategy concluded.
 - Support and additional capacity is also provided to services from risk management, equalities, finance & ICT and People & Culture professionals when required.
 - The PMO is responsible for delivering oversight of progress against the council's strategic priorities and other workstreams, including strategic cross-cutting reviews, Innovation Fund Projects and Early Intervention and Prevention Fund Projects. It does not have explicit responsibility for providing oversight specifically on mainstreamed transformational activities.
 - The council is considering developing an overview of all transformational activity for CMT and elected members (see below).
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The council is to improve how it reports progress on its range of transformational activities to CMT and elected members.

- Currently any service review or redesign activity is reported to CMT on an item-by-item basis in accordance with established decision-making arrangements. Progress on the cross-cutting reviews is reported to CMT once a month. Separate reports on the Innovation Fund and the Early Intervention and Prevention Fund have also been provided.
- For elected members, the reporting of any redesign, change management or service review work is reported through established decision-making arrangements. This includes reports to Cabinet, the Governance and Scrutiny Committee and/or full Council. For Health and Social Care matters this would also include the Integrated Joint Board.
- The council is developing a new reporting framework that is intended to consolidate reporting in relation to its transformational activities including the Innovation Fund, the Early Intervention and Prevention Fund, cross-cutting reviews, best value service reviews and other corporate or large-scale projects.
- This is to be reported to CMT on a quarterly basis and the council is also considering how details can be included within East Ayrshire Performs.

Recommendation 1

The council is to put in place its proposed arrangements to provide regular progress reports on all its transformational activities to senior management, elected members and members of the public. Reports should show the planned and realised benefits of its activities. The East Ayrshire Performs report is to be reviewed to support this.

Partnership working and community engagement

12. The [Best Value in Scotland](#) report noted that councils must now rethink how they work together, and with local partners and communities, to provide financially sustainable services. Few councils provide services jointly or share support services across different councils to a great extent. The scale and nature of the challenge, as set out in the [Transformation in councils](#) report, means that it is only by working more collaboratively that councils and their local partners, communities and the third sector will be able to provide sustainable local services.

Findings	Evidence
<p>There are discussions ongoing across the senior leadership of East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils to explore further opportunities for public sector reform and for collaboration including the Ayrshire Economic Strategy. These developments are to be discussed with elected members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council is involved in exploring a Pan-Ayrshire approach with North Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council, with a view to potentially sharing services. There are some barriers to this level of joint working including the siloed approach to funding, governance, and reporting arrangements. Also, the three Ayrshire councils have different political make-ups. The council refers to the vital role of national government in enabling more transformational partnership working between different bodies.

The council has a proven track record of working effectively with its partners and communities and has provided the audit team with sound examples of developing and delivering transformational activity alongside them.

- The council has a history of working effectively with its partners and communities. Our [2023/24 Annual Audit Report](#) noted that community planning arrangements are well established in East Ayrshire. In our [2023 Best Value report](#) we noted the council's sustained and effective engagement with its partners and communities in developing its new priorities. We also emphasised the council's focus, effort and the importance it places on working with its communities.
 - The council was asked to provide two examples of transformation projects demonstrating either successful transformation achieved or plans that indicate significant benefits will be achieved. Both examples provided by the council demonstrate effective partnership working.
 - The Fairer Futures Partnership project has been developed in collaboration with three third sector organisations who will deliver the projects within the community, as well as the Scottish Government, NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Public Health Scotland and East Ayrshire HSCP ([Case study 1](#)).
 - The Jobs and Training Fund ([Case study 2](#)) involved the council working with Ayrshire College, local businesses and Skills Development Scotland.
 - The strategic cross-cutting reviews required the council to work with partners, such as the Department for Work and Pensions, the Leisure Trust, Skills Development Scotland and Community Planning partners.
 - The council is working closely with East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership to develop additional supported accommodation for adults in East Ayrshire. This has involved the allocation of start-up funding from the council's Innovation Fund for a new model of support.
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The council has provided examples of joint funding arrangements with partners for transformation projects. Its Innovation Fund is open to all its Community Planning Partners.

- The Fairer Futures Partnership is being jointly funded by the Scottish Government and the council.
- The Jobs and Training Fund is funded mainly by the council although SDS provide funding towards the delivery of some training.
- The council's Innovation Fund is open to all Community Planning Partners as well as the council. The Health and Social Care Partnership has had a bid accepted on Technology Enabled Care.

The council has provided examples of how it has engaged well with its communities in transformational activities.

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- In August 2024 the council and its Community Planning partners hosted a roundtable event on the £40 million Early Intervention and Prevention Fund. It provided an opportunity for partners to discuss and suggest areas to invest in early intervention and prevention measures.
 - The Fairer Futures Partnership programme has been developed jointly with partners from the outset. There has been engagement with partners and community networks on the development of the initiatives.
 - Every year the council holds consultation events and an online survey on the budget for the coming year. The main focus of this is to get communities' views on the council's strategic priorities and the services that are most important to them. The feedback from these events and surveys are reported to the Cabinet as part of the budget process. The format remained the same for 2024/25 and 2025/26.
 - In the 2024/25 budget consultation respondents ranked education as the highest priority and corporate services as the lowest priority. The lowest percentage savings were required from education and the highest from corporate services in the subsequent budget.
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Case study 1

Fairer Futures Partnership

The council is working with the Scottish Government and three local third sector delivery partners to address the impacts of inequalities within East Ayrshire communities.

The council is working collaboratively with the Scottish Government and three local third sector delivery partners: CentreStage, Yip World and The Zone. The initiative, approved by Cabinet in October 2024, is intended to identify, test and adapt place-based, targeted change ideas and new approaches that will address the impacts of inequalities within East Ayrshire communities, reduce child poverty and reduce demand for public services.

The council has agreed to match fund the Scottish Government's contribution with £600,000 from the Early Intervention and Prevention Fund. Project plans have been developed between the council and individual partners detailing the activities being taken forward, together with arrangements for monitoring and reporting.

There is a commitment to impact assess the project as it progresses, and an evaluation model has been developed which will include qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. Specific cost benefits have still to be quantified, and the identification of direct savings will be a medium to long term outcome.

Yipworld and the Zone are proposing to take forward a programme of work that will take an assets-based approach and will include working with the whole family to provide basic needs support and mentoring.

The approach taken by Centrestage will focus on delivering a variety of interventions through the Ayrshire Arts Academy, including delivering place-based support and reducing experiences of poverty with development of new skills, volunteering and building resilience.

Source: East Ayrshire Council

Impact of transformation

13. It is important that the council has success measures in place to demonstrate the impact of its transformational activity on service quality; outcomes for people who use services, inequalities and/or savings.

Findings	Evidence
<p>In 2022 the council put in place improved arrangements to better identify and capture the impact, including savings, improvements to service delivery and outcomes, of its transformational activities. This approach has been slow to develop and to date we have seen limited evidence of this in practice. The council are developing a new reporting framework that will include information on realised benefits where appropriate.</p> <p>The council has indicated that reflections on benefits realised from individual projects will be included in the new consolidated reporting framework on transformational activities being introduced.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council's Programme Management Office introduced a benefits realisation approach as part of its project management framework in 2023. • In 2023 we reported that the council's benefits realisation approach was still developing. • The approach is intended to provide a framework to monitor, report and evidence the achievement of potential benefits arising from investment or change. To date we have seen limited evidence of this in practice. • Benefits realisation plans are included in the Technology enabled care Innovation Fund bid. • Although not as detailed as benefits realisation plans, success criteria were included in the project briefs for the cross-cutting reviews. • The council has indicated that reflections on benefits realised from individual projects will be included in the new consolidated reporting framework on transformational activities being introduced.

The focus of both examples of transformation provided by the council is early intervention and prevention. The Jobs and Training Fund created over 200 career opportunities. Cost benefits have still to be quantified.

The evaluation framework of the Fairer Futures Partnership is being developed. Direct savings are anticipated to occur in the medium to long term and have yet to be quantified.

- The council was asked to provide two examples of transformation projects demonstrating either successful transformation achieved or plans that indicate significant benefits will be achieved. The council provided one example of each.
- Fairer Futures Partnership– [Case study 1](#). The objectives of this work are to reduce the impact of poverty, promote fairness, provide skills for learning and work, move individuals into employment, and reduce demand in other areas.
- As set out in [Case study 2](#), the guiding principle of the Jobs and Training Fund was to secure prevention and early intervention. Specific cost benefits have still to be quantified and will involve a whole-system approach.

There is limited evidence that timely equality impact assessments have informed the council's plans for transformation. We have not seen a full equality impact assessment for any of the five cross-cutting reviews or one that relates directly to the two case studies. The reason for not carrying out a full equality impact assessment is not always clear as 'Assessing for relevance' forms are not always available. A recommendation from the 2022/23 Best Value report on Leadership and Strategic Direction was intended to ensure that equality impact assessments are completed at an early stage to inform policy and strategy development.

- Of the five cross-cutting reviews conducted by the council, an 'Assessing for relevance' form for equality impact assessments was only completed for parts one and two of the Leisure and Culture Review.
- The rationale for the other cross-cutting reviews not requiring an EQIA is not clear.
- An EQIA has not yet been conducted for the Fairer Futures Partnership case study example of transformation provided by the council but there is a commitment to do so.
- Two related EQIAs were published by the council that relate to the Jobs and Training Fund case study example of transformation provided by the council.
- The council monitors the uptake of Apprenticeships and other training roles from protected and vulnerable groups and actively encourages applications from care experienced young people.

Case study 2

Jobs and Training Fund

The Jobs and Training Fund set an ambitious target to increase the number of young people working for the council, improving employment opportunities and providing a strategic approach to succession planning as part of its Workforce Strategy. Elected Members agreed in February 2022 to allocate £6 million from the Covid-19 recovery fund for Jobs and Training.

The Jobs and Training Fund aimed to create 200 career opportunities for training, such as an apprenticeship or graduate internship, either within the council or with local businesses over a three-year period to 31 March 2025.

As at August 2024, the council had exceeded the original target of 200 career opportunities with 159 individuals within the council and 48 working in local businesses.

The guiding principle of the Jobs and Training Fund was to secure prevention and early intervention. Specific cost benefits have still to be quantified and will involve a whole-system approach.

The council is currently considering further investment in the programme for 2025/26 as part of its Early Intervention and Prevention Fund.

Source: East Ayrshire Council

Recommendation 2

The council should demonstrate it is carrying out equality impact assessments where necessary in relation to its transformational activities. There should be a clear rationale for not needing a full impact assessment. The council should set out clearly how equality impact assessments influence any planned changes in how services are delivered.

Appendix - Improvement action plan

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
<p>1. Reporting progress of benefits achieved from transformational activities</p> <p>The council recognises it should improve how it reports progress on its range of transformational activities to the CMT, elected members and the public.</p> <p>Risk – That elected members and the public do not understand how the council plans to change, to sustain services in the future.</p>	<p>The council is to put in place its proposed arrangements for regular reporting of the planned and realised benefits of its transformational activities to senior management, elected members and the public. East Ayrshire Performs is to be updated to support this.</p>	<p>A new performance reporting framework aligned to the Council's Strategic Framework will be developed in 2025/26 to provide oversight of transformational activities, benefits realisation and impact assessment.</p> <p>Chief Executive March 2026</p>
<p>2. Use of equality impact assessments</p> <p>There is limited evidence that timely equality impact assessments have informed the council's plans for transformation. We have not seen a full equality impact assessment for any of the five cross-cutting reviews or one that relates directly to the two case studies. The reason for not carrying out a full equality impact assessment is not always clear.</p> <p>Risk – That the council does not identify and mitigate against potentially negative impacts of its transformational activities on people with protected characteristics or affected by socio-economic disadvantage.</p>	<p>The council should demonstrate it is carrying out equality impact assessments where necessary in relation to its transformational activities. There should be a clear rationale for not needing a full impact assessment. The council should set out clearly how equality impact assessments influence any planned changes in how services are delivered.</p> <p>A similar recommendation was made in the Best Value report on Leadership and Strategic Direction and the council is working to strengthen this important area.</p>	<p>Further improvements to the Council's arrangements for EQIAs will be developed and implemented in 2025/26. This will include a review of the Council's EQIA toolkit and the identification of Equalities Champions and EQIA lead officers in Services.</p> <p>Chief Executive March 2026</p>

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