West Lothian Council

Best Value thematic management report

Transformation: how councils are redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes

Contents

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Key messages

1   The council has identified transformation as a clear theme within its corporate strategies and service plans. Transformation projects are integrated into financial plans along with its wider savings measures. The council has recently improved its transparency around which savings measures are intended to be transformational.

2   The council has made progress with identifying £25.2 million recurring savings measures to address its £34.9 million funding gap between 2025/26 and 2027/28. It will be important for the council to consider how it can transform its services to bridge the remaining budget gap and support the longer-term sustainability of its services. The council should continue to consider opportunities for transformational change to close future budget gaps.

3   The council has invested in structures and upskilling staff to support transformation activity, including establishing a corporate transformation team and training staff in service design. There is a range of officer-led governance arrangements to oversee implementation of transformation. Reporting to senior leadership and elected members could better demonstrate progress with achieving estimated non-financial benefits from transformational activity.

4   The council has provided good examples of partnership working aimed at improving outcomes and generating savings. It will be important for the council to continue to work with partners and seek to maximise opportunities for radical transformational change.

5   The council has engaged with communities and vulnerable groups on service redesign. It reports that it has used stakeholder feedback to influence change, but should ensure that it clearly documents how this engagement has influenced planned changes to services.

6   The council has not separately reported the impact of its transformational activity to the public. Integrated impact assessments document potential impacts and mitigating actions, but there is scope to set out more clearly how mitigating actions address the potential impacts identified.

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. 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.

4. 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?

5. 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.

6. The coverage of the work is in line with the expectations for councils' 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.

Exhibit 1
Transformation principles
Transformation is about radically changing how councils operate and deliver services to achieve planned outcomes in a financially sustainable way.

Principle	
Vision	Have a clear vision that sets out the intended end state of any transformation activity, focused on: • 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	• 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	• 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	• 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	• 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

7. 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.

Findings	Evidence
Transformation is identified as a theme across the council's strategies and service plans.	The council's Corporate Plan for 2023-2028 includes a section on transformation and performance, setting out key priorities as part of its approach to transformation, including increasing its customer focus; working in partnership; community empowerment and financial sustainability.
	The council's Performance and Transformation Strategy aims to support the effective and efficient delivery of council services and transformation for the future. The strategy sets out four high-level outcomes, with general objectives to achieve these.
	Other corporate strategies, including the Customer Strategy, People Strategy, Corporate Governance Strategy and Raising Attainment Strategy, include performance and transformation actions.
	Service areas produce service improvement plans every three years, which include performance and transformation actions.
	As transformation is delivered as part of the council's package of savings measures, it is fully integrated into the council's financial plans.

Findings	Evidence
The council has developed detailed proposals for its transformation and savings measures through a template covering costs, benefits, resourcing, impacts, and links to strategic priorities.	The council has developed a comprehensive template that it uses for new budget reduction measures, including its transformation projects. The template includes consideration of:
	• annual savings up to 2027/28
	• potential impacts on statutory and discretionary elements of service delivery; performance; staffing levels; and the public/service users
	• potential impacts on council priorities, local outcome improvement plans and national health and wellbeing outcomes
	• risks, uncertainties and mitigating factors
	• consultation requirements
	• whether a full integrated impact assessment is required.
	We reviewed a sample of project templates and found that these are used across council service areas.

Findings	Evidence
The council considers 71 of its savings measures for 2023/24 to 2027/28 to be transformation projects. Collectively, these are expected to deliver savings of £31.6 million, and over three-quarters of these projects are each expected to generate less than £0.5 million in savings. The council should continue to consider opportunities for transformational change to close future budget gaps.	We asked the council to identify its transformational savings measures. It highlighted 71 projects from its savings measures. These are projected to save £31.6 million over the period from 2023/24 to 2027/28. This is in the context of £38.6 million total savings over the same period (excluding an £8.6 million IJB savings assumption over 2026/27 and 2027/28 as measures are yet to be determined). The council's net expenditure on General Fund services was £561 million in 2023/24.
	The most financially significant of these 71 savings measures related to school-based savings (£8.2 million projected savings over from 2023/24 to 2027/28) and supporting West Lothian Leisure to become fully self-funded with no requirement for a management fee from the council (£1.7 million projected savings from 2024/25 to 2027/28). Of the 71 savings measures, 54 of these are each expected to generate less than £0.5 million savings for the council. The council reports that many of the smaller value changes are part of cross-service changes in areas such as digital transformation and service redesign, integration and modernisation.
	A number of the transformational projects involve the council delivering its services more efficiently to generate savings. For example, one measure relates to rationalising physical capacity at council childcare establishments where there is excess provision. Another relates to reduced opening hours for community recycling centres.

Findings	Evidence
The council has made progress with identifying £25.2 million recurring savings measures to address its £34.9 million funding gap between 2025/26 and 2027/28. It has also recently improved its transparency around which savings measures are intended to be transformational. When formulating plans to bridge the remaining budget gap, it will be important for the council to continue to consider how it can transform services to support their longer-term sustainability.	The council faces a £34.9 million budget gap between 2025/26 and 2027/28. The £25.2 million approved measures are recurring. They include £11.9 million of specific measures within the council and a £13.3 million Integrated Joint Board (IJB) savings target.[1] If savings are delivered as planned, this will leave a £9.7 million budget gap, which is expected to materialise over 2026/27 and 2027/28. The council has recently improved its transparency around which of its savings measures are intended to be transformational. In its Revenue Budget for 2025/26 to 2027/28, the council categorised savings into efficiencies, prioritisations and transformation. Several measures spanned more than one of these categories. Savings measures flagged as transformational totalled £10.9 million over the three-year period. This excludes IJB savings, which are not categorised in this way in the council's budget.

[1] £4.8 million of specific measures for 2025/26 were approved in the IJB's 2025/26 budget to be delivered by the council.

Programme management

8. 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 and evidence relating to the council's programme management arrangements

Findings	Evidence
The council has invested in staffing structures to support transformation.	Heads of service are responsible for delivering transformation within their area, with support from the Corporate Transformation Team (CTT) as needed. The CTT is a permanently resourced team within the council which has been in place since 2018. It works flexibly to support services in service design, the delivery of approved budget savings and the development of additional savings measures. The CTT has reported to the depute chief executive of corporate, operational and housing services since its inception, and has recently been redirected to report to the head of corporate services.
	The council established a six-week service design training course and associated Service Design Champions Group in 2020. It has trained 83 staff, across all service areas, in service design tools and techniques. There are 69 service design champions who are still in service with the council, and they support the development of new projects and/or service reviews in their areas. The council's service design champions meet quarterly, which provides the opportunity for ongoing learning, professional development and networking.
	The council's project template for budget reduction measures includes a section for services to note what support they will need from other council departments (such as HR, corporate communications and the CTT) to deliver the project.
	As part of our review, we found some resourcing issues relating to transformation. The council noted that some automation projects were on hold due to a lack of staff

Findings	Evidence
	resource and referred to concerns about a technical and analytical skills gap in relation to the use of Power BI. During our fieldwork, the council also highlighted that, while available resources can be a barrier, it feels that overall it has the workforce capacity required to deliver transformation.
The council has appropriate officer-led governance arrangements in place to monitor progress with transformation.	There are various channels within the council's officer-led governance structure which provide oversight of transformation activity at all levels across the council:

Extended Corporate Management Team (CMT)

An extended CMT operates as the council's corporate transformation board. It receives detailed updates on individual savings measures, including transformation activity. It is chaired by the chief executive and its membership includes depute chief executives and heads of service.

Representatives from the CTT attend extended CMT meetings, and the CTT provides a regular update on the workforce implications of savings measures. This includes staffing impacts for each financial year from 2023/24 to 2025/26. Planned full time equivalent reductions and the achievability of these is set out both at service area level and at the level of individual savings measures.

Service-level governance arrangements for individual projects

Project boards meet regularly to oversee the implementation of complex projects.

There are robust project management arrangements within project boards to maintain oversight of transformation plans. We reviewed a sample of project documentation and found that:

- the council uses project risk registers with risk likelihood, severity, level of threat and countermeasures recorded

- documentation and tracking of actions is appropriate, with action logs prepared and updated on an ongoing basis to show actions taken

- key information such as objectives, resourcing, scope, interdependencies and budget is clearly documented

- the council prepares a closure report at the end of each project, which includes consideration of lessons learned though this is limited in scope.

The council reports that, as measures are devolved to services to deliver, governance arrangements can vary depending on the complexity and scale of the projects. For example, services may opt to have their senior management

Findings	Evidence
	team as the overseeing body, or heads of service may work directly with their senior service managers to ensure progress is made.
	Customer, Performance and Transformation Board
	The Customer, Performance and Transformation Board's remit includes oversight of the delivery of the council's Performance and Transformation Strategy. The officer-led board meets quarterly and is chaired by the depute chief executive of corporate, operational and housing services.
	Some officer-led working groups report into the board. For example, the ICT Working Group report on ICT matters including transformation progress. The Digital Transformation Working Group updates the board on progress with defined actions for programmes of work.
The council has a well-established self-assessment process where service areas consider their progress in seven areas, including performance and transformation.	The council has a well-established self-assessment framework – the West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM). WLAM is a three-year programme, during which time all council service areas complete self-assessments. The most recent cycle runs from 2022 to 2025. Service areas assess their performance in seven categories, one of which is 'Driving Performance and Transformation'.
	Seven recommendations relating to transformation were generated through the WLAM process in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Recommendations included increasing the pace of transformation activity in some services; increasing the scale of transformation; and increasing the use of technology. Recommendations are followed up by an officer-led review panel which is chaired by the chief executive. WLAM process findings are also reported to the Performance Committee for scrutiny.
	The WLAM process has also highlighted positive progress within council services in relation to transformation, including the automation of processes and self-serve options for customers using the anti-poverty service; and embedding the use of automation and digital transformation to support key processes in the revenues unit.
The council reports progress with its savings measures to its senior leadership team and elected members. The council should provide more specific information within its financial	Reporting to senior leadership within the council
	Progress reporting to the council's senior leadership is primarily done via the extended CMT. Reports relating to individual financial savings measures, including transformation projects, are presented to the extended CMT.
	The council reports that the Executive Management Team may request ad hoc reports on transformation projects where

Findings	Evidence
reporting on non-financial benefits associated with transformational savings measures.	there is a potential concern or delay in the delivery of a project.
	There is regular reporting to CMT and reporting to the extended CMT at key points in the financial year. This reporting covers deliverability of and timescales for financial savings. It also includes updates on the council's Modernisation Fund, which provides for investment in technology and any severance costs associated with approved savings where these cannot be met from within existing service budgets.
	There is a lack of progress reporting to senior leadership in relation to the achievement of estimated non-financial benefits from transformation projects. The council reports that there is no specific reporting on transformation costs as they are funded from within existing budgets.
	Reporting to elected members
	The annual revenue budget is presented to the Full Council and contains a detailed breakdown of budget reduction measures (including transformation projects). This clearly sets out which measures will be delivered by officers as an operational savings measure, and which require further reporting to Council Executive or the relevant Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP).
	The Council Executive receives regular budget monitoring reports. These provide a summary of the deliverability of savings measures through a RAG rating, but do not specifically draw out progress towards delivering individual transformation projects.
	We reviewed a sample of reports on individual transformation projects which went to relevant PDSPs and found that there was limited reporting of project progress in relation to impacts or timescales for achieving milestones.
	There is no progress reporting to elected members that pulls together progress against all of the council's transformational projects in relation to estimated benefits.
	Annual updates on progress towards delivering the council's corporate strategies, including the Performance and Transformation Strategy, are delivered to the Corporate Services PDSP.
	Heads of service provide annual updates on their service improvement plans to their relevant PDSP. Reports include detailed updates on progress against improvement and

Findings	Evidence
	transformation actions. This could be further improved by including information relating to timings for completion.

Recommendation 1

The council should improve its reporting on transformation projects to elected members and the senior leadership team to include reporting on the achievement of any identified non-financial benefits.

Partnership working and community engagement

9. 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 and evidence relating to the council's partnership working and community engagement arrangements

Findings	Evidence
The examples the council provided of transformation demonstrated good partnership working aimed at improving outcomes and generating savings. It will be important for the council to continue to work with partners and seek to maximise opportunities for radical transformational change.	We asked the council to provide two recent examples of transformational activity. The examples demonstrate good partnership working and have generated savings while aiming to improve outcomes. Given the scale of the challenge facing all councils in Scotland, it will be important for the council to continue working with partners to explore opportunities for radical transformational change.
	For one case study, the council's family support workers have worked with health visitors and family nurse practitioners from NHS Lothian to identify and mitigate barriers to low-income families' participation in free early learning and childcare (ELC) for eligible two-year-olds. Professionals working with families who did not meet eligibility requirements for a placement set by the Scottish Government established other discretionary criteria, such as child protection or complex family support needs. As a result, they could make a referral to the council's Family Assessment and Support Service who could recommend a discretionary placement. The project has led to a 164.7 per cent increase in the overall uptake of placements.
	The council reports that its budget reduction measure to close two family centres provided a catalyst to review all support provided for eligible two-year-olds. The family centres

Findings	Evidence
	provided outreach family support and early intervention measures, such as parenting programmes, which are now provided within local communities and online. The closure of the family centres resulted in a recurring saving of £1.2 million between 2018/19 and 2022/23 through the realisation of property savings and a reduction in staffing.
	For the second case study, the council has worked with third sector organisations to develop an in-house intensive fostering service and an internal adoption service for looked after children and young people. This is also known as its Family Based Care Service. Both services reduce the need for the council to purchase external care placements, allowing children to remain within their local communities, while reducing costs for the council. The project is expected to generate £1.4 million savings between 2023/24 and 2027/28. The council also works in partnership with Children First to deliver its Kinship Care Service. This supports extended family members and friends who care for a child or young person where they cannot live at home.
The council has explored joint funding options and shared service opportunities.	The council has been exploring shared service opportunities for corporate support functions with other local authorities. This work is at an early stage, but scoping work is being undertaken with neighbouring councils for a shared corporate support function in relation to teacher's payroll.
	The council is working with the Improvement Service, Glasgow City Council and South Lanarkshire Council to seek a digital solution to monitor unpaid work community payback order monitoring. Discussions are taking place about a possible funding model, but this has not yet been agreed.
	The council is procuring a digital solution to streamline and simplify applications, admissions and allocations for early learning and childcare places. The project costs £548,438 and 82.6 per cent of funding was sourced through CivTech (a Scottish Government programme that facilitates solutions to challenges faced by public sector organisations). Although no other partners were involved, it has the potential to be used by the other 31 local authorities in Scotland.
The council is carrying out a phased consultation with its citizens on savings proposals.	The council has engaged with the community regarding its savings measures through the WL2028 Your Council Your Say consultation, which began in 2022. Phase 1 of the consultation helped the council set its strategic priorities for 2023-28.
	Phase 2 of the consultation focused on gathering feedback on savings proposals as part of the 2023/24 budget setting

Findings	Evidence
	process. The council was transparent about the funding gap, the scale of the challenge, proposed savings measures and the cost of these. Responses included savings suggestions and general comments from respondents. Council officers considered the responses received to try and help identify potential opportunities for additional savings measures. No specific additional savings measures or transformation projects were identified through the consultation, but the council reports that one savings measure to restructure the school day was withdrawn following the consultation.
	The council plans to carry out a further phase of the WL2028 Your Council Your Say consultation following the summer recess in 2025. It originally planned to carry this out from August-October 2023 but took the decision to delay this until after the 2024/25 budget was set to include proposed budget savings measures to close the 2025/26 to 2027/28 budget gap.
	Ahead of the consultation, the council carried out targeted social media engagement on its budget in November-December 2024 which aimed to increase citizens' understanding of what the transformation requirements of the council are.
The council has engaged with relevant community groups, including vulnerable groups, on service redesign projects and reports that it has used feedback to influence changes, but should ensure that it clearly documents how the engagement influenced the planned changes.	The council has carried out extensive engagement as part of the development of its Family Based Care Service. It engaged with looked after young people, foster carers and adoptive parents and carers. There is a lack of clarity on how some of that engagement directly informed the planned changes to services within committee papers. For example, the engagement with young people showed support for increased local options which would support them being able to continue living in their local communities, but it is not clear from committee papers how they directly influenced the planned changes to the services. The council provided the audit team with various examples but could do more to document how the engagement has directly influenced changes.
	As part of its engagement to remove barriers to participation with ELC for eligible two-year-olds, the council worked with health visitors and social workers to identify barriers that low-income families faced. Barriers included digital exclusion and difficulties applying online as well as the geographical location of ELC facilities. Actions taken by the council included providing health visitors with devices to facilitate applications and registering ELC establishments with the Care Inspectorate to enable provision suitable for two-year

Findings	Evidence
	olds to be established in new geographical locations close to families.
	As part of its work to remove barriers to participation with ELC for eligible two-year-olds, the council's Anti-Poverty Service also consulted its Experts by Experience Panel, which comprises 20 volunteers with lived experience of poverty, to review the Early Learning and Childcare section of the council's website. This resulted in language on the website being changed to make this more accessible. This consultation was not specifically around the redesign of a service, but there is scope for the council to further consult the Experts by Experience panel on relevant future service redesign projects.
	The council is consulting management committees, community groups and community centre users on the future provision of community centres. At present, management committees retain associated income from community centres and the council covers operating costs, therefore it is seeking to explore a more sustainable operating model. Options include community asset transfer, lease agreements and recharging all of the revenue costs associated with the operation of the community centres to management committees and community groups. Following recent engagement, the council is working with management committees on their preferred options. Some management committees also suggested alternative options and the council is developing these through further engagement. In January 2025, the council expanded this project to include community centres that are located in partnership centres and community wings within schools. Overall, the project is expected to generate up to £1.073 million savings by 2027/28.

Recommendation 2

The council should continue to work with partners to explore opportunities for radical transformational change.

Recommendation 3

The council should ensure that it clearly documents how engagement with communities, including vulnerable groups, has informed planned changes to services.

Impact of transformation

10. 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 and evidence relating to the impact of the council's transformation activity

Findings	Evidence
The council carries out integrated impact assessments for its savings measures. These document potential impacts and mitigating actions. There is scope to set out more clearly how mitigating actions address the potential impacts identified.	The council carries out integrated relevance assessments for all savings measures in order to establish whether a full integrated impact assessment (IIA) is required. These are reported publicly to the relevant PDSP alongside revenue budget strategy reports. The council reports that the IIA is used to guide the development of proposals and may recommend a course of action. We reviewed a sample of IIAs. These documented potential impacts, relevant supporting evidence, and mitigating actions. We found that the council's IIAs are well documented, but they could be enhanced by more clearly linking mitigating actions to impacts and specifying how each mitigating action addresses the identified impacts. The council is in the process of updating its committee report template. This includes the introduction of a specific section outlining the implications for equalities arising from the IIA. There is scope for the council to make use of this to document any planned mitigations in relation to impacts identified during the IIA process.
The council has a range of reporting structures in place to monitor service performance. However, it should further enhance its current reporting arrangements to provide consistent and clear success measures and reporting to demonstrate	Project plan templates for budget reduction measures include consideration of potential impacts on performance and the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. However, from the information provided, there was limited evidence of the council measuring the overall impact of individual projects on performance, service quality, outcomes and inequalities. Project closure reports are reported internally and include comment on project achievements, lessons learned, benefits and performance. We reviewed a sample of three project

Findings	Evidence
the impact of its transformation projects.	closure reports and found that none of the reports quantified the benefits in terms of improvements to service performance and outcomes. Two of the sampled reports included a savings total, but only one made clear that this was recurring.
	The council could enhance its public reporting on the impact of transformational activity by making this more transparent. The council reports general performance information on its website, but this is not clearly linked to its transformational activity. The council currently has a number of active transformation projects, but a concise overview of milestones and achievements from these is not readily available.
Together, the two examples of successful transformation projects provided by the council set out recurring savings of £2.6 million. Both projects have the potential to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities, and success measures are in place for both.	We outlined two examples of transformation projects provided by the council covering partnership working (Family Based Care Service and early learning and childcare for eligible two-year-olds).
	The council has set out clear success measures for the Family Based Care Service case study and has developed a series of performance measures relating to fostering, adoption and kinship care to help it assess impact. The project runs until 2027/28, therefore it is too early to fully assess its impact. However, the project has the potential to increase local family-based options for looked after children and young people to remain in their local communities with their siblings and be near their family, friends and schooling provision. This is in line with the recommendations from the Independent Care Review (The Promise). To date, the project has led to increased numbers of fostering enquiries and applications, and an increase in the number of foster caring households.
	For the early learning and childcare for eligible two-year-olds case study, the council has performance measures to monitor the uptake of places and applications for income maximisation support. The council has also put a tracking system in place to monitor the progress of 3-5-year-olds that accepted eligible early learning and childcare places at two-years-old. It also monitors their attainment in primary settings.
	Both case studies align with the Accounts Commission's transformation principles in relation to improving outcomes for citizens in line with council priorities and meeting the needs of people who use services and reducing inequalities.

Recommendation 4

The council should clearly link mitigating actions to impacts in its integrated impact assessments.

Recommendation 5

The council should ensure clear success measures are in place for transformation projects. It should then report on these measures to transparently demonstrate the impact of transformational activity to the public.

Appendix

Improvement action plan

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
1. Reporting to elected members and senior leadership The council reports progress with its savings measures to its senior leadership team and elected members. The council should provide more specific information within its financial reporting on non-financial benefits associated with transformational savings measures.	The council should improve its reporting on transformation projects to elected members and the senior leadership team to include reporting on the achievement of any identified non-financial benefits.	**Management response** The reporting of non-financial benefits is incorporated into the mainstream reporting of performance to WLAM Panels, PDSP Quarterly Performance reporting, and Performance Committee reporting. In order to enhance the current reporting, the council will make specific reference to transformation savings measures which impact on non-financial performance indicators in performance monitoring reports following their implementation. **Responsible officer** Depute Chief Executive (Corporate, Housing and Operational Services) **Actioned by** 30 September 2025

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
2. Partnership working The examples the council provided of transformation demonstrated good partnership working aimed at improving outcomes and generating savings. It will be important for the council to continue to work with partners and seek to maximise opportunities for radical transformational change.	The council should continue to work with partners to explore opportunities for radical transformational change. .	**Management response** The council has extensive and good partnership working arrangements and will continue to explore opportunities for further transformational change at both a West Lothian and national level. **Responsible officer** Chief Executive **Actioned by** Ongoing
3. Community engagement The council has engaged with relevant community groups, including vulnerable groups, on service redesign projects and reports that it has used feedback to influence changes, but should ensure that it clearly documents how the engagement influenced the planned changes.	The council should ensure that it clearly documents how engagement with communities, including vulnerable groups, has informed planned changes to services.	**Management response** The council will review the current approach to documenting community and stakeholder engagement, and reporting on how the engagement has influenced any changes in the project when reporting to PDSP as part of enhanced reporting arrangements. **Responsible officer** Depute Chief Executive (Corporate, Housing and Operational Services) **Actioned by** 30 September 2025

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
4. Integrated impact assessments The council carries out integrated impact assessments for its savings measures. These document potential impacts and mitigating actions. There is scope to set out more clearly how mitigating actions address the potential impacts identified.	The council should clearly link mitigating actions to impacts in its integrated impact assessments.	**Management response** The council is in the process of updating its committee report template. This includes the introduction of a specific section outlining the implications for equalities arising from the IIA. The council will revise the template to ensure that any mitigating actions and their impact are clearer in the IIA documentation and process. **Responsible officer** Head of Corporate Services **Actioned by** 30 June 2025

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
5. Impact reporting The council has a range of reporting structures in place to monitor service performance. However, it should further enhance its current reporting arrangements to provide consistent and clear success measures and reporting to demonstrate the impact of its transformation projects.	The council should ensure clear success measures are in place for transformation projects. It should then report on these measures to transparently demonstrate the impact of transformational activity to the public.	**Management response** The council reports financial and non-financial performance to PDSP and service performance to the Performance committee on a quarterly basis. The council will consider how it can enhance existing reporting to include information on the impact of transformation projects following a period of implementation, for example in the subsequent quarterly monitoring periods following the implementation of the measure. **Responsible officer** Depute Chief Executive (Corporate, Housing and Operational Services) **Actioned by** 30 September 2025

West Lothian Council

Transformation: how councils are redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes

AS.5.0

AUDIT SCOTLAND

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