North Lanarkshire 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   Transformation is about radically changing how councils operate and deliver services to achieve planned outcomes in a financially sustainable way. North Lanarkshire Council has made a strategic decision to integrate transformation activity across its Programme of Work, giving services direct responsibility for delivering change. The Programme of Work and the council's accompanying Delivery Plan set out how it will deliver *The Plan for North Lanarkshire*, the council's transformative, place-based strategic plan that focuses on improving outcomes and the lives of its people and communities by transforming the area's physical environment, bringing about economic, social and health benefits. The Delivery Plan includes almost 250 projects or activities including how it is transforming eight of its town centres, plans to deliver over 6,000 new council homes and the establishment of Community Hubs.

2   We reported in our [2023/24 Annual Audit Report](#) that the council has a track record of delivering savings but given the scale of savings already delivered, its future financial plans are becoming increasingly challenging. In 2025/26, the council's bridged its budget gap of over £13 million by increasing council tax. Over the next five years its budget gap is predicted to be nearly £137 million. The council recognises that there needs to be a clear link between it transforming its services and addressing its budget gap by delivering transformation in a financially sustainable way.

3   The council has demonstrated its commitment to transformation through an innovative long-term fund to support new capital expenditure in its communities. The Community Investment Fund aims to generate future budget savings and support economic regeneration activity throughout North Lanarkshire. An estimate of resources available from the Fund between 2019/20 and 2033/34 is £793 million.

4   The council has effective governance arrangements in place to oversee its transformation work. Delivery of the Programme of Work is monitored by each Strategic Board in the first instance with strategic oversight thereafter by the Corporate Management Team. Elected members receive comprehensive updates on progress with the Programme of Work through the council's Policy and Strategy Committee and service committees.

5   The council works with partners to deliver a number of its transformation projects across North Lanarkshire. It has consulted with its communities and vulnerable groups on transformation activities and there is evidence changes have been made to services as a result of this work. The council carries out Equality Impact Assessments for its major programmes of work, including transformation themes, and there are examples of comprehensive community engagement taking place in relation to these.

6   The council uses 28 outcome measures to monitor the impact of *The Plan for North Lanarkshire* as a whole and to determine whether places and services are improving. As transformation is embedded, the direction of travel of these indicators reflects the success of the council's transformation activities. At March 2025, 50 per cent of the indicators had improved over the period of *The Plan for North Lanarkshire*. A summary of the council's performance against its 28 health check indicators could be made more accessible to the public.

7   While the council monitors the impact of *The Plan for North Lanarkshire* as a whole using outcome measures, it is important that it also demonstrates the extent to which project benefits targeted through the council's investment in transformation are realised. The council does not currently track or report transformation benefits at project level. It is in the process of developing a benefits realisation tool that will measure both the financial and non-financial benefits of the projects and activities in its Programme of Work.

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 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.

2. 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 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).

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.

Source: Accounts Commission, Transformation in councils, October 2024

Transformation planning

8. Councils need to ensure they 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 2025/26 briefing noted that councils' cumulative funding gap to 2027/28 is £997 million. Councils will need to identify and deliver recurring measures such as savings or increased income to be financially sustainable in the short-term.

9. In January 2025, the Accounts Commission advised in its Local government in Scotland Financial bulletin 2023/24 that councils need to intensify transformation activity, progressing at scale and pace to ensure their financial sustainability and how councils plan to use their reserves, make savings and transform their services needs to become more transparent.

Findings	Evidence
The council's transformation activities are embedded within the Programme of Work for North Lanarkshire.	• North Lanarkshire's Programme of Work and the council's accompanying delivery plan set out how the council will deliver *The Plan for North Lanarkshire*, the council's place-based strategic plan from 2019. *The Plan for North Lanarkshire* outlines the long-term vision and priorities for the area for the council, its partners, stakeholders and communities. Its vision is inclusive growth and prosperity for all – to bring equal benefits and a fairer distribution of wealth to all North Lanarkshire's people and communities. It aims to transform the area's physical environment, bringing about economic, social and health benefits.
	• The Programme of Work was refreshed in 2023 with the council streamlining the number of programmes, projects and activities, drawing out interdependencies between them and focusing more on improvement and change and the scale and pace of change. The council's transformation activities are embedded within the Programme of Work and are not badged specifically as transformation.
	• The Programme of Work is split into seven priorities. Five priorities are front-facing – Transforming Places, Invest in North Lanarkshire, Sustainable Futures, Resilient People and Brighter Futures. The other two priorities - Digital North Lanarkshire and One Service - enable service programme delivery. In May 2025, the council noted that there were 243 projects or activities in its Delivery Plan across the seven priorities.

Findings	Evidence
	• Transformation projects include: - **Community hubs.** These are good examples of place-based service delivery that maximise the use of council buildings. The council is continuing with the transition from schools to hubs - through both new build community hubs, and the extension/adaption of schools and other council buildings to act as satellite locations for service delivery of both council employees and the wider North Lanarkshire Partnership. This programme is intended to lead to more positive outcomes for children, communities, and the economy. The model aims to ensure that communities have more direct access to the services they need and staff are closer to the communities they work in. - The **Town centre transformation programme** to repurpose North Lanarkshire's eight town centres. Town Centre Vision plans were developed for each town centre and are supported by action plans that focus on the shorter-term delivery of projects. - The **New supply programme** to deliver 2,000 new council homes between 2023 and 2028, with a further 2,354 by 2035 to meet housing need and support town centre and community regeneration. • **Digital North Lanarkshire** aims to develop a skilled digital workforce and be the digital leader for a transformed North Lanarkshire. It is a key enabler in delivering the other programme of work priorities and driving economic growth. • **One Service programme of work** aims to ensure services are delivered in a streamlined, efficient and supportive model.
The council has demonstrated its commitment to transformation through an innovative fund to support new capital expenditure in its communities. The Community Investment Fund aims to generate future budget savings and support economic regeneration activity throughout North Lanarkshire.	• The Policy and Strategy Committee approved the £1.7 billion Strategic Capital Investment Programme in March 2025. The programme is to operate over a five-year period and aims to revitalise towns, schools, housing, roads and community facilities. • A key part of the Capital Investment Programme is the Community Investment Fund, developed at the same time as *The Plan for North Lanarkshire*. In 2019, the council's ambition was to create additional resources of £500 million over a ten-year period to support new capital expenditure in North Lanarkshire's communities, funded through ringfencing elements of future council tax income associated with the growth in housing and top slicing an element of future council tax increases. In December 2024, the Policy and Strategy Committee approved a revised Year 1 of a new 10-year Community Investment Fund to 2033/34, with additional

Findings	Evidence
	funding of £300.130m, taking the total fund to £793.104m from its inception.
	• To date, the Community Investment Fund has been used for new schools and hubs and investment in leisure, infrastructure and other facilities. For example, it has funded the completion of the Chryston and Riverbank Community Hubs, the purchase of Cumbernauld Town Centre to facilitate significant town centre regeneration and the development of digital classrooms.
	• The council also has a Change Management Fund of £19.4 million that it uses to support future budget pressures, one-off costs of approved savings and transformation initiatives.
In February 2025, the council agreed to increase council tax to bridge a budget gap of over £13 million in 2025/26. Over the next five years its budget gap is predicted to be nearly £137 million. **The council recognises that there needs to be a clear link between it transforming its services and addressing its budget gap by delivering transformation in a financially sustainable way.**	• The council's budget in February 2025 highlighted a budget gap in 2025/26 of £13.590 million. The council decided to increase council tax by ten per cent to bridge that budget gap and set a balanced budget for 2025/26. • In June 2025, it reported an envisaged budget gap in the five-year period between 2026/27 and 2030/31 of £136.927 million. • The council has developed key principles to help bridge its budget gap. While transformation of services has not been specifically identified as a solution, the first key principle - Revenue funding will be directed to the council's key priorities - notes that the Programme of Work is critical to driving change and future financial efficiencies and savings. • Other key principles include: - service design and delivery reviews - aiming to minimise cost, maximise income generation and potentially generate financial savings - maximising income generation – from council tax and other sources - planned and sustainable use of reserves. • The council has recognised the importance of prioritising the use of resources for its key priority areas. This includes service redesign and transformation. Given the financial challenges facing the council it will be important that the council's transformation programme maintains a focus on how much the Programme of Work as a whole, or the transformation activities that form part of it, will contribute to bridging its budget gap.

Programme management

10. It is essential that councils have good programme management arrangements in place to ensure they are making sufficient progress against their transformation plans. It is important that councils have the structures and the staffing resource in place to deliver their transformation ambitions. In addition, councils 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 effective governance arrangements in place to oversee its transformation work. Delivery of the Programme of Work is monitored by each Strategic Board in the first instance with strategic oversight thereafter by the Corporate Management Team.	• The Corporate Management Team has oversight of the entire Programme of Work within the council. Each of the six Strategic Boards are chaired by a Senior Responsible Officer who is a Chief Officer and is accountable for the delivery of Programme of Work priorities, including transformation projects. The One Service Programme of Work Strategic Board has an overarching focus on the delivery of the council's transformational activities, through the Programme of Work to ensure a "one place, one plan, one council approach".
	• Key components of the governance processes established for overseeing transformation work within the council are highlighted below:
	- There is a council-wide single Integrated Delivery Plan that tracks all projects and activities across the entire Programme of Work and its seven priorities (i.e. Transforming Places, Invest in North Lanarkshire, Sustainable Futures, Resilient People, Brighter Futures, Digital North Lanarkshire, and One Services), with designated officers and set timescales. The Delivery Plan is monitored quarterly at each Programme of Work Strategic Board meeting.
	- Delivery is monitored using a Quality Assurance framework and applying RAG ratings across key dimensions. Monitoring reports are produced for review by each of the six Boards on a quarterly basis and a composite report is produced for review by the Corporate Management Team on a quarterly basis.

Findings	Evidence
	- The PULSE (Programme Uncertainty Level Status Evaluation) tool helps Boards assess interdependencies, risks, and confidence levels and a council-wide Project Management Framework has been established to ensure consistency across projects. - All boards have clear oversight of the council's transformation activities. For example, there is detailed consideration and regular discussion in relation to transformation activity. Standing agenda items include updates on delivering the Programme of Work and Programme of Work Governance and Performance. - Risk is a standing agenda item across all six Programme of Work Boards. There is consideration of comprehensive monitoring reports on a quarterly basis, focusing on projects with red or amber RAG ratings and agreed actions to follow-up on in the next quarterly cycle. There are examples of appropriate escalation to both Corporate Management Team and/or Business Management Team.
The council has comprehensive arrangements in place, through its Programme of Work boards for reporting to its senior leadership team on the progress of transformation projects and the delivery of the Programme of Work as a whole.	• North Lanarkshire Council monitors and reports quarterly to its Corporate Management Team on progress across its Programme of Work. All Strategic Boards, including One Service, report on individual projects and activities using a RAG status based on seven key dimensions: scope; cost/ budget; quality; resource; risk; within time/ on schedule and percentage completed. Reports focus on projects and/or activities rated amber or red to ensure appropriate discussion and actions is being taken forward to manage any risks. • All monitoring reports to all of the six Programme of Work Boards clearly track progress against timescales and costs. Delivery within time/on schedule and cost/budget are key dimensions and standing items in quarterly monitoring reports.
The council is adequately resourced to deliver on its transformation ambitions.	• The council has advised the audit team that it has capacity - both in terms of resource and skills mix - to deliver the Programme of Work. Interviewees noted that Boards are well resourced and well attended and that staff are experienced at delivering complex change. • In May 2025, the council noted in its Delivery Plan that 234 out of 243 of its projects across its boards were being delivered within available resources (classified as 'green'). A small number (seven) were assigned amber status indicating resourcing concerns are being managed and just one project was classified as red indicating a critical resourcing issue.

Findings	Evidence
Elected members receive comprehensive updates on progress with the Programme of Work through the council's Policy and Strategy Committee and service committees	• Elected members have strategic oversight of the council's Programme of Work through the council's Policy and Strategy Committee. • Comprehensive updates are provided to the Policy and Strategy Committee every six months setting out progress in delivering the entire Programme of Work. • Reporting covers key achievements and provides detailed updates on the progress of individual projects across the Programme of Work. An overall RAG status is assigned to individual projects based on six delivery dimensions, including whether projects are running to budget. Annual reporting against the 28 Health Check Indicators also provides elected members with a clear view of council performance, highlighting areas of improvement or decline over the course of The Plan for North Lanarkshire. All Policy and Strategy Committee papers are publicly available on the council's website. • A range of specific topical Programme of Work reports are also submitted throughout the year - as per an established reporting schedule - to the respective service committee depending on what is being delivered and the remit of the committee. These provide detailed updates on the specific programme, project, or activity being delivered, seeking appropriate committee approval at key stages in delivery.
The council is developing a benefits realisation tool. It does not currently track or report transformation benefits at project level.	• Benefits are not directly reported on as a standalone category within quarterly monitoring reports. All PULSE (Programme Uncertainty Level Status Evaluation) results from 2024 for the One Service Board categorise benefits as red for level of confidence against "*Benefits - The Board has an understanding of the range of benefits that the Programme of Work will deliver and also an appreciation of which projects and activities will contribute the greatest benefit*." According to the key for level of confidence this means "not yet being considered." • The council is in the process of developing a benefits realisation tool that will measure both the financial and non-financial benefits of projects. The tool will set out examples of different types of benefits (eg income generation, cost savings, productivity gains and qualitative improvements such as increased customer satisfaction). It will also incorporate a tracker with RAG indicators to monitor the progress of each benefit. The PULSE results from June 2025 show this work is still in progress, with tracking mechanisms not yet in place for benefits realisation.

Recommendation 1

The council should prioritise completion of its benefits realisation framework and incorporate reporting on both financial and non-financial benefits into regular monitoring reports. Given the financial challenges the council is facing there is a need to increasingly monitor and track cost and benefits of transformation projects. This will help inform officers and members of the extent to which transformation projects are delivering their intended benefits.

Partnership working and community engagement

11. 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.

12. In January 2025, the Accounts Commission advised in its Local government in Scotland Financial bulletin 2023/24 that how councils plan to use their reserves, make savings and transform their services needs to become more transparent. The need to consult local communities and clearly communicate the implications for local services of the budget decisions taken has never been more important.

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

Findings	Evidence
The council works with partners to deliver a number of its transformation projects across North Lanarkshire.	• The *Plan for North Lanarkshire* sets out a shared ambition and vision for the council, partners, stakeholders and communities. It was endorsed by the North Lanarkshire Partnership (North Lanarkshire's Community Planning Partnership) in March 2019.
	• The council works with partners, arm's length external organisations, and other relevant agencies to deliver transformation projects that make up part of the Programme of Work. Examples of these include delivering community hubs, the East Airdrie link road project, the creation of an Industry Skills Board and the Driving Digital Locally Intergenerational Project.
	• As noted above, the council is creating **community hubs** across North Lanarkshire. These provide place-based service delivery and allow partners and the council to work jointly to deliver services to the community. The council has an ambition to replace every school not replaced or remodelled since 1996 and its vision is to make these places for the whole community rather than just the school

Findings	Evidence
	community. The community hub model is the way of delivering this ambition. For example, the Chryston Community Hub is a partnership with NHS Lanarkshire and includes a community health clinic, alongside the primary school.
	• The **East Airdrie link road project**, part of the Glasgow City Region City Deal, and the **Monklands replacement hospital project**, have been linked together and a project interface board set up with NHS Lanarkshire to work through logistics, challenges and opportunities around employment and investment that the work can bring. These are two separate projects. The Link Road is part of City Deal and was originally planned before the new hospital site was identified.
	• An **Industry Skills Board** was created in partnership with senior managers from construction firms to develop plans for the workforce of the future. The Board has commissioned pieces of work to better understand workforce demand and demand for training. It has also developed a youth engagement strategy linked to schools, to identify space in the curriculum to develop skills and create pathways to the construction industry.
	• The council was asked to provide examples of successful transformation to the audit team. One of these was the **Driving Digital Locally Intergenerational Project** (Exhibit 2). It illustrates how the council has worked innovatively with partners and its communities to improve the digital skills of older people.
The council has consulted with its communities and vulnerable groups on transformational activities and there is evidence changes have been made as a result of this work.	• The council's nine Community Boards, based across North Lanarkshire, support community participation. The Boards are made up from representatives from local community groups and community planning partners and meet several times a year, debating issues that affect the local community. Each Community Board area has its own social media channels, using these to report progress and distribute messages. Reports on the work of the nine Community Boards are provided to the Communities Committee each committee cycle.
	• In 2023, Audit Scotland's Best Value Thematic report on leadership found that the council was proactive in engaging with a wide range of communities but was, at that time, unable to show how successful the range of engagement activity was in demonstrating it was listening to feedback. It recommended that the council consider how it measures the level of engagement with communities and equalities groups.

Findings	Evidence
	• The council implemented this recommendation through its June 2024 Communications and Engagement Strategy. This strategy sets out the council's intention to report annually to the Communities Committee on the number of individuals and community organisations participating in Community Boards. In April 2025, the council reported participation from a wide range of groups including the Voice of Experience Forum, Youth Forums, Faith Groups, the NL Disability Access Panel, Parent Councils and Tenants and Residents' Associations.
	• There are a number of examples of the council engaging with communities in relation to transformation projects and this engagement resulting in change:
	- The Digital North Lanarkshire Board established two **digital zones** providing dedicated spaces equipped with the latest technology and resources to help individuals improve their basic digital skills and gain confidence online. These are to be used by individuals for a range of activities including completing educational activities and accessing health information. As part of the implementation of these zones, a consultation took place from November to December 2024, which received 620 responses. The council has set out explicitly what it is going to do as a result of this consultation, including ensuring private meeting space for customers for virtual doctor's appointments, providing access to printing and ensuring support staff are available at specified times.
	- **Coatbridge** was awarded £19.5million from the UK Government's 'Plan for Neighbourhoods'. The council was charged with developing and delivering a Regeneration Plan for the town, setting out a vision for Coatbridge for the next ten years. Consultation was carried out with communities during Summer 2024 through face-to-face interviews, online surveys, family fun days and engaging with primary and secondary schools. The draft Regeneration Plan and associated Investment Plan set out three priorities that were based on what communities said they would like to see. These plans are due to be finalised by October 2025.
	- The council's **Early Help Family Support Service** tender specification was informed by formal consultation and focus groups with families about their needs. This approach was piloted in one area and eight months later was expanded to the whole of North Lanarkshire.

Exhibit 2
Driving Digital Locally Intergenerational Project

In 2022, the council launched its Driving Digital Locally Intergenerational Project, aimed at enhancing older residents' digital technology skills through one-to-one training with young people in their communities. The initiative has been delivered across seven communities in North Lanarkshire, involving 80 elderly tenants and 115 school pupils. Ninety per cent of the elderly tenants reported increased confidence in using digital tools, with many applying their new skills in everyday tasks such as booking holidays online, sending emails, or using digital notes for shopping lists. In response to feedback, a 'How to' booklet was created for tenants, and a weekly overview was developed for pupils and teachers to improve preparation and delivery of future sessions.

Building on its success in retirement complexes and incorporating feedback from community groups, the project was expanded to reach the wider community through direct delivery in settings such as senior citizens' clubs, knitting groups, and women's retirement groups. The positive outcomes have led to discussions with the Lanarkshire Deaf Club about adapting the project for the deaf community. Plans are now underway to launch a tailored version in partnership with the Club, a primary school, the deaf unit at a nearby secondary school, and interpreters.

Source: North Lanarkshire Council

Impact of transformation

13. It is important that councils have success measures in place to demonstrate the impact of their 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 uses 28 indicators to monitor the impact of *The Plan for North Lanarkshire* as a whole and to determine whether places and services are improving. As transformation is embedded, the direction of travel of these indicators reflects the success of the council's transformation activities.	• The council uses 28 health check indicators to measure the impact and progress of *The Plan for North Lanarkshire*. The approach involves using long-term outcome measures to assess whether places and services are improving in North Lanarkshire. The indicators are used as an evidence base for strategic planning and cover a wide range of demographic, social and economic outcomes.
	• Given the council's approach to embed transformation, the indicators span across its entire Programme of Work as opposed to being specific to transformation.
	• The measures will help to assess whether changes in service delivery models are contributing to positive outcomes for people and communities.
Performance against the 28 indicators is consistent between 2024 and 2025, with 50 per cent of indicators having improved over the period of *The Plan for North Lanarkshire*.	• At March 2025, 50 per cent of the indicators had improved over the period of The Plan for North Lanarkshire, while 50 per cent had not improved. These results are consistent with the previous year's performance in 2024.
	• Examples of indicators showing improvement include:
	- wages - traditionally less than the Scottish average, have been higher in North Lanarkshire than the Scottish average for the last three years
	- economic growth - over the last decade North Lanarkshire's economic output grew at a faster rate than the Scottish average
A summary of the council's performance against its 28 health check indicators is not easily accessible to the public.	- reduction in school exclusions - school exclusions in North Lanarkshire have reduced dramatically over the last five years and latest figures are well below the Scotland average.
	• Areas where challenges remain include:

Findings	Evidence
	- life expectancy – both males and females from North Lanarkshire have lower life expectancy and healthy life expectancy than the Scotland average
	- North Lanarkshire's economic activity rate is below the Scottish average
	- the number of children living in poverty in North Lanarkshire remains significantly higher than the Scottish average.
	• Performance against the 28 Health indicators is embedded within online documents on North Lanarkshire Council's website. This makes it difficult for the public to access and understand how the council is performing or what impact it is having locally.
	• Our 2023/24 Annual Audit Report for North Lanarkshire Council recommended the council improve its public performance reporting to provide its citizens and communities with a clear summary of performance[1].
	• The council has, during the course of this audit, added a 26-page document entitled 'The North Lanarkshire context' to the section of its website detailing *The Plan for North Lanarkshire*. This document sets out trends for each of the 28 health indicators alongside in-depth commentary. Although it provides rich information, it would benefit from a high-level summary providing an at-a-glance overall direction of travel (as is provided in papers to elected members). It also remains difficult to find and would benefit from a more appropriate title.
	• The council has advised that it is considering the development of data dashboards as part of a short to medium-term plan relating to data.
The council carries out Equality Impact Assessments for its major programmes of work, (including transformation themes) and there are examples of comprehensive community engagement	• The council has provided two examples of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) in relation to its transformation work – for the Town and Community Hub Programme and the Leadership and Operating model supporting the Hub Programme.
	• The Town and Community Hub Programme (2021), as noted above, aims to replace all pre-1996 learning and teaching establishments, creating efficiencies through asset rationalisation. The EIA for the programme shows wide-ranging community engagement, including with youth

[1] North Lanarkshire Council 2023/24 Annual Audit Report, Audit Scotland, October 2024.

Findings	Evidence
taking place in relation to these. **Plans for ongoing monitoring and adaptations to service delivery are being factored into the council's Equality Impact Assessment process.**	and disability forums and partnership groups, and feedback from new mothers to support breastfeeding friendly spaces. The council also drew on data sources like SIMD, school estates statistics and capital allocations. The EIA assesses both positive and negative impacts on equality, socio-economic disadvantage and human rights, with actions to mitigate adverse impacts. It also includes detailed monitoring plans such as "you said, we did" reporting and post- occupancy evaluations for each facility. • The Hub Programme aims to bring together staff, services and community groups into one place to improve access and outcomes. It is hoped the approach will reduce socio-economic disadvantage in North Lanarkshire. The Hub Programme EIA draws on a broad range of evidence including census data, staff focus groups, community consultation, as well as lived experience co-design with local people. The EIA has considered groups that are expected to be impacted positively by community hubs, as well as the potential adverse impacts - such as challenges hybrid working may pose for disabled workers - and clearly sets out actions like flexible working to address challenges. There are plans to carry out ongoing monitoring and consultation with stakeholders at each phase of implementation, and adaptations to be made to service delivery accordingly.

Recommendation 2

The council should ensure that the reporting of progress against its 28 Health Check Indicators is more accessible to the public.

Appendix

Improvement action plan

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
1. Benefits realisation The council is developing a benefits realisation tool. It does not currently track or report transformation benefits at project level.	The council should prioritise completion of its benefits realisation framework and incorporate reporting on both financial and non-financial benefits into regular monitoring reports. Given the financial challenges the council is facing there is a need to increasingly monitor and track cost and benefits of transformation projects. This will help inform officers and members of the extent to which transformation projects are delivering their intended benefits.	Following the Framework to the One Service Board in March 2025, arrangements are being made to roll this out to all of the other Programme of Work Boards. Chief Officer (Strategy and Engagement) June 2026

Issue/risk	Recommendation	Agreed management action/timing
2. Improving public reporting of progress against the 28 Health Check Indicators The council uses 28 indicators to monitor the impact of *The Plan for North Lanarkshire* as a whole and to determine whether places and services are improving. A summary of the council's performance against its 28 health check indicators is not easily accessible to the public. This makes it difficult for the public to find out and understand how the council is performing or what impact it is having locally.	The council should ensure that the reporting of progress against its 28 Health Check Indicators is more accessible to the public.	There is a dedicated section within the Programme of Work pages on the website for "Performance", however this is under redevelopment to ensure it captures, and provides access to, all relevant and already existing council and Programme of Work performance reporting in the one place. This will include regular updates on the 28 health check indicators in a way that is meaningful to the reader. Chief Officer (Strategy and Engagement) June 2026

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