

Delivering for the future: Transformation Case studies

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Introduction

1. This supplement sets out the detail of the case studies referenced in the report [Delivering for the future: Transformation - How councils are redesigning and delivering more efficient services](#). These are illustrative examples of approaches that are contributing positively within the respective councils. They are intended as a resource to support councils to learn from others. It is a snapshot of examples at the time of drafting and many other valid approaches exist beyond those reflected in the supplement.

2. The supplement is organised into headings aligned with those in the Delivering for the future report to support cross-referencing. It is intended to provide further information where of interest rather than act as a standalone document.

3. The case studies are sourced from local management reports. A link to the relevant local report is provided in the source for each case study.

Strategic planning

1. East Ayrshire Council

A service embedded approach that is well linked to wider corporate strategies

Transformation is embedded in service delivery, giving services direct responsibility for delivering change. The council's commitment to transformation is set out in its Strategic Plan 2022–27 and its medium-term financial strategy is the driver for transformational change. 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 plans. The new approach involves transformational activity being owned by each head of service with the Council Management Team providing oversight.

Source: [East Ayrshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 10), Audit Scotland

2. North Lanarkshire Council

'Programme of Work' and accompanying delivery plan – seeing transformation through a regional lens

The council has embedded transformation into the programme of work that supports delivery of its strategic plan (The Plan for North Lanarkshire). The strategic plan, and therefore the initiatives to deliver it, is outward looking, setting out a long-term vision and priorities for North Lanarkshire for the council, its partners, stakeholders and communities. The council's programme of work has included projects such as community hubs, the purchase of Cumbernauld town centre to facilitate regeneration, and the development of digital classrooms.

Source: [North Lanarkshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 8), Audit Scotland

3. Highland Council

A strong example of the transformation programme sitting within the corporate strategic plan

The council's Delivery Plan 2024–27 sets out how it will deliver on the commitments in its Our Future Highland corporate plan. It is organised into six portfolios, each with workstreams and projects. This shows how projects come together to address priority areas. For each project, the delivery plan sets out links to wider council strategies, financial implications, timescales, and success measures. The document is public, providing a clear summary for communities of the council's plans.

Source: [The Highland Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 8), Audit Scotland

4. West Lothian Council

An example of a standalone 'Performance and Transformation Strategy' with projects embedded in services

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.

Source: [West Lothian Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 7), Audit Scotland

Financial planning

1. North Ayrshire Council

A strong approach to planning transformation to deliver savings and protect frontline services

The council is clear that the primary driver behind its transformation programme is the need to deliver financial savings to address the council's financial challenges. The council's current transformation programme, known as its Sustainable Change Programme, was approved in 2023 and consists of five workstreams and six service reviews.

The council has a dedicated section in its annual budget documents on its change programme. As well as setting out the savings generated to date, it notes that the more progress made through delivery of the programme, the less impact there could be on delivery of the council's core services.

Source: [North Ayrshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 10), Audit Scotland

Transformation funding

1. North Lanarkshire Council

Community Investment Fund

The council has demonstrated its commitment to transformation through the creation of the Community Investment Fund in 2018 to support capital investment and economic regeneration activity, facilitated by increased council tax income. In December 2024, the council reported an expected fund value of £793.1 million over the 15 years from its inception to 2033/34. To date, the fund has supported projects such as community hubs, the regeneration of Cumbernauld town centre, 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.

Source: [North Lanarkshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 9), Audit Scotland

2. Renfrewshire Council

Service Modernisation and Reform Fund

Renfrewshire Council's Service Modernisation and Reform Fund supports services in implementing change and funds development costs for projects that are expected to bring long-term benefits to the council. Alongside this, the council utilises short-term capacity within service budgets and external funding where available to protect the fund's capacity to support further work over the long term.

The fund is increased where there are one-off surpluses in revenue budgets. It had a balance of £10.2 million at 1 April 2025. Based on current commitments the council estimates that there is sufficient funding available for two to three years of costs, but also anticipates there to be further funding required in order to exploit potential opportunities arising in relation to the use of AI.

Source: [Renfrewshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 12), Azets Audit Services Ltd

3. Scottish Borders Council

Change Fund

The council has a £20 million self-replenishing Change Fund to support transformation projects. Auditors noted that it was too early to measure its success but highlighted that £1 million had been invested in 2024/25 to support digital projects. These were due to be repaid over three to five financial years.

Source: [Scottish Borders Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 9), Audit Scotland

4. East Ayrshire Council

Early Intervention and Prevention Fund

East Ayrshire Council used funding generated on a one-off basis from financial flexibilities to set up a £40 million Early Intervention and Prevention Fund, showing its commitment to invest resources to improve strategic outcomes. This will be spent over ten years. The council consulted local communities and community planning partners on how to spend this money.

Source: [East Ayrshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 13), Audit Scotland

Project plans

1. West Lothian Council

Budget reduction measures template

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/those who use services
- 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.

Auditors reviewed a sample of project templates and found that these are used across council service areas.

Source: [West Lothian Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 8), Audit Scotland

Managing projects and programmes

1. Falkirk Council

Strong arrangements for officer monitoring of transformation activity

The governance arrangements for the council's Council of the Future programme were revised in response to recommendations made in the council's last Best Value Assurance Report (January 2022). The council adopted more officer-led arrangements which included the creation of the Council of the Future Board and three simplified directorate boards.

The Council of the Future Board meets every two months and is responsible for upholding and implementing the council's vision for transformation, maintaining the scope of the portfolio and ensuring transformation is resourced and managed effectively to deliver tangible benefits. There is strong ownership from senior leadership across the council, with the board being chaired by the chief executive and membership including directors and heads of service. The Council of the Future Board operates on a model of exception reporting, which means that it focuses on projects which are not meeting targets. It receives updates on the overall status of the transformation projects and individual projects, which show a red, amber or green status for milestones and financials.

The council has developed a template for Spend to Save reserve (formerly Change Fund) bids to ensure that funding is only granted where Council of the Future criteria are met and that savings are to be delivered as a result of the funding.

Source: [Falkirk Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 12), Audit Scotland

Examples where operational governance arrangements align with arrangements for strategic and financial priorities

2. Highland Council

The council has good governance arrangements in place to oversee progress with transformation, underpinned by a well-developed performance management system. Governance arrangements are set out within the council's Delivery Plan 2024–27. Each of the six portfolios within the Delivery Plan is sponsored by an assistant chief executive, led by a chief officer and governed by a strategic portfolio board. The council has put in place both central and project-level resources, creating 48 fixed-term posts to support the Delivery Plan.

The council's corporate Portfolio Management Office supports the implementation and governance of the Delivery Plan. The Portfolio Management Office and the Performance Team were brought together given both have a key role in supporting governance, assurance and progress reporting. The Portfolio Management Office is part of the council's Strategic Improvement and Performance function. In terms of structure, a performance manager oversees three portfolio managers, five IT project officers, and four performance officers.

Source: [The Highland Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 14), Audit Scotland

3. North Lanarkshire Council

The council has effective governance arrangements in place to oversee its transformation work.

Elected members have strategic oversight of the council's Programme of Work (which incorporates transformation) through the Policy and Strategy Committee, receiving comprehensive updates every six months. Specific reports are also submitted to service committees on individual projects and activities. At an officer level, the Corporate Management Team has oversight of the entire Programme of Work within the council.

Six strategic boards monitor delivery. These are chaired by a senior responsible officer, who is a chief officer and is accountable for the delivery of programme of work priorities. 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 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.
- 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.

Source: [North Lanarkshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 11), Audit Scotland

4. Renfrewshire Council

The council has established a refreshed Transformation Board, chaired by the director of finance and resources, to provide strategic oversight of the current phase of its Reshaping Renfrewshire transformation programme. In previous phases, transformation updates were presented to the Corporate Management Team through 'portfolio' updates on themes aligned to the strategic outcomes a minimum of twice a year. Under the refreshed structure, the Transformation Board reports into the Corporate Management Team and the cross-party Leadership Board. The Leadership Board is responsible for approving and providing the highest level of governance oversight of the overall transformation programme.

Individual workstreams are overseen by a relevant officer governance group and report to the relevant political board. Such boards receive updates at appropriate points in time on progress against objectives. To allow a more efficient oversight of the complex environment, the responsibility of governing projects is at a workstream level and split between different council boards (for political oversight) and governance groups (for officer oversight) chaired by head of service, director or the chief executive. All of the officer groups then report to the Corporate Management Team at appropriate points during the project.

The council also has a corporate Project Management Office function with Programme Management Unit specialists who support major transformation projects and programmes.

Source: [Renfrewshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 14), Azets Audit Services Ltd

Examples where transformation or reform boards are used

5. Fife Council

The council has a Programme Management Office, Reform Board and Cabinet Committee in place to provide strategic direction, ensure alignment with corporate priorities, and monitor delivery of progress of transformational activity.

The Reform Board comprises the council's Executive Team and provides strategic direction, approves key initiatives, and monitors overall progress. Transformation proposals are routed through the Reform Board through the council's Service Change Plan process. Insights from Reform Board and Cabinet Committee discussions are fed back to service teams to refine delivery plans, ensuring a two-way flow of information and strategic alignment.

Source: [Fife Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 11), Azets Audit Services Ltd

6. North Ayrshire Council

The council provides regular and detailed information on the financial and non-financial benefits of individual transformation workstreams and service reviews to its Transformation Board.

The board meets bi-monthly and is chaired by the chief executive, ensuring they are well-sighted on the programme. All chief officers are members of the board. The board considers and agrees work to be progressed under the council's Sustainable Change Programme. Each of the five workstreams in the programme has its own project board, which feeds into the Transformation Board.

Source: [North Ayrshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 11), Audit Scotland

Examples where Programme or Project Management Offices are in place

7. Dundee City Council

The council has a permanently resourced Programme Management Office which comprises two permanent staff and one temporary member of staff. The Programme Management Office function is part of the Chief Executive service area. The Programme Management Office consists of a transformation programme manager and two transformation programme officers. Auditors concluded the Programme Management Office is adequately resourced.

The transformation programme officers are assigned to key transformation projects with other projects being led by service staff but supported from the central Programme Management Office function. However, Programme Management Office staff can help progress projects where required. The council is planning to develop more secondment opportunities to support transformation projects to help resource transformation.

Source: [Dundee City Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 12), Audit Scotland

8. Perth and Kinross Council

The council's transformation programme is effectively resourced, and this is continually monitored. A Programme Management Office was formally approved in September 2024. It is due to be in place until March 2026 and discussions are ongoing at the council around future arrangements.

The Programme Management Office comprises three members of staff – a strategic lead, project manager and project officer. In most cases service staff lead the transformation projects taking place in their area with support from the central Programme Management Office function. However, Programme Management Office staff can help progress projects when required. The council has reported that the Programme Management Office has led to improved consistency of approach, clear support structures and more accountability in terms of monitoring and reporting.

Source: [Perth and Kinross Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 10), Audit Scotland

Councillor engagement

1. Midlothian Council

Effective governance arrangements for reporting progress to the senior leadership team and councillors

As part of the effective governance arrangements supporting the delivery of its Transformation Blueprint, the council has a Business Transformation Steering Group, made up of councillors from across parties. Its purpose is to scrutinise and approve transformation work for onward transmission to the Full Council; advise the officer-led Business Transformation Board on priorities and risks; and allocate funding from the council's Transformation Fund.

The council has developed a Transformation Blueprint dashboard to report progress across the programme to the Full Council, the Business Transformation Board and the Business Transformation Steering Group. The dashboard is supplemented by more detailed papers on individual projects which provide suitable information for senior leadership and councillors on transformation progress and issues.

Source: [Midlothian Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 12), Audit Scotland

2. Scottish Borders Council

Improving transformation visibility for councillors

The council is working to improve the visibility of its transformation programme with councillors through its reporting arrangements and its Transformation Working Group.

In May 2024, the council established a Transformation Working Group. This was set up for councillors to provide views on transformation proposals to help officers to decide which projects to take forward in the budget. The group includes cross-party and independent councillor representation.

From October 2024, during the financial planning process, the Transformation Working Group became the Budget Working Group. The council reported that this approach was beneficial when setting its 2025/26 budget. It intends to have a recurring annual pattern where the Transformation Working Group meets for around six months before becoming the Budget Working Group for around six months during the financial planning process.

Source: [Scottish Borders Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 12), Audit Scotland

Resourcing

1. Midlothian Council

Use of Transformation Fund to resource a Programme Management Office

The council has used its Transformation Fund to develop a fixed-term programme management office to support implementation of its Transformation Blueprint for a three-year period until October 2026. It is well resourced and is led by the executive business manager (transformation), who attends key officer and councillor governance groups.

The council has also used its Transformation Fund to create extra posts in service areas to deliver transformation, but has faced difficulties recruiting for some of these. To mitigate capacity risks around transformation work, the council has considered employing support staff and has recruited consultants.

The council reports that the executive business manager (transformation) regularly reviews resourcing of the Transformation Blueprint and discusses this in fortnightly meetings with the chief officer corporate solutions.

Source: [Midlothian Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 13), Audit Scotland

2. West Lothian Council

Service Design Champions Group embedded in the workforce

The council has invested in staffing structures to support transformation. It established a six-week service design training course and associated Service Design Champions Group in 2020. To date, it has trained 83 staff across all service areas in service design tools and techniques, with 69 service design champions who remain with the council.

These champions support the development of new projects and/or service reviews in their areas. The Service Design Champions Group meets quarterly, which provides the opportunity for ongoing learning, professional development and networking.

Source: [West Lothian Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 11), Audit Scotland

Partnership working

1. North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire councils

Pan-Ayrshire shared services

Some of the most radical plans for transformation in the local government sector involve shared services. At the time of audit work, North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire councils were exploring 'Pan-Ayrshire' shared services. However, the councils highlighted barriers (including the siloed approach to funding, governance and reporting) and referred to the vital role of national government in enabling more transformational partnership working. In early 2026, North and East Ayrshire councils agreed to progress a shared Economic Development Service. South Ayrshire are not currently joining this shared service.

Source: [South Ayrshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 13), Audit Scotland

2. Midlothian Council

Multi-Agency Transformation Management Group

The council is working well with partners to deliver transformation in Midlothian. One of the council's Transformation Blueprint themes is multi-agency transformation. Projects being taken forward under this theme include economic growth and skills; the Midlothian Aligned Curriculum Offer; estate rationalisation; one stop shops; and exploring the Safeguarding Through Rapid Intervention model.

The council has established a board with its partners, the Multi-Agency Transformation Management Group, to deliver whole system change. This is chaired by the council's chief executive. Partners represented include NHS Lothian, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh College, Scottish Ambulance Service and East Lothian Council.

Source: [Midlothian Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 15), Audit Scotland

Joint funding

1. Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Highland and Moray councils

Expanding electric vehicle infrastructure supported by £7.5 million of Scottish Government funding

Highland, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire councils share a procurement service. Through this service, and building on wider regional relationships, the councils are working with Moray Council to expand electric vehicle infrastructure, which is supported by £7.5 million of Scottish Government funding.

Source: [The Highland Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 20), Audit Scotland

2. Moray Council

M.connect project – developing a demand-responsive council-run bus service using funding provided by the Scottish Government

This ambitious ten-year project (initiated in 2022) aimed to develop a demand-responsive council-operated bus service with links to the wider commercial bus network. It is expected to run until 2032 where it is anticipated the service will become embedded as business as usual. It was not targeted as a cost-saving measure, but to improve public transport connectivity in rural areas with low population density and relatively high transport poverty. Journeys made with the service have increased from 45,881 in year one to 74,938 in year three.

The council worked with Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Partnership and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to develop an outline business case in 2021 and a full business case in 2023. Capital funding of £4.3 million was provided by the Scottish Government as part of the Moray Growth Deal. The Department for Work and Pensions has also partnered with the council on initiatives to provide pathways to employment – either through bus services that provide access to interviews/employment, or driver recruitment. A further partnership with NHS Grampian is likely to be considered in phase 2.

The council noted initial and ongoing community engagement and feedback has been key to the success of the m.connect service. Initial engagement was to establish the need and inform solutions, to ensure the council were delivering a service that was wanted. The council recognises ongoing customer engagement is essential to grow and improve the service, with evidence of feedback influencing decision-making.

Source: [Moray Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 20), Grant Thornton UK LLP

3. Shetland Islands and Orkney Islands Councils

Partner, private and third sector collaboration on rural energy hubs

Shetland Islands and Orkney Islands councils are involved in a rural energy hub project with the environmental consultancy Aquatera Ltd, the European Marine Energy Centre, Community Energy Scotland, and Highland Fuels Ltd. After initial projects in Shetland and Orkney, this second phase of work aims to pilot a rural energy hub in Shetland. A hub was expected to open in Brae during 2025.

Shetland Islands Council and Orkney Islands Council were awarded £1.6 million and £1.3 million respectively of UK Research and Innovation funding, with further grant funding awarded to partners.

Source: [Shetland Islands Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 17), Audit Scotland

4. Midlothian Council

Midlothian Energy Limited – joint venture with private sector to deliver low-carbon energy projects across the area

Midlothian Energy Limited is an energy services company which is a joint venture between Midlothian Council and Vattenfall Heat UK. It was set up to deliver low-carbon energy projects across Midlothian and supports the council's 2020 Climate Change Strategy. Initially, the project will supply low-carbon heat to around 3,000 homes, education and retail spaces in Midlothian's new town, Shawfair. The first connection to a residential property was achieved in December 2024. The council and Vattenfall are aiming to expand the Midlothian Energy Limited network into existing buildings in Midlothian and Edinburgh over the next five years.

Midlothian Energy Limited is expected to benefit the council's long-term financial position, while providing both environmental and community benefits, such as helping to achieve its net zero carbon ambition by 2045, jobs creation, outreach events for schools and generating local supply chain opportunities.

The council provided a £1.6 million shareholder equity injection into Midlothian Energy Limited to cover business costs of the company and up to £8.6 million to allow the Shawfair project to proceed. This is being matched by Vattenfall. Additionally, Midlothian Energy Limited has also benefitted from £7.4 million funding from the Scottish Government's Low Carbon Transition programme.

Source: [Midlothian Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 19), Audit Scotland

Community engagement

1. North Ayrshire Council

Budget consultation

The council ran an expanded, comprehensive budget engagement process from October to November 2024 to gather views on several transformation projects in response to significant financial challenges. Surveys included a range of options across six main themes. The themed survey approach let people focus on areas of interest and increased responses from 200 in 2024/25 to 4,461 in 2025/26, alongside additional community discussions. The results were shared with councillors to inform future service delivery, and two proposals were agreed as budget savings: the learning review and the economic development service review.

Source: [North Ayrshire Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 18), Audit Scotland

2. Perth and Kinross Council

User-focused service design approach

Perth and Kinross Council use the [Scottish Approach to Service Design](#), using the Double Diamond framework to ensure services are designed collaboratively, with users, and focused on solving the right problems with effective well-defined solutions. Feedback gathered through workshops, events, and meetings informs clear actions and service improvements, including recent reviews of employability services and Arm's-Length External Organisations.

Source: [Perth and Kinross Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 15), Audit Scotland

3. East Renfrewshire Council

Use of data

East Renfrewshire Council invested in data analysis tools to identify early signs of financial vulnerability among its communities. Financial wellbeing indicators (such as unauthorised overdraft use) can be overlaid onto council datasets. Data can be broken down into very small areas of the map, allowing the council to identify pockets of vulnerability in otherwise affluent areas. This has allowed the council to target the advice services it provides citizens around money and energy efficiency.

Source: [East Renfrewshire Council: Best Value Thematic Report](#), (page 12), Ernst and Young LLP

Impacts

1. Perth and Kinross Council

Benefits realisation log

The council has introduced a benefits realisation log which has been incorporated into the council's project monitoring system to capture what deliverables have been achieved in the period. Examples of deliverables include the completion of key milestones, workstreams, key task(s) within workstreams, a critical success factor being completed, or an outcome achieved. The council has committed to enhance the recording of benefits realised in every project and ensure that it can link the outcomes, return on investment and benefits to workstreams and action planning. This is due for completion in March 2026.

Source: [Perth and Kinross Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 18), Audit Scotland

2. Highland Council

Incorporating success measures into the Performance and Risk Management System (PRMS)

The council has made good progress with identifying clear success measures for projects in its Delivery Plan. Each project is also linked to targets in the council's Performance Plan. The council uses its PRMS to monitor and report on the impacts of its Delivery Plan. The system allows monitoring of measures of success on a project or portfolio level. RAG ratings are applied to each success measure, which supports monitoring of whether intended benefits are being delivered.

Information on success measures from the PRMS is incorporated into the reporting structure for Delivery Plan progress updates to strategic committees. However, most success measures were not at the stage of being reported at the time of audit work. It was therefore too early to assess the quality of reporting.

The Operational Delivery Plan Annual Progress Report 2024/25, which went to the Full Council in May 2025, included 'highlights' from 2024/25 and RAG ratings for all projects. It did not include reporting on success measures, as these were not yet at the stage of being reported for most projects. Auditors noted there was scope to incorporate these measures in future annual Delivery Plan progress reports.

Source: [The Highland Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 23), Audit Scotland

3. Highland Council

Highland Council in-house bus service – delivering savings while improving service quality

The council launched its in-house bus service in response to a steep rise in public and school transport contract costs following the Covid-19 pandemic. It piloted the service on seven routes starting in early 2023. The pilot has evolved into a business-as-usual operation, with expansion in 2024 and 2025, including the establishment of a second base in Caithness and the acquisition of a local bus operator. The council has also introduced a new shopper bus service in response to a request from local residents. The council plans to further expand the service across Highland, including Skye and Badenoch & Strathspey, by 2028.

The initiative aimed to reduce costs, improve service reliability, and ensure continuity of statutory school transport, particularly in rural and remote areas. The council reports that service quality has improved, with increased passenger numbers, high reliability, and positive feedback on cleanliness and driver conduct. The in-house model has enabled the council to respond more flexibly to community needs, particularly in rural areas, supporting the council's strategic aim of resilient and sustainable communities.

Financially, the project is self-funding and has delivered recurring savings. By 2024/25, it had secured an annual revenue saving of £1.35 million, with cost avoidance benefits of £1.51 million in its initial phase (figures based on unaudited data). Capital investments, such as vehicle purchases, are offset by the savings from avoiding high contract costs. The council's 2025/26 budget included a £6 million Transport Expansion Fund to support future growth.

Source: [The Highland Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 24), Audit Scotland

4. Angus Council

Tracking the impacts of estate rationalisation

The Agile Working and Estate Rationalisation Programme is a long-term transformation initiative aimed at modernising workforce practices, reducing the council's property footprint and improving environmental and financial sustainability. Initiated in 2015 as part of the broader Transforming Angus programme, the project introduced agile workstyles supported by mobile technology and digitisation, enabling hybrid working and rapid adaptation during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over four phases, the council reduced its estate by 33 properties to eight properties, saving £3.68 million in recurring revenue costs and generating £1.33 million in capital receipts, while also cutting 298 tonnes of CO² emissions.

The programme aligned with council priorities such as economic development, climate action, and operational efficiency. An Equality Impact Assessment ensured the redesign of workspaces considered inclusivity, with no negative impacts identified for protected groups. The programme also supports staff wellbeing, flexibility, and inclusion contributing to a more attractive and resilient employment proposition.

The council set out 16 success measures associated with the programme categorised into workforce, property and environmental-related improvements. These included:

- increase in employee satisfaction
- attracting the right talent and retaining the right skills and capability
- reduction in property revenue costs through reduced footprint
- capital receipts and income generation through, for example, leasing out property
- reduction in CO² emissions from, for example, less travel to and from work.

Measures relating to employee satisfaction and talent are to be monitored through staff surveys.

Source: [Angus Council: Best Value thematic management report](#), (page 18), Audit Scotland
