

Digital Vision

In this briefing paper we have set out:

- Why we are proposing to move North Lanarkshire Council to a new digital delivery model;
- Our community digital vision; and
- Our plan to deliver it

Why move to a digital delivery model?

The Local Government landscape is evolving. Demographic change is leading to increased demand on our services. Budgetary pressure is continuing and unlikely to lessen in the near term. New legislation is creating a greater focus on empowering communities to direct service provision and to self-support. Finally, our customers and employees have an increasing desire and expectation to engage and work digitally. All this is putting considerable pressure across our local public services.

At the same time we are seeing significant advances in disruptive technologies such as ultra-fast broadband, artificial intelligence and smart devices, and these will become increasingly sophisticated in the future. For example, artificial intelligence (AI) can already be used to respond to customer queries through chatbot features or even virtual assistants. By 2029, it is predicted AI will be at about the same level of intelligence as adult humans. This technology and others unlock possibilities for delivering services in radically different ways – if we invest in the necessary infrastructure.

Overall, this gives us an opportunity for significant and fundamental change. Our ambition is for North Lanarkshire Council to seize this opportunity to transform into a digital pioneer in Scotland, delivering better outcomes for the people and businesses of North Lanarkshire.

What is our Digital Vision?

Our digital vision and ambition involves going beyond just changing our operational ways of working within the Council, it involves looking holistically at the North Lanarkshire area and community. We are proposing therefore to deliver a wide ranging transformation that interlocks significant improvements in our operational and customer facing IT with the modernisation of our infrastructure across the area.

We will embrace technological innovation and find new ways to deliver services at the lowest possible cost base in ways that are designed around outcomes and people, not around our internal structures. We aim to empower and activate customers to be self-managing, direct them to the right resources, and anticipate their needs. This will make North Lanarkshire an attractive place to live, work and do business, both improving outcomes for residents and fostering economic growth.

We have ambitious plans to put in place a state of the art ultrafast public wifi network and remote 5G in the next 3-10 years. This physical infrastructure will be established as we build 20k new Council houses. This provides the foundations on which we can transform residential areas into “Smart Cities” connecting them to innovative services that help reduce demand and support priority outcomes. For example, this will enable “the internet of things” as a standard across our homes, connecting our residents and their assets to the internet, which in turn will help to detect needs and trigger early interventions.

At the same time we will change our operational ways of working in ways that make the most of these new digital technologies. We will reduce the cost base through the removal of duplication and fragmentation through consolidation of common activity/processes. Data and digital are key enablers to this model of service delivery. They provide access for our customers as well as the evidence base to change our services and respond to need on an ongoing basis. This will increase customers' use of self-support whilst allowing us to target our resources at those with greatest need.

To turn this into reality requires an improved IT architecture. This means a new digital platform on which we build the new technology and ways of working. This includes, for example, linking Smart Council homes into our network as part of the digital transformation.

This vision and ambition is summarised by the key principles set out below and will require strong leadership and investment to turn this in to a reality.

Our community digital vision is that:

- **North Lanarkshire Council is one of Scotland's digital pioneers** - NLC embraces technological innovation and digitisation of services including cutting edge technologies like the internet of things (sensors automatically sending information to Council systems and enabling better targeting of resources), drone technology (utilized in delivering services such as surveying), and non-evasive user authentication techniques (fingerprints and voiceprints for customers to check sensitive data or receive personalised recommendations).
- **NLC uses digital platforms to reduce demand and provide personalised services to customers** - Digital platforms support flexible and rapid improvements and support customers and businesses to connect more effectively. Connections to other websites (e.g. Blue Badges) pull in information on all past appointments and interactions from the Local Health partnership and there are links to an ecosystem of third party apps (e.g. sharing tools, volunteering, social meetups) and to paid-for services (e.g. tutors, dieticians, personal trainers). NLC acts as a broker, linking people to third party support that they can benefit from. NLC subsidises or endorses these services to reduce demand on the Council. Algorithms use browsing history and cookies to tailor dashboard content to users in the same style as platform services such as "Amazon" (e.g. notifications about local events, voluntary positions, jobs, homecare, distance learning opportunities, local businesses etc.).
- **NLC is more efficient, personal contact is reduced in favour of digitised services** - NLC works with people in a myriad of virtual and physical ways that break from traditional ways of working. Personal contact is reduced in favour of end to end digitised services. All transactions e.g. including payments or applications for licenses take place online and not just through the website - building on existing work on mobile apps. Traditional services like First Stop Shops are transformed to assist people to self-serve with kiosks for basic transactions and video chat if needed.
- **Digital exclusion should be addressed as part of our plans but not hinder our ambition** - Information on digital platforms is adapted for people with language and literacy difficulties e.g. including signing and chat bots for assistance. NLC also ensures that groups with limited digital proficiency have access to in-person navigation support and internet access in libraries and community centres.
- **NLC is highly networked with other organisations** - Multi-agency working is the norm. Council services – and often partners too – share a digital platform, so much of their data is shared instantly. As a result, NLC now organise around particular problems as we need to tackle them – teams are highly strategic, fluid entities that

form into teams based on local needs. NLC works closely with experts, customers and innovators to generate new ideas. For instance, rapid response teams form for fixed periods to address specific cross-cutting challenges. Direct service provision by the Council is priority based as NLC acts more as a broker.

- **NLC innovates with a deeper toolbox for problem solving** - NLC uses data analytics, predictive algorithms to identify, analyse, and anticipate problems. Services such as infrastructure, customer contact, waste and welfare are responsive to North Lanarkshire customers and proactively respond to them, where necessary, based on data driven decision making.
- **NLC technology, workforce and public space are flexible and adaptable to change** - All staff, from the Chief Executive to refuse collectors, can access the files and case management information they need, wherever they are. Files are stored in the Cloud; chat platforms enable staff to communicate with one another and maintain a record of conversations. Workers are highly mobile and not tied to Council offices creating less need for public buildings.
- **NLC's staff focus on higher value analytics not routine admin** - The back office is fully digitised. Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is a common feature at the Council, taking over repetitive rules-based tasks e.g. invoice payments. The move to digital working hasn't created as many jobs as it has removed. There are fewer managers. There are greater numbers of digital natives and digital leaders in the Council with strong skills for problem solving, systems thinking and innovation. Increasingly, staff have future-focused analytical capabilities, to consider long-term challenges such as an ageing population. The Council uses talented developers, designers and analysts but not all of these jobs exist in-house.
- **NLC offers the incentives to attract and retain the talent needed** - Skills and responsibilities, not seniority and age, are rewarded. Less rigid career pathways and a non-hierarchical structure have also made NLC more attractive and smoothed pathways between the public and private sectors.

In conclusion our vision is to harness available technology to digitise Council services and deliver improved outcomes and services to citizens and communities.

What is the plan to deliver this?

Managing change

To deliver the Council's vision of "harnessing available technology to digitise Council services, delivering improved outcomes and services to citizens and communities", and becoming the leading digital Council in Scotland will require a robust transformational approach. This programme will be business led and the delivery will have the following characteristics:

- Digital leadership will be provided from the senior sponsors of the programme, and from senior leadership in the Council as a whole, providing the experience, personality, leadership abilities and assertiveness needed to drive transformation in the organisation.
- The design process will begin by examining business functions and redesigning processes to remove duplication and fragmentation across the Council. This process will be customer focused and involve engagement of stakeholders both internally and externally to the Council.
- There will be an enabling workstream within the programme focusing on "people" i.e. the skills and roles, leadership, culture and behaviour changes needed for

implementing the change. The ability to engage staff and empower them to work more digitally will be crucial in implementing any changes. Change to teams / services will encompass new processes and new training/behaviours in addition to new technologies.

- There will be a workforce transition plan put in place. This will include working with the Business, Organisational & People Solutions division to create new or different jobs, create paths for the future, and train people for new roles as appropriate.

Digital capabilities

We will also need to build some key Digital capabilities. These Digital capabilities will enable the Council to become an anticipatory, innovative, and adaptive organisation focused on outcomes. To build these capabilities there are some key technology investments and activities required, which will both lay the foundation for the digital future and also maximise usage and scale of the technology investment. The IT architecture changes have been identified adhering to some key success criteria including the following:

- Establish an integrated programme of change across the council that provides visibility of all change (in-flight or planned) and enables resources to be managed effectively and efficiently to deliver against our vision;
- Establish external delivery partnerships to provide the required expertise and capability to augment the councils own IT and change resource, helping to safely deliver the programme under a value for money arrangement;
- Establish a knowledge transfer arrangement with delivery partners to develop and grow the councils own change and digital capabilities to support and sustain digital innovation in the Council;
- Establish a flexible digital platform based on well supported, well understood technology. The digital platform underpins the Councils' ability to adopt, scale and release technical solutions and it is crucial to get this foundation right;
- Standardise on a single, comprehensive case management solution that allows internal and external service requests to be tracked across the Council, regardless of entry point or line of service. This will replace the existing Lagan Case Management solution;
- Develop a modern, standards based and mobile optimised public front end which allows services to be requested securely, asking for information once, with minimised opportunity for error, and automating the use of this information to ensure services are commissioned and customers are kept informed through two way communication channels, which may be phone, text, messaging or social apps;
- Move the existing IT systems integrations to the cloud and invest in a strategic, cloud based integration solution which is the central, controlled conduit for automation of information transferral around the Council;
- Establish single indexes for people, place and staff to allow many applications to leverage these single sources of truth. The indexes would replace our current master data management tool with a more flexible, technically aligned solution;
- Consolidate to a single business intelligence platform for all reporting purposes, to ensure one version of the truth is accessible in a timely, secure and automated fashion and allowing the Council to make informed, intelligence-based decisions;

- Strong governance is required across the Council to ensure all changes to the technology landscape support the business objectives and are not short term, siloed instances of change; and
- Where Line of Business applications cannot be subsumed by common components then any future selection must be done in alignment of the overall architecture of the Digital Council.

Conclusion

The challenges we face are unprecedented but so is the opportunity presented by new technologies. We have set out an ambitious community digital vision in this paper. In order to realise this ambition there will need to be a robust transformation programme in place - we will need to invest in the technology infrastructure and change management process throughout the life of the programme; from design through to implementation. Ultimately, achieving the vision will unlock significant benefits for the Council and its customers alike.