HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee:	Corporate Resources Committee
Date:	21 November 2018
Report Title:	**Unified Communications Project**
Report By:	Director of Corporate Resources

1.   Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1   This report is an update to Members on the Unified Communications (UC) Project.
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1.2   This report seeks to notify Members of completion of the UC Project, and highlight the Video Conferencing (VC) element of the Project, as we appreciate delivery of new VC solutions to Area Offices is of particular interest and is already being heavily utilised by Members since installed.

2.   Recommendations

2.1   Members are asked to consider the update on the Unified Communications Project.

3. Introduction

3.1 Unified Communications is the integration of a number of telecommunication functions that allow Officers, Elected Members and members of the public to communicate, take part in meetings or observe meetings without the need to travel. The systems and technology involved include:

- Telephony
- Telephone Conferencing
- Instant Messaging (online chat)
- Presence (office attendance information)
- Video Conferencing
- Sharing Computer Desktops

3.2 These technologies have significant advantages for an area as large as the Highlands. Benefits of the UC Project include:

- Affordable replacement of ageing and failing telephone systems;
- Support for mobile and flexible working;
- Reduction in the requirement for expensive phone lines;
- Reduction in call charges;
- Affordable replacement of ageing and failing VC systems;
- Ability to reduce the need for and cost of travel.

3.3 Since the last update to Members the project has completed delivery of its three key work streams:
- Schools Telephony
- Video Conferencing
- Corporate Telephony

4. Work Streams Delivered

4.1 Schools Telephony

From 5th October 2016 to 5th July 2017 the project deployed new telephony solutions to 48 Highland Schools

4.2 Room Based Video Conferencing

From 30th January 2017 to 11th May 2017 the project deployed 18 new room based video conferencing solutions across 10 key Council Area sites.

At time of writing this report, one additional new room based video conferencing system was in the process of being deployed to Kyle Service Point, with the expectation that this new system will be up and running by the end of November 2018 at the very latest.

4.3 Corporate Telephony

From 5th March 2018 to 27th August 2018 the project deployed a new, modern enterprise edition (telephones run over the computer data network) telephony solution to the 37 largest Council corporate sites, covering over 2,000 corporate staff.

5. Costs and Budget

5.1 The UC project budget summary is shown below:

Project Expenditure (all figures EX VAT)	£000
Unified Communications project budget	1,287
Less actual project expenditure	1,250
Forecast end of Unified Communications project budget underspend	37

5.2 At time of writing this report, as per the above table, the project budget underspend is listed as 'Forecast' until the final financial true up exercise has been completed by the project team (by end of November 2018). However, it is not expected that this figure will alter significantly, and the UC project will be delivered under budget.

6. Benefits

6.1 A number of benefits have already been delivered or will be delivered as a result of this project. They are summarised in the table below:

Core Outcome	Enabled by:
New Telephony Solutions	Replacement of current telephony to schools and corporate sites.
New VC Solutions	Replacement of current VC with modern solutions to corporate sites.
Telephony Charges Reduced by 40%	Reduction in physical BT lines and associated line rental charges, call charges and support costs at schools and corporate sites.
Reduced travel and associated expenses by 25%	The provision of reliable and easy to use VC solutions at key Area Offices throughout the Council area with integration into future Office desktop solution.
Increased usage of VC by Council users by 60%	The provision of reliable and easy to use VC solutions at key Area Offices throughout the Council area.
Improved VC experience for Council users	The provision of a VC Support Model at key Area Offices throughout the Council area managed by Business Support.
Unified Communications Solution	Integration of newly deployed corporate telephony solutions with future Office365/Skype for Business desktop solutions.
Objectives	**Comments**
Deploy new IP telephony solutions to 48 Highland schools	Avaya IP Office telephony solutions deployed by BT between 05/10/2016 to 05/07/2017.
Deploy new room based video conferencing solution to 10 key Council Area sites	Avaya Scopia XT video conferencing solutions deployed by Exchange Communications Ltd between 30/01/2017 to 11/05/2017.
Procure and deploy new IP telephony solution to 37 largest corporate sites	Avaya Aura Enterprise Edition VOIP telephony solutions deployed by BT between 05/03/2018 to 27/08/2018.
Benefit Description	**Benefit Realised**
Reduction in telephony costs	Saving of £44,081 in FY 17/18
Reduction in Council staff travel costs	Saving of £19,762 in FY 17/18
Reduction in Council staff travel	70,977 miles less travelled in 17/18
Reduction in Council CO2 emissions	Reduced by 20.96 metric tonnes in 17/18
Benefit Description	**Future Benefit to be Realised**
Further reduction in Corporate telephony costs	Estimated savings of £41,712 per annum from 19/20
Future shared services opportunities with other Local Authorities.	Council VOIP telephony solutions can be offered to other Local Authorities. E.g. Highland Council are in discussion with Moray Council regarding potential shared telephony service absorbing Moray Council sites and delivering telephony through Highland Council telephony solution.

| Future commercial opportunities with local businesses. | Council VOIP telephony solutions can be offered to local businesses. Negotiations are underway to investigate several opportunities. |

6.   Implications

6.1   **Resource** – The project is forecast to complete with a £37k underspend. Any underspend will be returned to the Council's Capital Programme.

6.3   **Legal** - There are no implications arising from this report.

6.3   **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - There are no implications arising from this report.

6.4   **Climate Change/Carbon Clever** - There are no implications arising from this report.

6.5   **Risk** – This project has reduced the risk of key communications systems failing across the Council. Work will continue to ensure that the new systems installed are managed sustainably and in recognition of their criticality to the Council.

6.6   **Gaelic** - There are no implications arising from this report.

Designation: Director of Corporate Resources

Date: 12 November 2018

Author: Brian Davidson, ICT Project Manager