

Agenda Item	4
Report No	RDB-01-25

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Redesign Board

Date: 20 March 2025

Report Title: Redesign of Highland Council – Work Programme Update

Report By: Chief Officer – Business Solutions

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report highlights the ongoing importance of the work of the Redesign Board with the Council's priorities, in particular as set out in the approved report to 2 March 2023 Council [‘Our Future Highland- Budget Strategy 2023/24’](#).

The report updates the Redesign Board on the current Work Programme, comprising major projects and a programme of Lean/Rapid Reviews.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:-
- i) **Note** the Work Programme Update;

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource:** There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. Project Sponsors manage the resource commitments required for the successful delivery of their projects from a corporate perspective, ensuring targeted deployment of resource for the effective redesign of Council services in line with the Council's priorities.
- 3.2 **Legal:** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Project Sponsors seek legal advice and take appropriate action as required in respect of their projects.
- 3.3 **Risk:** All Redesign projects comply with Corporate and Transformation PMO standards in respect of proactive risk management as a key discipline in the controlled and managed delivery of the work. Importantly, the Redesign Board work programme and activity of the Board directly contributes to the risk response to of the Corporate Risk in respect of Financial Sustainability (CR1).

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):** There are no direct Health and Safety implications arising from this report. Project Sponsors will consider any specific relevant Health and Safety implications as part of the management and delivery of their projects.

3.5 **Gaelic:** There are no specific Gaelic implications arising from this report. All projects will ensure the Council's bilingual policy is appropriately applied.

4. **Impacts**

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

4. **Programme Delivery – Council Delivery Plan**

4.1 Most of the projects sitting within the 6 Delivery Plan portfolios are now being reported to the relevant strategic committees for scrutiny by Members. The projects agreed to be scrutinised by the Redesign Board are covered by this report.

5 **Redesign Projects Update**

5.1 The Redesign Projects that continue to be reported to the Redesign Board are as follows:-

- My Council (see section 6)
- Food in Schools (see section 7)
- Roads (see section 8)

6 **My Council**

6.1 The Programme Brief was approved at the 28 November 2022 Redesign Board, and from this, the summary purpose and objectives of the Programme are as follows:-

Purpose: To review, improve and create a joined-up customer contact experience at the Highland Council, including the opportunities to further utilise digital approaches to support improved outcomes for our citizens, our staff, and the Council. By developing the use of technology, resources are released to better support customers who need it the most.

6.2 The aim of the My Council Project is to review and create a joined-up customer contact experience at the Highland Council, including the opportunities to further utilise digital approaches to support improved outcomes for our citizens, our staff, and the Council. By developing self-service digital options for those who can use it, resources are released to better support customers who need it the most. The focus of the project is putting the citizen at the centre of customer engagement at the Highland Council, to improve our process and approach for all contact methods (digital, telephony, face to face) and to provide a seamless customer experience. The outcomes of this data-driven and customer focused project will

drive cost-saving efficiencies (financial benefits); reduce failure demand (greater efficiency); and increase internal/external customer satisfaction (improvement).

Following changes in the programme structure, delivery is now being managed through 3 core projects:

- **Project 1** - Customer Contact Strategy
- **Project 3** - MyHighland (formerly “End-to-end Customer Journey”)
- **Project 4** - Customer Contact Methods

Project 2 was covering data and business intelligence. This has now been subsumed within the Data Foundations project, one of the constituent projects within the Delivery Plan Corporate Solutions portfolio.

6.3 The Redesign Board Members assigned to this Project are Cllrs Maxine Smith, Jackie Hendry and Bill Boyd.

6.4 Progress across several key areas has been made during this reporting period and the programme has moved from amber to green:

Project 1: Customer Contact Strategy

- The Customer Experience Strategy was approved at the October 2024 meeting of the Redesign Board and was subsequently taken to the meeting of The Highland Council on 31 October 2024.
- Work is commencing to communicate the strategy and training requirements with management teams and work is ongoing to publish and report on performance standards relating to Customer Experience.
- All work under Project 1 is being progressed but with slippage reported against the project milestone “Publish Customer Standards”.

Project 3: MyHighland

- Prior to this project being initiated, work was progressed on the lean review of housing repairs, with key actions taken to amend processes and communication. The project work produced an action plan for the service to support effective service redesign, which is expected to support customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. The services are undertaking a review of this action plan to map out what’s next.
- Formerly known as the End-to-end Customer Journey Project, MyHighland will deliver online, customised, self-service transactional functionality for the new website. The first area being looked is Council Tax Online. Work is underway to plan for the technology implementation, data flows and changes to business processes.
- All work under project 3 is on track to meet project milestones and deliverables. The project aims to deliver a Council Tax Online solution within the next 12-18 months.

Project 4: Customer Contact Methods

- This project has delivered a new telephony system (RingCentral) for the Service Centre and wider within the Council.
- The prime focus now is on the redesign and update of the Council's core website.
- Input from Members at a previous Redesign workshop, targeted public feedback and input from web design experts has highlighted the complexity of meeting a variety of different user needs. Feedback from stakeholders, and examples of best practice local government websites, are now being worked through with the website system supplier to develop the next design iteration.
- In parallel, an audit of content on the existing website has taken place and additional resources will join the project team to work with Council Services to update and rewrite content as necessary.
- Whilst all work under project 4 is progressing well to meet the anticipated go-live target of September 2025, the Web Project is being recommended as a red status as there is currently not certainty about this timescale being met. However, there is good dialogue underway with the supplier and various actions are being taken to mitigate the risk and to confirm the timescale. It is likely that the project status will be revised before the meeting of the Redesign Board.

6.5 Programme Milestones

Completed milestones are shown in the table below.

Milestones	Estimated Financial Quarter	Project - 1,2,3,4	Start date	Target completion date	Status
Production of a Customer Experience Strategy	Q3 2024/2025	1	01/08/2023	19/09/2024	Complete
Final Customer Charter	Q2 2024/2025	1	01/07/2023	31/07/2024	Complete
Final Customer Relationship Policy	Q1 2024/2025	1	02/04/2024	30/06/2024	Complete
One organisational cloud telephony transition	Q2 2024/2025	4	01/08/2023	30/09/2024	Complete
Housing LEAN Review	Q2 2023/2024	3	01/07/2023	30/09/2024	Complete

In progress milestones are shown in the table below.

Milestones	Estimated Financial Quarter	Project - 1,2,3,4	Start date	Target completion date	Status
Highland Council Website Upgrade & Platform Transition	Q2 2025/2026	4	01/11/2023	30/09/2025	Red
MyHighland - Council Tax Online	Q1 2026/2027	3	06/01/2025	30/06/2026	On Track
CRM Assessment - Programme Milestone	Q4 2024/2025	3	09/07/2024	31/03/2025	On Track
Customer Service Standards published	Q4 2024/2025	1	01/04/2024	31/03/2025	Slippage

6.6 Financial Summary

There are no specific savings targets allocated to this programme. However, it is expected that significant service improvements and efficiencies will result.

The current programme budget is £0.5m, funded from earmarked reserves. The table below shows the financial outlook. This funding has been sufficient to progress projects 1 (Customer Contact Strategy) and 4 (Customer Contact Methods).

EMR	500,000.00	
Q3 24/25 Drawdown	244,230.00	
Q4 24/25 Forecast Drawdown – year end position	- 21,395.45	
25/26 Forecast Spend	206,513.68	
Balance Forecast Q2 FY25-26 -End Sept 25	- 70,651.77	UNDERSPEND

My Council Programme financial outlook – **Based End January 25 (Period 10) FY24-25**

A case will be made for additional funding to progress project 3 (MyHighland).

6.7 Key Risks

Three key risks have been identified.

- Programme resources are not sufficient to achieve all outcomes – mitigated by regular review and planning of resource utilisation and presentation of business cases for additional resources if required.
- Competing tensions between operations and project work – mitigated by resource planning and input as required from senior management to prioritise work.
- Scope and scale of organisational culture change required – mitigated by leadership from senior management and work at multiple levels to embed change within the Council.

7 Food in Schools – Delivering Sustainability

7.1 This Delivery Plan project is being reported to Corporate Resources Committee but is also included in this Redesign Board report given the involvement from the Board.

7.2 During Q3, senior Officers had a very helpful and informative meeting with 2 senior phase secondary pupils at Culloden Academy to discuss the current provision of food in schools. Potential opportunities to increase take-up and reduce waste were also shared. Work is also being taken forward to design surveys to receive feedback from primary and secondary pupils, parent councils and Council teams involved in the provision of food in schools. Furthermore, the Welfare Support team, in collaboration with the People Cluster, continues to promote universal school meals, take-up of means-tested free schools and for those in primaries 6 and 7, those entitled to the Scottish Child Payment.

7.3 Non-Financial Targets and Measures of Success

Food in Schools: Reduced food waste across school estate

Food in Schools: Increase in uptake of free school meals

7.4 Milestones

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Apr 24</i>	Food in Schools: Key partner engagement commenced	M1 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes May 24</i>	Food in Schools: Whole system process review commenced	M2 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes July 24</i>	Food in Schools: Baselines and research	M4 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Nov24 / Completes Mar27</i>	Food in Schools: Design and implement changes	M11 24/25 On Target

7.5 Financial Summary - Savings / Investment

	Food in Schools: Savings	£ 262,000
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7.6 Key Risks

KEY RISKS ASSESSED	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
Food in Schools: Impact on waste management	2	Treat
Food in Schools: Operational impact on resources	2	Treat
Food in Schools: Reduction in take-up through change	4	Treat

7.7 Forward Plan

A Redesign Board Workshop is scheduled for 20 March 2025 to receive feedback on the format of the planned surveys and to discuss future actions.

8 Roads Redesign

- 8.1 Phase 1 of this project has completed, as reported to the 28 November 2024 meeting of the Redesign Board. A separate phase 1 closure report is on the agenda of this meeting.

Designation: Chief Officer – Business Solutions

Date: 7 March 2025

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