

# The Highland Council

Agenda Item	<b>11.a</b>
Report No	<b>RES/08/25</b>

**Committee:** Corporate Resources

**Date:** 20 March 2025

**Report Title:** Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update – Corporate Solutions

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate

## 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Delivery Plan 2024-27 consists of 64 projects/programmes, managed through 6 Portfolio Boards. Each project is reported to a relevant committee for consideration and scrutiny in terms of the Portfolio Reporting Cycle agreed at Council on 9 May 2024. Exceptions to this general rule may apply when for example circumstances merit a standalone project/programme report to either committee or council. If exceptions apply this report will signpost to where the relevant reporting can be found.
- 1.2 This report provides financial, performance, risk and general information on the following Delivery Plan projects/Programme:
- Corporate Solutions – specifically the following projects
    - Service Improvement Solutions (previously Data and Digital Solutions)
    - Food in Schools – Delivering Sustainability
    - One Council Financials
    - One Council HRP&P
- 1.3 The content and structure of the report is intended to:
- assist Member scrutiny and performance management
  - inform decision making and aid continuous improvement, and
  - provide transparency and accessibility

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Consider and **note** progress on the projects covered in this report

## 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource:** Where there are savings targets against projects, non-delivery will have an impact on the Council's budget strategy. Robust programme management and governance will ensure that action is taken to address this as projects progress. Investments are being made in the delivery of the projects, either funded from

Service revenue budgets or from earmarked reserves. Again, robust management will ensure best use of those resources.

As detailed in section 5.6.2, there is an issue with the delivery of savings to the agreed profile for the Service Improvement Solutions project.

- 3.2 **Legal:** This report contributes to the Council's statutory duties to report performance and secure best value in terms of; Section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, and Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, respectively.
- 3.3 **Risk:** There are no additional risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. Project/Programme risks are identified via the council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards and are reported by exception only.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):** There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic:** There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.

#### **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 a monitoring and update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

#### **5. Service Improvement Solutions (previously Data and Digital Solutions)**

##### **5.1 Introduction**

- 5.1.1 This project was previously called Data & Digital Solutions but has been renamed to avoid confusion with other projects. The project is co-ordinating the production of business cases for potential digital transformation initiatives. Where the business cases justify, the project is then preparing to hand over the implementation of those initiatives either to relevant Service teams or to existing Delivery Plan project teams.
- 5.1.2 Delivery of the changes and therefore realisation of benefits is not the purpose of the Service Improvement Solutions project. Rather, it provides a central co-ordinated approach to exploring and developing potential digital transformation opportunities.

##### **5.2 Overall Project RAG**

- 5.2.1 Service Improvement Solutions is overall ragged as Red. This is for 2 reasons – production of the phase 1 business cases has taken longer than expected due to their complexity and there is then a knock-on impact on the timing of the delivery of agreed savings.

## 5.2.2

Reason for Project RAG Rating and Corrective Action:

M10 24/25

Delays in the completion and sign-off of Phase 1 business cases due to complexity and the need to validate potential cost and savings figures. This will have a knock-on effect on the timing of delivering savings and this is being considered as part of the Council's budget.

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## 5.3 Phase 1

5.3.1 Business case preparation is being led by external digital consultants – Triple Value Impact (TVI). TVI are bringing in subject matter experts in a range of service areas to work with Council teams in the business case production. They are also building on success seen in other councils and introducing new options for new technology.

5.3.2 Phase 1 of the work with TVI is nearing completion. This phase investigated potential solutions in the areas shown below:

- Council Tax – use of technology and data to create efficiencies in the management of Single Person Discounts (SPD).
- Roads – use of in-cab video technology with AI to carry out automated monitoring of road conditions.
- Adult Social Care – several possible implementations of technology, such as use of AI to improve care commissioning and smart tech in houses to assist with care at home.
- Foster carers – use of data and digital marketing to target and recruit new foster carers.
- Corporate data and business intelligence – providing input to the Data Foundations project to move the council to being a data-led organisation. This included an in-depth Corporate Business Intelligence Review.

5.3.3 From the above list, progress is now being made with implementation of projects for Council Tax, Roads and Corporate Data. The Foster Carers project is being scoped currently. In Adult Social Care, implementation is likely to focus initially on the use of AI for commissioning services and that is being worked through currently in conjunction with NHS(H).

## 5.4 Phase 2

5.4.1 A second phase, looking at a new set of potential projects, commenced in January 2025. Some of these are building on ideas from phase 1 and others are looking at completely new areas. Examples of the ideas being explored are:

- Use of AI to automate Subject Access Requests and FOIs.
- Use of mobile video communications to assist Council tenants with fault diagnosis and repairs.
- Pro-active monitoring for damp and mould

- Automation of administration in Planning.
- Assessment and rationalisation of the Council's software applications.
- Further automation in Council Tax

5.4.2 Business cases will be prepared over the next 3 months, and it is expected a number of implementation projects will then commence.

## 5.5 Key Milestones and Non-Financial Targets

5.5.1 The only milestone non-financial target is the completion and sign-off of business cases. This was targeted for end of October 2024 and most of the work was completed by then. However further scrutiny is being made of business cases relating to Foster Carers and Adult Social Care, so the October date was not met.

5.5.2 With the introduction of phase 2 of the project, new milestones will be created relating to the new businesses case developments.

5.5.3 Although overall significant recurring savings are expected to be delivered, some of the opportunities being investigated are not driven by direct delivery of savings. Instead they are seen as opportunities to improve service delivery and support future savings.

## 5.6 Financial Summary

### 5.6.1 Investment

Funding of £265k was approved from earmarked funds to complete phase 1. This included a substantial piece of work on the Corporate Business Intelligence Review carried out by a sub-contractor to TVI called itelligent-i.



Additional funding for phase 2, to be confirmed, will be from ICT earmarked reserves.

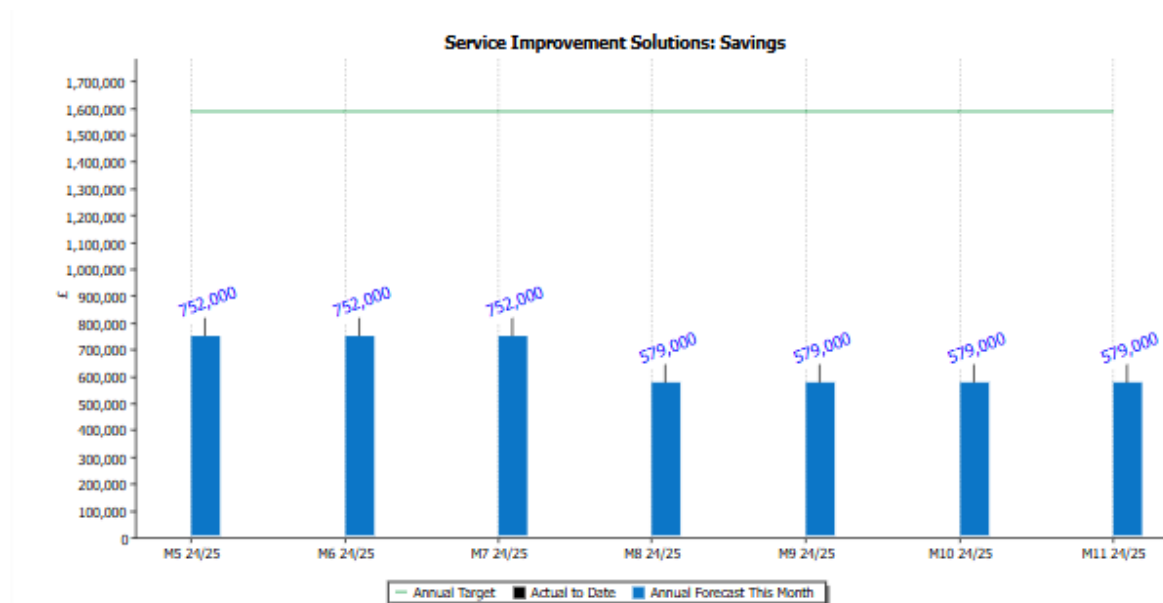
### 5.6.2 Savings

Substantial savings are expected to be delivered by the projects arising. Production of the business cases alone will not realise any savings but will prepare the ground for their delivery. It is important to stress that the savings delivered will be as a result of change projects being delivered by the relevant Services as a result of the business cases developed. However, the savings are reported against this project for full visibility.

5.6.3 The savings target is ragged as Red due to the likely timing of delivery. The full savings target is still expected to be delivered but not as profiled currently. Discussion is underway to reprofile the savings, as part of the Council's budget setting process, to fit with realistic delivery dates.

5.6.4 The table below shows the original savings target profile set for this project and the new profile proposed:

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	TOTAL
<b>Original profile</b>	£1.589m	£0.330m	£0.199m	-	<b>£2.118m</b>
<b>Revised profile</b>	£0.579m	£0.222m	£0.651m	£0.666m	<b>£2.118m</b>



### 5.7 Key Risks

Key Risks	Mitigation
Business cases not being completed and signed off by Services. Due to lack of ownership, incorrect assumptions or governance delays.	Maintaining high levels of awareness with Service management and escalation as required. Building good stakeholder engagement. Initial “sanity checks” of ideas before progressing.
Identified savings not being delivered. Due to Services not taking ownership of the savings delivery, business case assumptions being incorrect,	Maintaining high levels of awareness with Service management and escalation as required. Phase 2 should

circumstances changing or delays in delivery.	identify new opportunities either to meet or exceed the existing savings target.
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## 5.8 Forward Plan

Over the next quarter, phase 1 business cases should be signed off and moved to delivery where appropriate. Phase 2 engagement has started, and new business cases will be developed over that period.

## 6. Food in Schools – Delivering Sustainability

6.1 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.

## 6.2 Non-Financial Targets

Measures of Success

Food in Schools: Reduced food waste across school estate
Food in Schools: Increase in uptake of free school meals

## 6.3 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

## 6.4 Financial Summary

Savings / Investment

 Food in Schools: Savings	£ 262,000
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## 6.5 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

## 6.6 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.

## 7. One Council Financials

7.1 This project was initiated to replace and improvement the Council's core corporate financial system. A separate report is included on the agenda of this Committee detailing progress with the wider Finance, HR, Payroll and Pensions Programme. This project is a part of that programme so please refer to that separate report for a full progress update.

### 7.2 Key Milestones

MILESTONES	CURRENT STATUS
<i>Marked as complete Jun 23</i> One Council Financials: Design Complete	M6 23/24 Completed
<i>Marked as completed Mar 24</i> One Council Financials: Acceptance Testing End	M12 23/24 Completed
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Apr 24</i> One Council Financials: Go-live	M1 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Aug24 / Completes Nov24</i> One Council Financials: Socitm Advisory Review Complete	M8 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Sep24 / Completes Mar25</i> One Council Financials: Financial Data Archive Solution Live	M11 24/25 On Target

### 7.3 Financial Summary

There were no savings attached to this project but there are likely to be future efficiencies resulting in due course.

Please refer to the separate report for investment details.

### 7.4 Key Risks

Please refer to the separate report.

## 7.5 Forward Plan

This project is due to complete at the end of March 2025.

## 8. One Council HRP&P

- 8.1 This project was initiated to replace and improvement the Council's core corporate financial system. A separate report is included on the agenda of this Committee detailing progress with the wider Finance, HR, Payroll and Pensions Programme. This project is a part of that programme so please refer to that separate report for a full progress update.

## 8.2 Key Milestones

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Apr 24</i>	One Council HRP&P: HC pensions self-serve go live	M4 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Apr24 / Completes Aug24</i>	One Council HRP&P: Pensions self-serve concludes	M6 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Apr24 / Completes Mar25</i>	One Council HRP&P: Pensions payments migrated to Altair	M11 24/25 On Target
<i>Starts Aug24 / Completes Nov24</i>	One Council HRP&P: Socitm Advisory Review Complete	M8 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Oct24 / Completes Feb25</i>	One Council HRP&P: Pensioners payroll Go-live	M12 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts / Completes Feb25</i>	HRP Data and Process Enablement: Initiation	M11 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Mar25 / Completes Apr25</i>	HRP Data and Process Enablement: Discover phase	M12 24/25 On Target
<i>Starts Apr25 / Completes May25</i>	HRP Data and Process Enablement: Define phase	
<i>Starts May25 / Completes Jun25</i>	HRP Data and Process Enablement: Prepare phase	
<i>Starts / Completes Jun25</i>	HRP Data and Process Enablement: Deliver phase	
<i>Starts Jun25 / Completes Aug25</i>	HRP Data and Process Enablement: Options appraisal	
<i>Starts / Completes Aug25</i>	HRP Data and Process Enablement: Project closure	
<i>Starts Aug25 / Completes Sep25</i>	One Council HRP&P: Option selection	

## 8.3 Financial Summary

**Savings** - Post project completion efficiency savings resulting from HR & Payroll process redesign and new ways of working of £300k in 2026/27 are forecasted.

**Investment** - Please refer to report at Item 8 to today's agenda.



#### 8.4 **Key Risks**

Please refer to report at Item 8 to today's agenda.

#### 8.5 **Forward Plan**

Please refer to report at Item 8 to today's agenda.

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Date: 5 March 2025

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