

Agenda Item	4
Report No	RDB-03-25

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Redesign Board

Date: 5 June 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 Redesign Phase 2 (see section 8)
- Amenities Review – Future Operating Model (see section 9)

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 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 ongoing 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.
- Project 1 is now undertaking Project closure activities and will report to the My Council programme board for approval.

Project 3: MyHighland

- 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.
- 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 at is Council Tax Online.
- A roadmap has been produced to deliver the ability for our customers to view Council Tax online over the next 12-18 months. It has been identified that an assessment of the data is required to establish the best option for transferring to the new online solution, as this is a critical path to achieving a successful delivery. The assessment is currently underway and expected to complete by the end of June 2025.
- Work progressed on the LEAN review of housing repairs which began within the initial project for End-to-End Customer Journey. A Service review has identified a key action as the implementation of a new housing repairs form. This would offer citizens the ability to submit repairs requests online and reduce the impact to the service centre.

The work is currently being assessed by the Project for feasibility, timeframe and required effort to implement.

- An assessment of the Council's requirements of CRM has been produced, which sets out how best the Council can make improvements to achieve better outcomes for both customers and council staff.

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, were extensively worked through with the website system supplier to develop the new user focused designs.
- In parallel, an audit of content on the existing website has taken place and additional resources have joined the project team to work with Council Services to update and rewrite content as necessary. Training by the supplier has been delivered on best practice customer-centric content writing, including using customer language.
- The anticipated go-live target of September 2025 has now been reviewed to a slightly later date of December 2025. This extension to the go-live date reflects the complexity of the undertaking of this task, and the various connected elements.
- The Project is on track to meet this extended go-live date and is therefore being recommended as a green status. This is a change from red in the last reporting update and reflects the significant corrective action taken by the project.

6.5 Programme Milestones

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Jun 24</i>	My Council Programme: Customer Charter implemented with staff	M3 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Sept 24</i>	My Council Programme: Customer Contact strategy agreed	M7 24/25 Completed
<i>Completed Q1 24/25</i>	Roll out new corporate telephony to support new ways of working	Q1 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Mar 25</i>	My Council Programme: Assessment of CRM	M2 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts Apr24 / Completes Mar25</i>	My Council Programme: Customer Service Standards published	M2 25/26 Some Slippage
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Dec 25</i>	My Council Programme: New redesigned website in place	M2 25/26 On Target
<i>Starts Jan25 / Completes Jun26</i>	My Council Programme: Council tax online implemented	M2 25/26 On Target

As reported in PRMS

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

As reported at 6.4, the go-live for the Council's new website is December 2025. The additional costs arising from this are not significant. It is forecast that the current workplans can be delivered with existing funding.

Funding required to take forward any workplans for MyHighland (Project 3) will require a detailed business case, funding options identified and approval most likely through the Corporate Resources Committee.

6.7 Key Risks

Three key risks have been identified as reported in PRMS.

KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
My Council Programme: Programme Resources and Affordability	6	Treat
My Council Programme: Competing Tensions between day job and change initiatives	6	Treat
My Council Programme: Scope and Scale of organisational culture change	9	Treat

- 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

- 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 Following the informative workshop with the Redesign Board on 20 March 2025, significant work has been undertaken to reflect the Board’s feedback and to finalise the design and content of the questionnaires for stakeholder engagement. This also includes briefings to ensure that questionnaires are issued in a managed and consistent way, supported by corporate messaging. Monitoring is also in place with regard to waste and through the Council’s Welfare Support team take-up of free school meals continues to be a key focus of this project. As reported to The Highland Council on 15 May 2025, this project forecasts a year end income of £303,664, exceeding the savings target of £262,000. This level of income has been achieved through the promotion of school meals and reflects the increase in take-up across Highland schools. Members are also reminded that as “take-up” is included in the formulae used to inform Councils grant distribution from the Scottish Government for this particular service area, these increases in take-up could help positively inform future grant levels.
- 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

After the surveys have been issued to the range of stakeholders agreed by the Redesign Board, and responses have been received, analysis will be undertaken. Feedback will then be reported to the Redesign Board with recommendations.

8 Roads Redesign

8.1 Phase 1 of this project has completed, as reported to the 28 November 2024 meeting of the Redesign Board and a Phase 1 closure report was presented to the Redesign Board on 20 March 2025. A separate report is on the agenda of this meeting covering the Phase 2 Scope.

9. Amenities Review – Future Operating Model

9.1 A separate report is on the agenda of this meeting covering the scope of this project.

Designation: Chief Officer – Business Solutions

Date: 20 May 2025

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