

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	CP/20/25

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 14 August 2025

**Report Title:** Service Performance Reporting for Q1 April 2025 to June 2025

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - Place

## 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The report details relevant performance monitoring information for the Communities and Place Service as follows:-

- Corporate Indicators;
- Contribution to the Corporate Plan; and
- Service Plan Progress

1.2 The content and structure is intended to: -

- assist Member scrutiny and performance management;
- inform decision making to aid continuous improvement; and
- provide transparency and accessibility

## 2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to **scrutinise** and **note** the Service's performance information.

## 3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** - Any resource implications are detailed in the report.

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** - Risk implications associated with projects are detailed in the report. Project/Programme risks are identified via the council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are no immediate health and safety implications arising from this report.

3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no implications for Gaelic arising from 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 Performance – Corporate Indicators

- 5.1 Service performance in relation to Absence, Complaints, FOIs, and Invoice Payments are set out in the following sub-sections.

### 5.2 Service Attendance Management

- 5.2.1 Staff absence is a nationally benchmarked indicator. Effective absence management supports staff, maintains productivity, and contributes to the Council's benchmarked performance.

5.2.2

#### Service Sickness Absence - Communities and Place

##### Average number working days per employee lost through sickness absence

Average Days Lost	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26
Communities and Place	4.27	4.38	4.31	4.21	4.41	4.99	5.14	4.80
Highland Council	2.08	3.35	3.48	3.24	2.54	3.42	3.95	3.55

- 5.2.3 Reducing absence rates through a strong a consistent approach to attendance management is a particular focus for the service. Mandatory online and face-to-face training is available for managers and Attendance Support Officers continue to play a vital role in assisting both managers and employees. Managers are undertaking employee review and development (ERD) meetings with staff to identify any training and wellbeing requirements. The Employee Assistance Programme also provides staff and their families with access to a confidential counselling service and many other wellbeing services including legal and financial information, life coaching and health information.
- 5.2.4 Absence levels in Quarter 1 2025/26 have shown a slight decrease compared to Quarter 4 2024/25, reflecting the typical seasonal trend following the winter months and a reduction in virus-related illnesses. However, absence rates remain elevated when compared to the same period in previous years. Absence data shows the year-on-year increase in both short and long-term absences for Quarter 1 since 2022/23.

- 5.2.5 Mental health related absences continue to appear within the top three long term absence reasons for all Clusters. It should be noted that employees often require multiple treatments and ongoing support which may extend periods of absence. Additionally, there continues to be long NHS waiting lists to access appropriate mental health services.
- 5.2.6 As way of supporting stress/debility issues the occupational health, safety and wellbeing team have been hosting drop-in on-line sessions for staff on wellbeing, mental health and stress management. There has also been a focus on recruiting and training an additional 21 mental health representatives, bringing the total in the Council to 91 reps.
- 5.2.7 The mental health and wellbeing helpline provides easy access to the following mental health support services: EAP; NHS 24; Samaritans and mental health representatives.
- 5.2.8 Musculoskeletal reasons also continue to appear in the top three absence reasons for the service and managers are mindful of the largely manual workforce and the impact of those jobs on employee health and wellbeing. Therefore, occupational health and physiotherapy referrals are progressed as and when required. This is particularly important based on the aging workforce and the requirement to ensure staff receive the appropriate risk assessments, training and PPE to undertake their roles safely.

### 5.3 Service Complaints Response Times

- 5.3.1 Monitoring complaints provides important feedback which can facilitate decision making and service design. Services are responsible for responding to complaints which are issued on their behalf by the Complaints and Information Team ('CIT'). Performance for complaints during Quarter1 against a corporate target of 80% was as follows:-

#### Service Complaints - Communities and Place

#### Number of closed complaints and the % compliant with the legislative timescale

##### Frontline Resolution within 5 days

	Q2 23/24		Q3 23/24		Q4 23/24		Q1 24/25		Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26	
Communities and Place	37	92 %	36	89 %	57	82 %	61	85 %	105	87 %	56	86 %	52	88 %	64	95 %
Highland Council	132	78 %	150	80 %	189	76 %	219	84 %	196	78 %	155	88 %	183	87 %	177	92 %

##### Investigation Resolution within 20 days

	Q2 23/24		Q3 23/24		Q4 23/24		Q1 24/25		Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26	
Communities and Place	8	38 %	2	100 %	7	43 %	7	43 %	10	50 %	4	25 %	4	50 %	2	100 %
Highland Council	85	49 %	67	48 %	98	46 %	86	47 %	101	57 %	90	42 %	71	51 %	68	47 %

##### Escalated Resolution within 20 days

	Q2 23/24		Q3 23/24		Q4 23/24		Q1 24/25		Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26	
Communities and Place	4	75 %	5	80 %	4	75 %	7	57 %	7	57 %	8	75 %	8	63 %	7	71 %
Highland Council	32	41 %	28	57 %	34	35 %	47	32 %	28	50 %	26	46 %	34	44 %	30	33 %

Performance against front line complaint handling remains strong across the service, meeting the corporate targets and improving in the latest period to 95%. There has also been an improvement in investigation complaint handling however, as previously noted to Members, the numbers for these for Communities and Place are generally low and so any variation in performance can have a significant change against the target.

## 5.4 Service Freedom of Information ('FOI') Response Times

- 5.4.1 FOI requests are co-ordinated by CIT in collaboration with the Service teams which may hold information relevant to the request.

The performance for FOI response times during Quarter 1 against a corporate target of 90% was as follows:-

### Service Freedom of Information Requests - Communities and Place

#### % of FOIs closed compliant with the legislative timescale

% FOIs Compliant - Communities and Place	Q2 23/24		Q3 23/24		Q4 23/24		Q1 24/25		Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26	
	58	95 %	56	95 %	103	87 %	103	89 %	82	79 %	92	79 %	96	79 %	92	82 %

  

% FOIs Compliant - Highland Council	Q2 23/24		Q3 23/24		Q4 23/24		Q1 24/25		Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26	
	333	88 %	338	89 %	548	77 %	511	81 %	479	76 %	568	73 %	616	71 %	577	81 %

Tables display the number of FOIs closed within the quarter and % of those that were compliant with the legislative timescale (20 working days) for the service and the Highland Council overall.  
The Scottish Information Commissioner requires the Council to achieve a minimum compliance rate of 90%.

- 5.4.2 FOI performance across Communities and Place remains above the Council average and has improvement slightly in the latest period. Work continues to ensure delivery against the 90% corporate target.

## 5.5 Service Invoice Payment Times

- 5.5.1 Payment of invoices within 30 days of receipt is a Council Statutory Performance Indicator. The Council also monitors the number of invoices paid within 10 days of receipt.

The performance for invoice payment times within 30 days and 10 days during Quarter 1 against a target of 95% and 77%, respectively, was as follows:-

### Service Invoice Payment Times - Communities and Place

Invoice Payment within 30 days	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26
Communities and Place	98.4 %	98.6 %	96.9 %	80.8 %	88.2 %	87.9 %	88.7 %	88.2 %
Highland Council	96.7 %	95.6 %	93.6 %	87.7 %	91.4 %	92.9 %	92.9 %	93.0 %

  

Invoice Payment less than 10 days	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26
Communities and Place	90.6 %	89.2 %	86.0 %	49.7 %	66.7 %	52.1 %	46.5 %	53.4 %
Highland Council	80.9 %	75.3 %	69.7 %	57.0 %	68.5 %	63.8 %	63.3 %	64.7 %

- 5.5.2 Performance against the Council targets for invoice processing have been tracking below the Highland average during 2024/25. This continues into Quarter 1 for 2025/26, noting that there has been improvement in processing time less than 10 days. Action is being taken within service management teams to focus on invoice processing and payment in order to improve performance.

## 6 Service Contribution to the Performance Plan

- 6.1 The following outlines Communities and Place performance indicators that contribute to the Council's Performance Plan. Overall, progress against the Performance Plan Performance Indicators and Actions are on target.

### 6.2 *Communities and Place - PIs and Actions that contribute to Performance Plan*

PIs/Actions in the performance Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Period	Data
Reduce Highland Suicide rate - 5 Yr Avg    CP1.04	CY 2022	21.5	CY 2023	20.5	CY 2024	
No. HC workforce trained in supporting people with mental health and wellbeing concerns    CP1.07	FY 22/23		FY 23/24	390	FY 24/25	370
Involved Communities: Area Place Plans for each Council area    CP2.04/CP3.07/CP4.03/CP5.06	Q3 24/25	On Target	Q4 24/25	On Target	Q1 25/26	On Target
Street Cleanliness Score    CP2.07    ENV3c	FY 22/23	96.10 %	FY 23/24	96.36 %	FY 24/25	95.91 %
Continue partnership with ILM    CP4.06	Q3 24/25	On Target	Q4 24/25	On Target	Q1 25/26	On Target
% Household waste recycled    CP4.06    ENV6a	FY 22/23	37.2 %	FY 23/24	36.0 %	FY 24/25	42.5 %
Increase areas identified for food growing and ecological benefit    CP4.11	Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26	
ERDs being completed - CPL    CP5.01	Q3 24/25	Some Slippage	Q4 24/25	Some Slippage	Q1 25/26	Some Slippage
The 'My Council' project    CP5.03	Q3 24/25	On Target	Q4 24/25	On Target	Q1 25/26	Completed
Supporting and engaging with Community Councils    CP5.05	Q3 24/25	On Target	Q4 24/25	On Target	Q1 25/26	On Target

## 7 Service Plan Progress

- 7.1 The following summarises progress against the indicators and actions for the Communities and Place service plan. Data is not yet available for 2024/25 for a small number of indicators.

### 7.2

Community Development and Involvement Approaches Q1 25/26						
Actions PIs being Monitored in Service Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/ Update Date
Agreement of new Allotments policy	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q4 23/24
Involved Communities: Area Place Plans for each Council area    CP2.04/CP3.07/CP4.03/CP5.06	Q4 24/25	On Target	Q1 25/26	On Target		Due to complete Q3 25/26
Develop and implement a new integrated impact assessment tool	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q1 24/25
Develop a marketing approach to promote and increase civil ceremonies offering	Q4 24/25	Some Slippage	Q1 25/26	Some Slippage		Due to complete Q1 24/25
Development of Community Benefits Policy Procured and Voluntary Benefits	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q2 24/25
External Annual Examination by National Records of Scotland	CY 2023		CY 2024		98 %	annual update November
Implementation of new SPSO Child Friendly Complaints process – UNCRC	Q4 24/25	Completed	Q1 25/26			Completed Q4 24/25
Review of the Community Council Scheme	Q4 24/25	On Target	Q1 25/26	On Target		Due to complete Q3 25/26
Undertake Review of Customer Services process/operations and implement changes	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q2 24/25

7.3

Bereavement Services, Transforming Services for Significant Life Events Q1 25/26						
Actions PIs being Monitored in Service Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/Update Date
Bereavement: Progressing Lean review of burials	Q4 24/25	Completed	Q1 25/26			Completed Q4 24/25
Delivery of Burial Ground Projects	Q4 24/25	On Target	Q1 25/26	On Target		Targets set in project plan
Develop an approach for refurbishment /modernisation of Inverness crematorium	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q4 23/24

7.4

Environmental Health Q1 25/26						
Actions PIs being Monitored in Service Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/Update Date
95% of high risk private water supplies are inspected and sampled	FY 23/24	57 %	FY 24/25	77 %	95 %	annual update August
Business case to review resources re sampling private water supplies	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q4 23/24
Develop revised PI for food safety based on risk of premises	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q3 23/24

7.5

Transforming our Approach to Community Spaces Q1 25/26						
Actions PIs being Monitored in Service Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/Update Date
Review playpark strategy	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q3 23/24
Develop community volunteering policy	Q4 24/25	Some Slippage	Q1 25/26	Some Slippage		Due to complete Q3 23/24
Progress the workstreams in the Amenities Review	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q2 23/24

7.6

Fleet Rationalisation [Sustainable Business Travel] Q1 25/26						
Actions PIs being Monitored in Service Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/Update Date
Continue low emission approach for provision of heavy fleet	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q1 24/25
Design Sustainable Business Travel Approach and Action Plan	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q2 23/24

7.7

Waste Q1 25/26						
Actions PIs being Monitored in Service Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/Update Date
Street Cleanliness Score    CP2.07    ENV3c	FY 23/24	96.36 %	FY 24/25	95.91 %	95.00 %	annual update December
% Household waste recycled    CP4.06    ENV6a	FY 23/24	36.0 %	FY 24/25	42.5 %		annual update September
Deliver RIF Project – Implementation [phased]	Q4 24/25	On Target	Q1 25/26	Some Slippage		Due to complete Q2 25/26
Deliver the Lochaber Waste Transfer Station Project	Q4 24/25	On Target	Q1 25/26	Some Slippage		Due to complete Q3 24/25
Delivery Bulky Waste Shredders	Q4 24/25	Some Slippage	Q1 25/26	Some Slippage		Due to complete Q1 24/25
Net Cost of Waste Collection per Premise    ENV1a	FY 23/24	£ 97.86	FY 24/25			annual update November
Net Cost of Waste Disposal per Premise    ENV2a	FY 23/24	£ 108.49	FY 24/25			annual update November
Net Cost of Street Cleaning per 1000 popn    ENV3a	FY 23/24	£ 10,845	FY 24/25			annual update November
% adults satisfied - refuse collection    ENV7a	FY 23/24	91.0 %	FY 24/25			annual update December
% adults satisfied - street cleaning    ENV7b	FY 23/24	64.0 %	FY 24/25			annual update December
Undertake feasibility assessment into Energy from Waste Plant	Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26			Completed Q3 23/24

7.8 Overall, progress against the Service Plan Performance Indicators and actions is very positive. There has been slippage for the following:-

- A marketing approach to support and promote the Council's wedding offering is in place and an update on this will be provided to the November committee report on registration activity.
- A draft framework to support Community Volunteering is in place. Work is being progressed to engage with community groups to receive feedback and input and shape the framework.
- Environmental Health have undertaken additional recruitment to provide further resources to meet the private water supply statutory duties and a significant improvement to 77% sampled was noted in 2024/25. Work will continue in 2025/26 to further improve the performance for sampling of high-risk private water supplies and on the associated risk assessment process that must be done for each supply.
- Bulky Waste Shredders - As reported at item 10 on the agenda, procurement is now at an advanced stage, the award of a contract is expected before the end of July, with the Shredders then being delivered over the next few months. Following a period of familiarisation and commissioning, the Shredders are expected to be fully operational during the Autumn of 2025.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 31 July 2025

Author: Sophie Stuart, Portfolio Manager

Background Papers: None

Appendices: None