Agenda Item	6
Report No	RDB/07/25

The Highland Council

Committee: **Redesign Board**

Date: **28 August 2025**

Report Title: **My Council Programme - Budget monitoring & Progress update**

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:
- My Council Programme

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.   Note the progress update, including approved request for change (milestone)
       ii.   Consider the opportunity to take part in website user testing (end of October 25)

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: 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. 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: There are no 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 in paragraph/s (see Section 5.8).

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

5.   My Council Programme

5.1   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.

5.2   The aim of the My Council Programme 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.

5.3   The Redesign Board Members assigned to this Project are Jackie Hendry and Bill Boyd.

5.4   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 training continues with all staff. The number of staff trained through Traineasy and toolbox talks will be reported quarterly

- The MCP Board agreed (June 25) to amend the milestone date for Customer Service Standards published, the project will move from Amber to Green.

- The new milestone date is October 2025.

- The MCP Sponsor and Programme Lead will hold a series of challenge and review sessions to support services in the development of their Customer Service Standards and, where appropriate/possible, performance measures to support these.

Project 3: MyHighland:

- The MyHighland Business case is being composed which aims to set out the business justification and funding required to deliver Council Tax Online and setup the project to enhance the customer experience.

- It will be reviewed by Project Sponsor and Chief Officers from Business Solutions and Corporate Finance.

- The MyHighland Business case is expected to be presented at the next MyCouncil Programme board.

Project 4: Customer Contact Methods

- The Green RAG status (as approved by the My Council Programme Board 12/06/25) reflects the good progress made in the period by the Project. It is expected that the Website will be live before the end of 2025 (Dec 2025).

- The work is progressing well, with the new designs being approved via delegated project governance. The designs were derived from key stakeholders, including input from Members at a previous Redesign workshop, targeted public feedback and input from web design experts.

- The content migration is progressing, 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.

5.5   All three projects in the programme are reporting green. 1) Customer Experience Strategy - working on a plan to collate customer service standards across all services, that will be published on HC website. 2)My Highland - pending business case approval for council tax online 3) Customer contact- website transformation - all three workstreams tracking green, on target for a go live date of 18/11/25.

5.6   <u>Key Milestones & Requests for Change</u>

There has been one request for change of a milestone in the period, approved by the Corporate Solutions Portfolio Board. This was for the Customer Service Standards published milestone (planned to complete March 25), which has now been extended to Oct 25. The reason for this was to allow services time to review and update their customer service standards.

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Jun 24	My Council Programme: Customer Charter implemented with staff	**M3 24/25 Completed**
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Sept 24	My Council Programme: Customer Contact strategy agreed	**M7 24/25 Completed**
Completed Q1 24/25	Roll out new corporate telephony to support new ways of working	**Q1 24/25 Completed**
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Mar 25	My Council Programme: Assessment of CRM	**M2 25/26 Completed**
Starts Apr 24/ Completes Oct 25	My Council Programme: Customer Service Standards published	**M4 25/26 On Target**
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Dec 25	My Council Programme: New redesigned website in place	**M4 25/26 On Target**
Starts Jan25 / Completes Jun26	My Council Programme: Council tax online implemented	**M4 25/26 On Target**

5.7   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).

My Council Programme financial outlook – Based End April 25 (Period 12) FY24-25

Budget - Earmarked Reserves (EMR)	£0.500m
24/25 Actual Spend	£0.226m
25/26 Forecast Spend	£0.274m
Balance Forecast Q3 FY25-26 – End Dec 25	£0

5.8   Key Risks

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.

6.   Forward Plan

Website User Acceptance Testing (Oct 25)

Members are invited to participate in user journey testing planned for the end of Oct 25. This will involve key journeys through the website and is an opportunity to ensure that key issues are addressed prior to Go Live.

Website demonstration (Nov 25)

It is planned that Members will receive a demonstration of the new website immediately following the next Redesign Board 19th November 2025.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate

Date: 11-8-25

Author: Andrea Brown, Programme Manager