

Agenda Item	<b>15a</b>
Report No	<b>RES/32/25</b>

# The Highland Council

**Committee:** Corporate Resources

**Date:** 28 August 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 14 May 2025. Exceptions to this 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
    - HR Payroll & Pensions
- 1.3 Digital Foundations is one of the other projects in the Corporate Solutions portfolio. Although the project is not scheduled to report to this meeting of the Committee, the opportunity is taken here to inform Members of the Council's Digital Week, organised by the project team, which will take place from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> September 2025. This is a week of online and in-person sessions aimed at staff and Members with a different theme each day.
- 1.4 Every 2 years we run a Digital Maturity Assessment (DMA) via the national Digital Office. We are due to run the next DMA in late September this year. Digital Week aims to raise awareness of the DMA and will encourage staff and Members to provide input. It's also an opportunity to remind everyone of the support available for digital in the Council and to share some examples of good practice. We will have a mix of internal and external presenters. Full details of the events will have been publicised before this meeting.
- 1.5 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)

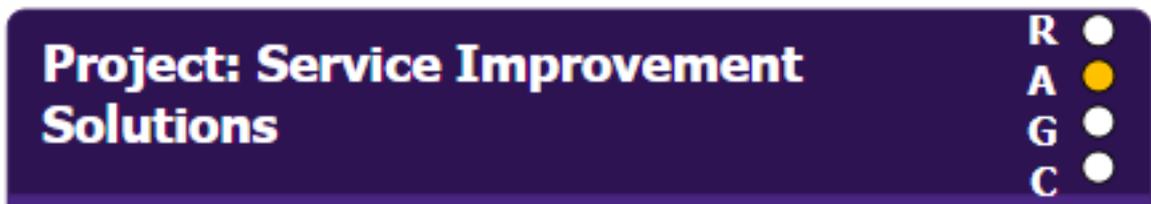
### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The project has been co-ordinating the production of business cases for potential digital transformation initiatives in collaboration with external consultants Triple Value Impact (TVI). Where the business cases justify, responsibility for

implementation of those initiatives is passed 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.
- 5.1.3 The project had an initial defined scope of 7 business cases to be developed. In December 2024, the scope was extended to cover a further 14. The work with TVI to create these business cases is now nearly concluded and it is expected that the project will be closed for the next report to this committee.

5.2 Overall Project RAG



- 5.2.1 Service Improvement Solutions is overall ragged Amber as whilst the vast majority of business cases from Triple Value Impact have now been completed, there are 2 due for imminent completion. A meeting was held late June between CEX and ACEs to overview the projected costs and savings for each, in order to determine which Business Cases will be taken forward and implemented. The ACEs are engaging with their relevant Chief Officers with regards to a decision on implementation. The Amber status remains as we have 2 business cases outstanding which are currently overdue. These are in the final stages, and our path to Green will involve working with TVI in order to close these out. Timeframes were agreed for late July but have slipped a few weeks due to key staff availability during the holiday period. Once delivered, this project will close.
- 5.2.2 From the candidate list of 21 potential initiatives, after initial sifting, business cases were developed for 11 and these are listed below.

Initiative	Service Area	Status
Council Tax Single Person Discounts	Revenues	Delivered.
Council Tax automation	Revenues	Planning for implementation.
Automated highways monitoring	Roads	To be delivered through Roads Redesign Phase 2.
Pre-empting demand for Adult Social Care services	Adult Social Care	With NHS(H) for final approvals and implementation.
Finding foster carers	Children's Services	Planning for implementation.
Data Foundations	ICT & Digital	Implementation in progress. Separate project within the Corporate Solutions portfolio.
Maximising benefits take-up	Benefits	Planning for implementation.
AI automation of FOI and SARS requests	Corporate Governance	Decision required on whether to proceed.
Digitally involving the community in care	Adult Social Care	Business case near completion. Pilot under consideration.
Video-based contact for housing repairs	Housing	Business case near completion.
Planning AI automation	Planning	Decision required on whether to proceed.

### 5.3 Key Milestones, Measures of Success and Requests for Change

#### 5.3.1 **Milestones**

##### **MILESTONES**

##### **CURRENT STATUS**

<i>Starts Apr24 / Completes Jun24</i>	Service Improvement Solutions: Finalisation of business cases	<b>M3 25/26 Some Slippage</b>
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5.3.2 This Milestone has been marked amber as, although the majority of business case work has been completed, there are still 2 business cases awaiting final sign off.

#### 5.3.3 **Measures of Success**

No specific measures have been defined as the project scope is just the production of business cases rather than implementation and realisation of benefits.

#### 5.3.4 **Requests for Change**

No requests for change. The project will soon be moving to closure.

### 5.4 Financial Summary

#### 5.4.1 **Investment**

Total funding, from a combination of Delivery Plan and ICT Investment reserves, for both phases of the project totalled £494k. To date £436k has been drawn down from reserves with a further draw down to be actioned soon to cover the final TVI invoices. It is expected that the total cost will be less than £494k.

#### 5.4.2 **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 delivered by the relevant Services through change projects as a result of the business cases developed. However, the savings are currently reported against this project for full visibility. With the closure of the project, savings targets, as per business cases, will transfer to the individual implementation projects.

5.4.3 Due to the complexity of building the business cases and the subsequent implementation, the agreed savings were re-profiled as part of the Council's budget agreed on 6 March 2025. The re-profiled savings profile is shown below.

	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Savings profile</b>	£0.579m	£0.222m	£0.651m	£0.666m	<b>£2.118m</b>

The 2024/25 saving was delivered through the project to review Council Tax Single Person Discounts.

The forecast for 2025/26 is for the full in-year saving to be delivered via automated highways monitoring and other digital projects within the Revenues and Benefits team. Future year savings will depend on implementation of the agreed business cases by Services.

5.5 Key Risks

<b>KEY RISKS ASSESSED</b>	<b>CURRENT RISK RATING</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
Service Improvement Solutions: Savings Not Achieved	<b>8</b>	<b>Treat</b>
Service Improvement Solutions: Business Case Approval	<b>16</b>	<b>Treat</b>

5.6 As already mentioned, all business cases are close to being completed. Therefore, the risk relating to business case approval will soon be closed. The risk around delivery of savings is still valid but will be transferred to the individual projects actually delivering the implementation.

5.7 Forward Plan

The project will soon be entering the final closure stage.

**6. Food in Schools – Delivering Sustainability**

6.1 The most recent activity for the Food in Schools project related to the design and issue of stakeholder consultation surveys based on feedback from elected Members at the Redesign Board Meeting in March 2025. Surveys were designed using a collaborative approach involving colleagues from Catering Services and issued in late May 2025 to parents/carers, pupils, catering and school staff and members.

6.2 Overall RAG



6.2.1 The RAG status of this project is Green.

6.3 Key Milestones, Measures of Success and Requests for Change

In total 5,009 responses were received by end of June 2025 from all secondary and special schools and over 95% of primary schools. The depth and breadth of responses provides assurances that the responses are highly representative of stakeholders' views. Initial analysis of results is now complete and will inform the Redesign Board's workshop on 28 August 2025.

### 6.3.1 Milestones

<b>MILESTONES</b>		<b>CURRENT STATUS</b>
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Apr 24</i>	Food in Schools: Key partner engagement commenced	<b>M1 24/25 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes May 24</i>	Food in Schools: Whole system process review commenced	<b>M2 24/25 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes July 24</i>	Food in Schools: Baselines and research	<b>M4 24/25 Completed</b>
<i>Starts Nov24 / Completes Mar27</i>	Food in Schools: Design and implement changes	<b>M3 25/26 On Target</b>

### 6.3.2 Requests for Change

There are no requests for change.

### 6.4 Financial Summary

#### i) Savings

	Food in Schools: Savings 24/25, 25/26, 26/27	<b>£ 262,000</b>
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Savings exceeded the 2024/25 target and are on target for 2025/26.

#### ii) Investment

No investment is required at this stage of the project.

#### iii) Mitigations

No mitigations are required.

### 6.5 Key Risks

Risks are being managed through the Corporate Solutions Portfolio Board.

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

### 6.6 Forward Plan

The project team continues to analyse the survey responses and to engage with colleagues across services. A workshop with the Redesign Board is planned for 28 August 2025 to share the themes from the survey results and to obtain elected Members' views regarding areas for development.

## 7. HR Payroll & Pensions

# Project: HR Payroll & Pensions

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7.1 A separate report is included on the agenda of this Committee detailing progress with the wider 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, Measures of Success and Requests for Change

#### 7.2.1 Milestones

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Apr 24</i>	Altair Pensions Payroll: HC pensions self-serve go live	M4 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Apr24 / Completes Aug24</i>	Altair Pensions Payroll: Pensions self-serve concludes	M6 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Apr24 / Completes Mar25</i>	Altair Pensions Payroll: Pensions payments migrated to Altair	M12 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Aug24 / Completes Nov24</i>	HR & Payroll: Socitm Advisory Review Complete	M8 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Oct24 / Completes Feb25</i>	Altair Pensions Payroll: Pensioners payroll Go-live	M12 24/25 Completed
<i>Completes Jun 25</i>	Altair Pensions Payroll: Project Closure	M3 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts / Completes Feb25</i>	HR & Payroll: Data and Process Enablement: Initiation	M11 24/25 Completed
<i>Starts Mar25 / Completes Apr25</i>	HR & Payroll: Data and Process Enablement: Discover phase	M2 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts Apr25 / Completes May25</i>	HR & Payroll: Data and Process Enablement: Define phase	M3 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts May25 / Completes Jun25</i>	HR & Payroll: Data and Process Enablement: Prepare phase	M3 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts / Completes Jun25</i>	HR & Payroll: Data and Process Enablement: Deliver phase	M4 25/26 Some Slippage
<i>Starts May 25/ Completes June 25</i>	HR & Payroll: Data and Process Enablement: Options appraisal	M3 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts May 25/ Completes June 25</i>	HR & Payroll: Rapid Improvements - Talentlink (recruitment system)	M4 25/26 Some Slippage
<i>Starts May 25/ Completes June 25</i>	HR & Payroll: Rapid Improvements - Resourcelink (HR and Payroll system)	M3 25/26 Completed
<i>Starts / Completes Aug25</i>	HR & Payroll: Data and Process Enablement: Project closure	
<i>Starts Aug25 / Completes Sep25</i>	HRP&P: Option selection	M3 25/26

## 7.2.2 Measures of Success

<b>MEASURES OF SUCCESS</b>		<b>CURRENT STATUS</b>
	HR P&P: Savings RSF1 HR & Payroll - FY 26-27	
HRP&P: Altair: Increase self-service member sign-up to My Pensions (Engage)		<b>36.6 %</b>
HRP&P: Eliminate inefficiencies by migrating to one system for Pensioners Payroll [hours saved per month]		<b>132</b>

## 7.3 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 14 on today's agenda.

## 7.4 Key Risks

<b>KEY RISKS ASSESSED</b>	<b>CURRENT RISK RATING</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
HRP&P: Risk 1 Competing tensions between "business as usual" availability of resources to support project work and deliver change	<b>9</b>	<b>Closed</b>
HRP&P: Risk 2 Competing tensions between "business as usual" and availability of technical/SME resources and the technical expertise to deliver the project outcomes	<b>16</b>	<b>Closed</b>
HRP&P: Risk 3 Significant cultural change is required to transform from current operations, in order to systemize HR and payroll and achieve project outcomes	<b>12</b>	<b>Closed</b>
HRP&P: Risk 4 Project funding may be insufficient	<b>4</b>	<b>Closed</b>

## 7.5 Forward Plan

Please refer to the separate report relating to this project on today's agenda.

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Date: 13 August 2025

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