

Agenda Item	5
Report No	RDB-10-25

The Highland Council

Committee: Redesign Board

Date: 20 November 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 57 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 confirmation of the launch date for the new website on 17 February 2025.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource: There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. The project remains on target to deliver on budget. 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 (Including website Redesign)

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 remains green:**

Project 1: Customer Contact Strategy

- Additional meetings have been held with all services to either obtain or agree on published customer service standard
- A draft webpage is being developed.
 - Due to the change freeze, the webpage hasn't been uploaded to the existing Highland Council website but instead is being redesigned for the new website in line with the guiding principles
- A new success measure for number of staff completing the Customer Service training has been agreed
- Making the Customer Service training mandatory has been agreed
- 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 have agreed the milestone can be marked as complete

Project 3: MyHighland:

- The business case has been agreed by the programme sponsor.
- The procurement of the Council Tax element is complete
- Detailed planning of delivery is underway

Project 4: Customer Contact Methods - Web Redesign

- A go live date of 17 February 2026 has been agreed for the launch of the new website.
- The MCP Board **Agreed** (5th Nov) the recommended milestone change from Dec 2025 to Feb 2026. This was in line with good project governance, managing risk, contractor availability and to allow the time to achieve our goal of a customer centric website which meets an agreed quality standard. The project therefore remains at Green RAG status.
- **Web Redesign – Design Workstream** – Note, following approval of the new website design, the supplier developed and tested functional prototypes, which passed without critical issues. The project has since completed the final round of user acceptance testing (UAT) in the pre-production environment, with no major concerns identified. Minor issues are being addressed in collaboration with the supplier to ensure readiness for launch.
- **Web Redesign – Content Workstream** – Note the project has made strong progress in content migration, with **99% of high-traffic** content transformed to **Gold Standard** and **60% of low-traffic** content successfully migrated to Silver Standard, alongside committee minutes and news articles. Over 2,000 pages have been built on the new website. It is anticipated that all remaining content will be migrated by the of Dec in readiness for final assurance checks and the revised go live date of 17 February 2026. As detailed at section 6, a programme of User Acceptance Testing has been designed for November, December and January. This will include those members who volunteered previously.
- **Web Redesign -Target Operation Model (TOM) Workstream–**
Note a briefing presented to the Extended Management Team in September 2025 outlined the roles and responsibilities essential for implementing the Council's new target operating model. The proposals were well received, with agreement to establish the Online Customer Experience Working Group (OCE-WG), chaired by Jon Shepherd (CO Business Solutions) and comprising representatives from each service area to support cross-organisational collaboration.

5.5 As reported and agreed at the MCP board on 5th November all three projects in the programme are reporting green. 1) Customer Experience Strategy - customer service standards across all services have been collated in readiness for publishing in line with the timeline for the new Highland Council website being made live and agreement by the MCP board to close the project. 2) My Highland - business case approved by the Sponsor for council tax online, with procurement commencing and delivery being planned 3) Customer contact- website transformation - all three workstreams tracking green, on target for a revised go live date of 17th February 26.

5.6 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

There has been one request for change of a milestone in the period, approved by MCP board and Solutions Portfolio Board. As outlined at 5.4, this was to support a go live date for the redesigned website of 17 February 2026. The reason for the change in date is in line with good project governance, appropriate risk management, contractor availability and to allow the time to achieve our goal of a customer centric website which meets an agreed quality standard.

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 Apr 24/ Completes Oct 25</i>	My Council Programme: Customer Service Standards published	M5 25/26 On Target
<i>Starts Apr 24 / Completes Dec 25</i>	My Council Programme: New redesigned website in place	M6 25/26 On Target
<i>Starts Jan25 / Completes Jun26</i>	My Council Programme: Council tax online implemented	M6 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 Sept 25 (Period 06) FY25-26**

Budget - Earmarked Reserves (EMR)	£0.500m
24/25 Actual Spend	£0.226m
25/26 Forecast Spend	£0.260m
Balance Forecast Q4 FY25-26	£0.014m

5.8 Key Risks

No new risks have been identified, no change to risk action RAG status.

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

Customer Contact Strategy

Work with L&D and Corporate Comms to raise the profile of the Customer Service training. To be reported as mandatory training.

The Customer Service Standards page is to be published in line with the new Highland Council website go live date 17 February 26.

Produce a Project closure report and making recommendations on outstanding actions.

Web Transformation

Web User UAT

To support the successful migration of Content the following User Acceptance Testing has been planned:

1. Web Project Team Review – **Nov 25**
2. Web Senior Team Review – **Nov 25**
3. Service Review – **Nov – Dec 25**
4. Customer Services Review - **Nov – Dec 25**
5. Volunteer Members Review – **Jan 26**

Members who previously indicated that they would be happy to support user testing will be involved in testing from January.

Website demonstration (Jan 26)

It is planned that Members will receive a demonstration of the new website at a Redesign Workshop on the afternoon of 29 January 2026.

Web Target Operating Model

1. Establish the new OCE-Working Group - **Dec 25**
2. Development of the new content standards
 - a. Service onboarding training – **Nov-Dec 25**
 - b. Governance controls agreed – **February 26 onwards**

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate

Date: 11-8-25

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