

Agenda Item	<b>9</b>
Report No	<b>HP/06/26</b>

# The Highland Council

**Committee:**            **Housing and Property**

**Date:**                    **28 January 2026**

**Report Title:**        **Strategic Asset Management Plan**

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

## **1        Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1        This report seeks approval for a new Strategic Asset Management Plan as detailed in **Appendix 2**, that formalises the strategy, policy and range of duties and actions required to take forward the Council's cross-service approach to property and asset management. The Plan aims to provide a structured, long-term approach to managing the property portfolio, ensuring that assets align with service delivery requirements, deliver value for money, support our organisational objectives and contribute to corporate savings targets for asset management.

## **2        Recommendations**

- 2.1        Members are asked to:-
- i.        **Agree** to adopt the Strategic Asset Management Plan as the guiding framework for future property-related decisions, noting the background, purpose, and partnership approach to its development; and
  - ii.       **Agree** the Action Plan is progressed, with updates provided on implementation and outcomes.

## **3        Implications**

- 3.1        **Resource** - Resource requirements linked to the delivery of opportunities identified within the Strategic Asset Management Plan, particularly those set out in the accompanying Action Plan and individual business cases, will be subject to review and approval by the Strategic Asset Management Board. In some instances, these resources are yet to be identified and will be confirmed as part of the ongoing implementation process.
- 3.2        **Legal** - There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report; however, individual properties identified through area reviews will be subject to title checks and other due diligence processes as required, to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory obligations.

3.3 **Risk** - There are risks associated with achieving the savings targets linked to the rationalisation of the estate, which are monitored under the remit of the Reconfiguring Our Assets Base Board. Risks linked to individual properties, such as legal, operational, or community impacts, will be assessed and managed through detailed property reviews and business cases. More broadly, the Council faces strategic risks, including the need to reduce the size and cost of its estate, meet net zero carbon targets, and ensure the long-term sustainability of its asset base.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - Health and safety risks associated with individual properties will be assessed as part of detailed property reviews and business cases, with appropriate recommendations developed to mitigate any identified issues in line with statutory obligations and best practice.

3.5 **Gaelic** – No implications currently.

#### 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 **Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary**

4.3.1 The Strategic Asset Management Plan has been subject to Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) screening, which identified no adverse impacts. Therefore, a full assessment was not deemed to be required. The conclusions have been subject to review and approval by the relevant Manager.

4.3.2 The Screening process concluded that the SAMP will mostly have positive implications as it promotes and sets out the strategy and policies for improving service delivery through the management of our assets. Members are asked to consider the summary within **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

4.3.3

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sex – <i>no impact</i></li><li>• Age – <i>no impact</i></li><li>• Disability – <i>Positive</i></li><li>• Religion or belief – <i>no impact</i></li><li>• Race – <i>no impact</i></li><li>• Sexual orientation – <i>no impact</i></li><li>• Gender reassignment – <i>no impact</i></li><li>• <i>Pregnant / Maternity</i> – <i>no impact</i></li><li>• Marriage and civil partnership – <i>no impact</i></li></ul>

Poverty and Socio-economic	<i>Positive impact</i>
Human Rights	<i>Positive impact</i>
Children's Rights and Well-being	<i>Positive impact</i>
Island and Mainland Rural	<i>no impact</i>
Climate Change	<i>no impact</i>
Data Rights	<i>no impact</i>

## 5 Background

- 5.1 Implementing a Strategic Asset Management Plan is crucial for aligning property management with Highland Council's programme, delivery plan, and emerging operating models. It also plays a vital role in formalising the strategy, policy and responsibilities for managing our assets and contributing to ambitious savings targets in the Council's Delivery Plan. This plan aims to ensure all assets are managed efficiently and effectively, supporting the Council's values to be ambitious, sustainable and connected. By integrating current and future needs, the plan will optimise the use of existing assets, enhance service delivery, and provide a framework for future growth and development. This strategic approach will enable the Council to respond proactively to changing demands and ensure that resources are utilised to achieve delivery outcomes for the community. The draft Strategic Asset Management Plan is enclosed within **Appendix 2**.
- 5.2 The key themes the SAMP seeks to address are:-
- **Alignment with Strategic Goals** to ensure all property related decisions support the organisation's overall strategic objectives;
  - **Asset Lifecycle Management** from acquisition to disposal to maximise asset value and performance;
  - **Sustainability and Environmental Impact** to ensure asset management activities support the Councils Net Zero targets;
  - **Data and Information Management** ensuring accurate and up-to-date information on assets is maintained for informed decision-making;
  - **Risk Management** to ensure reliability and safety; and
  - **Best Value** to ensure the costs associated with property management, maintenance, and operations are minimised without compromising quality
- 5.3 A key feature of the Strategic Asset Management Plan is the introduction of a new **assessment tool**, developed to consistently evaluate assets against an agreed set of criteria and consider future service delivery options. This tool will be used to assess property-related proposals and options appraisals to support evidence-based decision-making, with the overall aim of creating a sustainable property estate that effectively supports service delivery. The draft assessment tool can be viewed within **Appendix 3**.
- 5.4 A key aim of the Strategic Asset Management Plan is to strengthen alignment between property assets and strategic priorities, including the Highland Investment Plan and the Council's future operating model. The Plan promotes closer collaboration between property and service teams to ensure that asset decisions are informed by service needs, investment priorities, and long-term sustainability goals.
- 5.5 This first version of the Strategic Asset Management Plan also serves as an introduction to Highland Council's property estate and related matters, offering an

overview of the Council's approach, the current estate, key initiatives, and the challenges impacting property management. It establishes a baseline position that will act as a benchmark for future iterations, enabling comparison as data quality improves, the estate is rationalised, and strategic priorities evolve. While this version highlights selected areas of the estate, future updates will broaden the focus to shine a light on other property types and service areas, supporting a more holistic understanding of the Council's asset base.

- 5.6 The **Strategic Asset Management Board** is the key governance body responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Strategic Asset Management Plan. The Board provides strategic leadership, cross-service scrutiny, and operational oversight for property and asset-related decisions. Its core responsibilities include approving business cases, monitoring progress against key workstreams and ensuring alignment with corporate policies, legislation, and wider organisational initiatives. The Board also supports integration across services, promotes effective resource planning, and tracks delivery against financial and operational targets.
- 5.7 The **Action Plan** within the Strategic Asset Management Plan is structured into three key sections: strategic actions, operational actions, and targeted property initiatives. The final section reflects the Asset Management Team's active programme of work, focusing on specific property-related projects and opportunities. Progress is monitored through a **live project and savings tracker**, which provides real-time updates to the Strategic Asset Management Board, and to appropriate Ward Business Meetings (see paragraph 6.4), to enable broad input from asset users and members, and to inform the approach to wider public engagement and decision making by the appropriate Council Committee.

## 6 Key Action – Area Review Programme

- 6.1 A key strategic action in the SAMP is an Area Review programme using asset challenge tools to identify sites for retention, colocation or disposal. To support the Council's Delivery Plan, Budget Strategy, Highland Investment Programme, Future Operating Model, Net Zero targets, and Highland Housing Challenge, a coordinated programme of asset review and rationalisation will be delivered. This will enable place-based planning and prioritise the accelerated review of poor-performing assets and sites with housing potential, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives and maximising community and financial value.

Targeted area reviews will focus on identifying and developing practical, achievable opportunities that deliver on our strategic objectives and produce meaningful benefits to local communities through reconfiguring the asset base. Partnership arrangements across public sector partners are helping the process of identifying and optimising opportunities across Highland communities.

- 6.2 The targeted area property review process involves defining clear aims, developing an understanding of the local asset base, identifying known property issues, consulting with services and local Members, assessing community needs and challenges, reviewing statutory and operational requirements, and analysing available data, with the overall objective of identifying opportunities to reconfigure the asset base, realign services to better support the community, and rationalise properties to deliver savings, efficiencies, and improved service outcomes.
- 6.3 In 2025, desktop area reviews were carried out using data extracts from property systems to understand the current asset base by ward; these were then compiled into

property summary documents and property lists, which were uploaded to the member intranet to give members a comprehensive overview of their asset catalogue and enable them to provide intelligence on any issues or changes within their area. These summaries can be accessed by members on this [link](#).

- 6.4 The table below summarises progress made with Area Reviews and the scheduled programme of briefings in the next few months to get a steer from local members on taking these forward:-

Committee Area	Key Dates	Detail
<b>Nairnshire</b>	SAM Board 03/09/25	A review of offices, community assets, schools, vacant properties and partner-owned buildings in Nairn has identified opportunities to develop a community pod, an office pod, a tourism hub, and to explore demolition/repurposing options for long-term vacant buildings. Developing these options is ongoing and progress is reported to WBM.
	Nairnshire WBM 04/06/25, 10/09/25, 21/01/26	
<b>Black Isle &amp; Easter Ross</b>	SAM Board 03/09/25	<b>Tain</b> A review of offices and community assets in Tain identified an opportunity to develop a community pod to collocate frontline services incorporating views from service, community development and Local Members. An options appraisal with stakeholders is being concluded.
	Easter Ross WBM 24/03/25 Update TBC	
	WBM Target April 2026	<b>Easter Ross</b> Area Review – Easter Ross Ward 06 & 07 Business Meeting _ Asset Management will be updating Local Members on the ward assets potential and current projects and encouraging their views on Ward 6 & 7 portfolio.
	WBM 16/01/26	<b>Black Isle</b> Area Review - Back Isle Ward 09 Business meeting is occurring on 16/01/26. Asset Management will be updating Local Members on the ward assets potential and current projects and encouraging their views on the Ward 09 portfolio.
<b>City of Inverness</b>	SAM Board 26/11/25	Cross cutting reviews of offices, community assets, operational and educational facilities in the city centre are ongoing, seeking to identify opportunities to consolidate the estate and realign services.
	WBM TBC – target Feb/March	
<b>Skye &amp; Raasay</b>	SAM Board 29/10/25	A review of Portree Assets was presented to the SAM board on the 29 October 2025. This covered the major refurbishment works to Tigh

	Target Area review 30/03/2026	na Sgìre which are now in progress and the opportunities this project will enable. A wider review of assets across Skye & Raasay is scheduled to be taken to the WBM on 30 March 2026.
<b>Dingwall &amp; Seaforth</b>	SAM Board 2026	HIP in progress in Dingwall wide catchment area. Covering initially the Community (Incl new schools) PoD, Depot PoD (Transformation and rationalisation of Depots) and Office PoD asset rationalisation. Depot transformation updates due at the SAM board
	WBM Target March 2026	Area Review – Dingwall & Seaforth Ward 08 Business Meeting - Asset Management will be updating Local Members on the ward assets potential and current projects and encouraging their views on the Ward 08 portfolio.
<b>Lochaber</b>	SAM Board 11/06/25	An interim reconfiguration of Fort William Charles Kennedy office accommodation was approved to address significant operational short falls and embrace the future operating model to gain additional workstation space and workstation drop in facilities. Expected delivery February 2026. A full review of office facilities in the Fort William Area will follow soon after.
	WBM Target Feb / March 2026	<b>Fort William and Ardnamurchan</b> Area Review – Lochaber Ward Business Meeting - Asset Management will be updating Local Members on Ward 21 (Fort William and Ardnamurchan) assets. Highlighting the current and potential projects and encouraging their views on the Ward 21 asset portfolio.
	WBM Target March / April	<b>Caol and Mallaig</b> Area Review – Lochaber Ward Business Meeting - Asset Management will be updating Local Members on Ward 11 (Caol and Mallaig) assets. Highlighting the current and potential projects and encouraging their views on the Ward 11 asset portfolio.
<b>Sutherland</b>	Sutherland WBM on the 12/01/2026	Asset Management staff will attend the Sutherland Ward Business Meeting on the 12 January, and the elected Members will be informed of the current and potential future asset opportunities in Sutherland. They will also be briefed on the SAMP Assessment tool and a summary of the Assets in Sutherland. There is also potential to attend the WBM on the 30 <sup>th</sup> of March.
	North West Sutherland target date of the 9 March	

<b>Badenoch &amp; Strathspey</b>	Target March/April	A Ward Business meeting to discuss assets in Badenoch & Strathspey is aimed at being held in March or April.
<b>Caithness</b>	Target April/May	There is still uncertainty as to the potential NHS occupation of Caithness House. Wider asset opportunities will aim to align with the Thurso Highland Investment Plan that is being developed for wider public consultation. It should be possible to create a Caithness Area Review for April or May.
<b>Wester Ross, Strathpeffer &amp; Lochalsh</b>	Ward Business Meeting Target March / April 2026	Area Review – Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Ward 05 Business Meeting - Asset Management will be updating Local Members on current and potential projects and gather views on the local asset portfolio.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 5 January 2026

Author: Emma Calder, Property Manager - Asset Management  
Frank Scott, Property Manager - Asset Management  
Chris Holmes, Property Manager - Asset Management  
Scott Dalgarno, Strategic Lead - Asset & Property Management

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment  
Appendix 2 – Strategic Asset Management Plan  
Appendix 3 – SAMP Assessment Tool

# Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

---

## About proposal

**What does this proposal relate to?** Policy, Strategy, Action or delivery plan

**Proposal name:** Strategic Asset Management Plan

**High level summary of the proposal:** The Strategic Asset management Plan sets out Highland Council's long-term approach to managing its property assets in a way that supports service delivery, drives transformation, and delivers best value for communities.

**Who may be affected by the proposal?** All Highland Council staff and service users

**Start date of proposal:** 09/05/2024

**End date of proposal:** 30/01/2026

**Does this proposal result in a change or impact to one or more Council service?** Yes

**Which Council services will be impacted by this proposal?** Corporate, People, Place

**Does this relate to an existing proposal?** Yes

**Provide details of the existing proposal:** The development of the SAMP is a key workstream from the Highland Council Operational Delivery Plan 2024-27 and is interrelated to other workstreams including single property service and single public estate

---

## Author details

**Name:** Emma Calder

**Job title:** Property Manager (Asset Management)

**Email address:** Emma.Calder@highland.gov.uk

**Service:** Place

---

## Responsible officer details

**Name:** Scott Dalgarno

**Job title:** Strategic Lead - Property & Asset Management

**Email address:** Scott.Dalgarno@highland.gov.uk

**Sign off date:** 2026-01-05

---



# Equalities, poverty, and human rights

## Protected characteristics

Select what impact the proposal will have on the following protected characteristics:

**Sex:** No impact

**Age:** No impact

**Disability:** Positive

**Religion or belief:** No impact

**Race:** No impact

**Sexual orientation:** No impact

**Gender reassignment:** No impact

**Pregnancy and maternity:** No impact

**Marriage and civil partnership:** No impact

**Protected characteristics impact details:** The Strategic Asset Management Plan is designed to focus on the efficient use and improvement of physical assets and infrastructure, and as such, it does not involve changes to policies, practices, or services that would directly affect individuals based on protected characteristics such as sex, age, religion, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, or marriage and civil partnership; however, it may have a positive impact on people with disabilities by enhancing the accessibility and inclusivity of buildings and services.

## Poverty and socio-economic

What impact is the proposal likely to have on the following?

**Prospects and opportunities:** Positive

**Places:** Positive

**Financial:** Positive

**Poverty and socio-economic impact details:** The Strategic Asset Management Plan has the potential to positively impact life prospects and opportunities by supporting new ways of working that are not location-dependent, enabling greater access to employment through digital inclusion, particularly in remote areas; it also enhances places by aligning with the Highland Investment Plan to develop community points of delivery and consolidate services in a more accessible, place-based manner, and it may ease financial pressures on households by improving access to local services and reducing the need for travel, thereby supporting more efficient and inclusive service delivery across the region.

## Human rights

**Which of the below human rights will be affected by this proposal?**No human rights will be affected

**What impact do you consider this proposal to have on the human rights of people?**Positive

**Human rights impact details:** The Strategic Asset Management Plan supports the realisation of human rights by promoting equitable access to public services and facilities, enhancing digital inclusion, and enabling remote working opportunities, thereby helping individuals, particularly in rural and underserved communities, exercise their rights to education, employment, and participation in public life.

## **Equalities, poverty and human rights screening assessment**

**What impact do you think there will be to equalities, poverty and human rights?** Positive impact

**Is a Full Impact Assessment required?** No

---

## **Children's rights and wellbeing**

**What likely impact will the proposal have on children and young people?**The Strategic Asset Management Plan supports children's rights and wellbeing indirectly by adopting a place-based approach to service delivery, making essential services more accessible to families through the development of community points of delivery and closer collaboration with partners; by maximising opportunities for affordable housing and improving access to local facilities, the plan helps create more supportive environments for children, while also strengthening the Council's financial resilience, enabling resources to be directed toward frontline services that benefit children and families rather than being tied up in maintaining buildings.

**Which of the below children's rights will be affected by the proposal?**No children's rights will be affected

**Explain how the children's rights selected above will be affected:**

## **Children's rights and wellbeing screening assessment**

**What impact do you think there will be to children's rights and wellbeing?**Positive impact

**Is a Full Impact Assessment required?** No

---

## **Data protection**

**Will your proposal involve processing personal data?** No

## **Data protection screening assessment**

**What change will there be to the way personal data is processed?**No personal data will be processed

**Is a Full Impact Assessment required?** No

---

## **Island and mainland rural communities**

**Does your proposal impact island and mainland rural communities?** Yes

**Could people in island and mainland rural communities be affected differently?** No

**Have any negative impacts been identified?** No

## **Island and mainland rural communities screening assessment**

**What impact do you think there will be to island and mainland rural communities?** No difference

**Is a Full Impact Assessment required?** No

---

## **Climate change**

**Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>e)?** Yes

**Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity?** Yes

**Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate?** Yes

**Provide information regarding your selection above:** Climate considerations are embedded at the core of the Strategic Asset Management Plan, with a strong focus on supporting the Council's net zero targets and reducing its overall environmental impact. The plan ensures that all property and area reviews incorporate sustainability principles, including energy efficiency, carbon reduction, and responsible resource use. By modernising the estate and promoting better behaviours around energy consumption, the SAMP aims to create a more environmentally responsible property portfolio that not only supports service delivery but also contributes meaningfully to climate resilience and long-term sustainability.

## **Climate change screening assessment**

**Have you identified potential impact for any of the areas above or marked any as not known?** Yes

**Is a Full Impact Assessment required?** No





# Strategic Asset Management Plan 2025-2027

## Plana Ro-innleachdail Stiùireadh Maoine 2025–2027

Property and Assets Service  
Place Service Cluster





# Foreword

## Facal-toisich

The Highland Council's property estate sits at the heart of public service delivery, and we now stand at a pivotal moment in its evolution. As we face significant challenges and embrace new opportunities, it is essential that every asset we manage contributes to a more efficient, sustainable, and responsive future for our communities.

This Strategic Asset Management Plan sets out our commitment to transforming how we use and manage our estate. We must confront difficult but necessary changes, reducing the size of our estate, challenging how we use space, and transforming our behaviours around energy consumption. Equally, we must adapt our service delivery models, embrace new technologies and ensure we are meeting the needs of our communities in smarter, more efficient ways. These are not tasks for a single team or department, they are a shared responsibility. Achieving our net zero targets and delivering best value for our communities requires collective effort, innovation, and a willingness to embrace change.

We must also accept that continuous improvement is essential and a culture of adaptability and forward-thinking will ensure we remain resilient and capable of delivering high-quality services in an ever-changing world.

Highland Council is not just responding to change, we are driving it forward. Our delivery plan initiatives, including the development of community pods and the implementation of our future operating model, place services and jobs at the heart of our communities, future-proofing our delivery model and ensuring we remain ambitious, sustainable, and connected. Central to this transformation is the Highland Investment Plan, which represents a bold and substantial commitment to the region's future. Through this significant investment, we are enhancing local infrastructure, building resilient communities, and creating long-term opportunities across the Highlands, actively shaping a thriving, inclusive, and forward-looking region.

This plan is more than a document - it is a call to action. Together, we can build a stronger, greener, and more sustainable Highland for generations to come.



Councillor Glynis Campbell Sinclair

Provost of Inverness and Area  
Chair of Housing and Property Committee

# Contents

## Clàr-innse

### **1. Strategic Asset Management Plan**

- 1.1 Introduction – the scale of the challenge and drivers for change - 4
- 1.2 Highland Council Built Estate Vision - 5
- 1.3 Our Land, Buildings and Data - 6
- 1.4 The Built Estate by Numbers - 7
- 1.5 Ongoing Asset Reviews - 8
- 1.6 Plan Overview - 9

### **2. Asset Management Policy**

- 2.1 Asset Management Policy -11
- 2.2 Actions and Behaviours -12
- 2.3 Governance - 13

### **3. Asset Management Strategy**

- 3.1 Our Transition Plan – 15
- 3.2 Highland Investment Plan - 17
- 3.3 Single Property Service - 18
- 3.4 Our Money - 19
- 3.5 Strategic Alignment – A Community focused Estate - 21
- 3.6 Single Public Estate - 22
- 3.7 Learning Estate Strategy - 23

- 3.8 Green Free Port & Highland Housing Challenge - 24
- 3.9 Net Zero Strategy - 25
- 3.10 Maintaining Our Assets - 26
- 3.11 Asset Challenge and Office Rationalisation - 28
- 3.12 Commercial Estate -29
- 3.13 Depot Transformation - 30
- 3.14 Harbours Review - 32
- 3.15 Risk - 33

### **4. Asset Management Action Plan**

- 4.1 Strategic Actions - 35
- 4.2 Operational Actions - 37
- 4.3 Targeted Property Interventions Actions - 38



Nairn Courthouse, Nairn

## 1.1 Introduction – the scale of the challenge and drivers for change

### Ro-ràdh – meud an dùbhlain agus na nithean a tha a’ stiùireadh atharrachadh

Local Authorities across Scotland hold property portfolios (made up of buildings and land) that have been acquired in different ways and over different periods of time. The Highland Council property portfolio has formed under both the current Highland Council and the former district councils and has come about through a mix of policy decisions, transfer of functions between other public sector organisations and service led investment.

The Scottish Highlands cover an area of approximately 26,484 square kilometres, making up about 33% of Scotland's total land area. The area includes 6 inhabited islands, nearly 7000km of roads, a property estate including multiple depots, harbours, offices, schools, leisure facilities and council houses. The Council deliver services to approximately 235,430 residents and hosts thousands of annual visitors and although the Highlands are known for beautiful landscapes, Highland Council faces unique challenges delivering services across this expansive area. Low population density, combined with remote settings, make it challenging to deliver public services efficiently. Additionally, the council must address the needs of an aging population and economic disparities between urban and rural areas.

The Highland Council's property systems indicate there are 20,074 separate property and land asset records which includes 15,775 housing assets. Our portfolio is diverse, encompassing operational assets such as offices, sports and leisure facilities, depots, and schools. Additionally, we manage heritage assets like monuments and war memorials, which are integral to our region's rich cultural heritage. Public parks and open spaces, along with sports and leisure facilities and cultural venues, enhance the quality of life for our residents. Meanwhile, industrial properties and development land play a crucial role in driving economic growth and generating income.

The Highland Council faces ongoing challenges in managing its property estate due to sustained financial pressures, ageing infrastructure, and difficulties in recruiting skilled professionals. However, by embracing these challenges as catalysts for change, we have a unique opportunity to drive transformation. Through innovation, collaboration, and a bold, ambitious approach, we can reimagine service delivery to create more efficient, accessible, and sustainable solutions. The Council's property estate is a key enabler of this transformation, providing the flexible, modern spaces needed to support new ways of working, integrated services, and stronger community connections. With a unified vision and shared ambition, we can unlock significant benefits for the communities we serve, building a resilient and thriving future for the Highlands.

Over the coming years, Highland Council will navigate a complex and evolving landscape. To meet these challenges effectively, it is vital that all parts of the Council work together with a shared purpose, guided by a clear understanding of the key drivers for change across both our service delivery model and built estate. These interlinked pressures and strategic priorities include Financial Constraints, Estate Condition and Risk, Operating Model Redesign, Scottish Government's Single Public Estate Agenda, Net Zero Transition and Resilience, Adult Social Care Reform, Green Freeport Impact and Highland Housing Challenge, Digital Inclusion and Connectivity, Workforce Demographics and Skills, Community Empowerment and Localism, and Tourism and Seasonal Pressures.

These drivers will shape how the property estate is planned, used, and managed to support future service delivery, with their influence reflected throughout the Strategic Asset Management Plan.





## 1.2 Highland Council Built Estate Vision Lèirsinn Oighreachd Thogte Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

As we respond to these drivers of change, our property estate must evolve to remain a vital enabler of public service delivery. Looking 25 years ahead, we must ask: what should our estate look like, and how can it best support a more efficient, inclusive, and sustainable Highland Council?

**A modern, flexible, and efficient estate that is resilient, enhances community wellbeing through effective service delivery, and secures long-term financial sustainability.**

**Our Community Points of Delivery:** Multi-agency community points of delivery in bespoke facilities, strategically located in the heart of local communities, delivering education and community services efficiently, enhancing accessibility, and tackling inequalities. Staff are embedded within the communities they serve, allowing them to design and deliver services that are both responsive and efficient.

**Our Administrative Estate:** Conveniently situated, sustainably constructed offices featuring state-of-the-art technology and facilities that support the corporate activities of Highland Council and our multi-agency partners. The offices support innovative working practices and cultivate a sense of belonging for a dynamic workforce.

**Our Operational Network:** A network of secure, strategically located, community integrated depot facilities supporting enhanced operations to achieve streamlined workflows and logistical efficiencies. Staff experience improved working conditions from advanced safety features and ergonomic design, reducing risk and ensuring compliance.

**Our Workforce:** By incorporating state-of-the-art technology, bespoke facilities, and high-quality buildings, alongside modern, flexible working practices, we cultivate a sense of pride and belonging. This holistic approach enhances staff recruitment and retention, enabling us to attract and retain the best talent to serve our communities effectively.

**Our Environment:** Our buildings are designed to be sympathetic to their surroundings, sustainably constructed, and engineered to withstand the increasing impacts of climate change. By integrating carbon-neutral and renewable energy systems, we reduce long-term emissions while enhancing energy resilience. Our approach strategically addresses the unique geographical challenges of the Highland region through the deployment of advanced technologies and targeted resource planning. We have not only achieved but surpassed our Net Zero targets, demonstrating sector leadership and a commitment to continuous innovation. Our commitment to ecological sustainability in the Highland region is stronger than ever, and we are proud to play a pivotal role in delivering a greener, more climate-resilient future for the Highlands.



## 1.3 Our Land, Buildings and Data

### Am Fearann, Na Togalaichean agus An Dàta Againn

To deliver on our strategic vision and respond effectively to the key drivers for change, we must first understand the composition of our current property estate. The table on this page provides a clear and comprehensive overview, categorising assets by type and showing the total number in each category. This snapshot highlights the scale, diversity, and complexity of the estate we are working to manage, modernise, and transform.

The Highland Council's property data remains fragmented across multiple systems, with much of it still structured according to outdated organisational frameworks. This disjointed approach has led to significant data gaps and inconsistencies, undermining the council's ability to manage its assets strategically and make robust, evidence-based decisions. Without a unified and accurate dataset, it becomes challenging to assess asset performance, plan for future needs, or optimise resource allocation. Conducting a comprehensive data audit will help identify these gaps, redundancies, and inconsistencies, laying the groundwork for improved data governance. Furthermore, adopting a digital estate strategy would enable the council to modernise its data infrastructure, integrate disparate systems, and align property data with current strategic asset management plan principles. This alignment is essential for enhancing transparency, improving operational efficiency, and supporting long-term planning and sustainability goals.

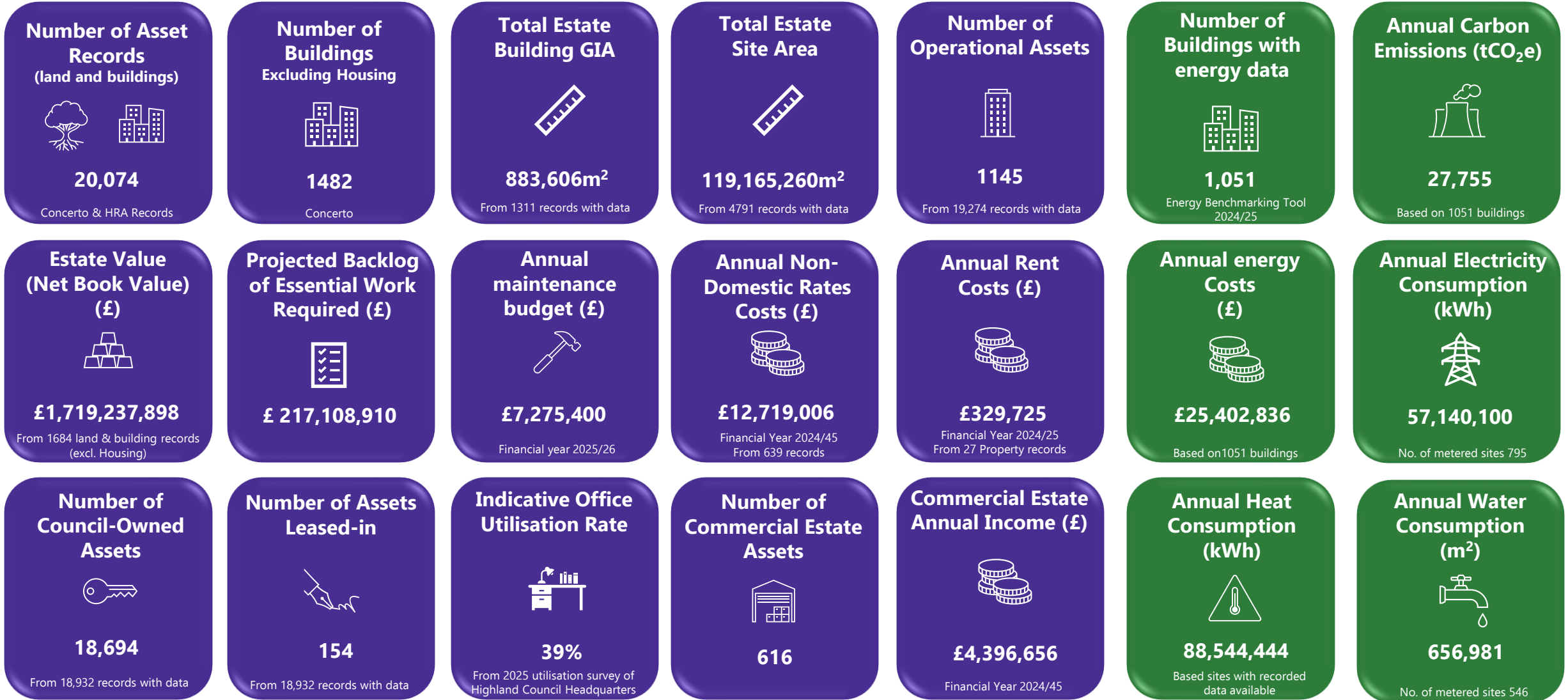
Concerto is Highland Council's cloud-based property asset, project, and facilities management database. It offers an integrated solution for managing property estate, capital projects, facilities, maintenance, sustainability, and energy. Implementing Concerto was planned to enhance legislative compliance in Council property management, improve property information, eliminate manual data exchange processes, foster partnership working and collaboration, consolidate information from disparate systems, create business process efficiencies, support mobile working, increase transparency through financial system interfaces, and generally boost confidence in using property information for strategic decision-making. All modules are available for use, and the implementation of a digital estate strategy will ensure that we leverage the full capabilities of the Concerto system to support effective asset management and informed decision-making.

Asset Type	Number
Bridges and Towers	35
Burial Grounds	238
Car, Lorry and Coach Parks	253
Caravan / Camp Sites	11
Commercial and Industrial Sites	852
Culture, Leisure and Sports Facilities	90
Depots, Quarries, Stores, Yards & Workshops	105
Development Land	137
Education Sites (Schools, Nurseries, Teaching Units)	218
Family, Care, Day and Residential Centres	55
Halls and Community Centres	47
Harbours, Piers, Jettys and Slipways	111
Heritage Assets (Memorials, Monuments)	166
Houses and Flats	15775
Land and Open Spaces (Land, Woodland, Countryside)	248
Libraries	21
Masts and Aerials	29
Offices and Service Points	81
Partner Assets	75
Public Conveniences	98
Public Parks, Pitches, Picnic and Play Areas	506
Ranger Bases	2
Transport Infrastructure (Roads, Cycle Paths, Moorings)	285
Travelling Peoples Sites	6
Vacant Sites and Unclassified Land	431
Waste Sites (Recycling, Landfill and Waste Transfer)	189
Youth Centres	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>20074</b>

The information presented in this table represents the most current property data available within Concerto and Housing Revenue Account data systems

# 1.4 The Built Estate by Numbers

## An Oighreachd Thogte A Rèir Àireamhan



Note: The information presented is the most current property data available within Concerto, CiA Financial System, Housing Revenue Account data systems, the Energy Benchmarking Tool and Estates data systems. Gross Internal Area (GIA) refers to the total floor area of a building measured to the internal face of the perimeter walls, including all spaces such as corridors, toilets, and storage areas. The net book value (NBV) of an asset is the value at which the asset is recorded on the balance sheet, after accounting for depreciation and impairments. It represents the asset's current accounting value, not necessarily its market value. tCO<sub>2</sub>e stands for tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. kWh stands for kilowatt-hour. m<sup>2</sup> stands for square metres. Utilisation rate (%) = (Number of desks and meeting rooms in use ÷ Total number available) × 100. Non-domestic rates are a form of property tax. Site area refers to the total land area of a property or parcel of land. The projected backlog of essential work required refers to the estimated value or volume of critical maintenance, repairs, or upgrades that are currently outstanding. All energy benchmarking tool data is from financial year 2024/25

# 1.5 Ongoing Asset Reviews

## Ath-sgrùdaidhean Maoine Leantainneach

The graphic map provides a comprehensive visual representation of the wide-ranging activities currently in progress in relation to the Highland Investment Plan and this Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP).

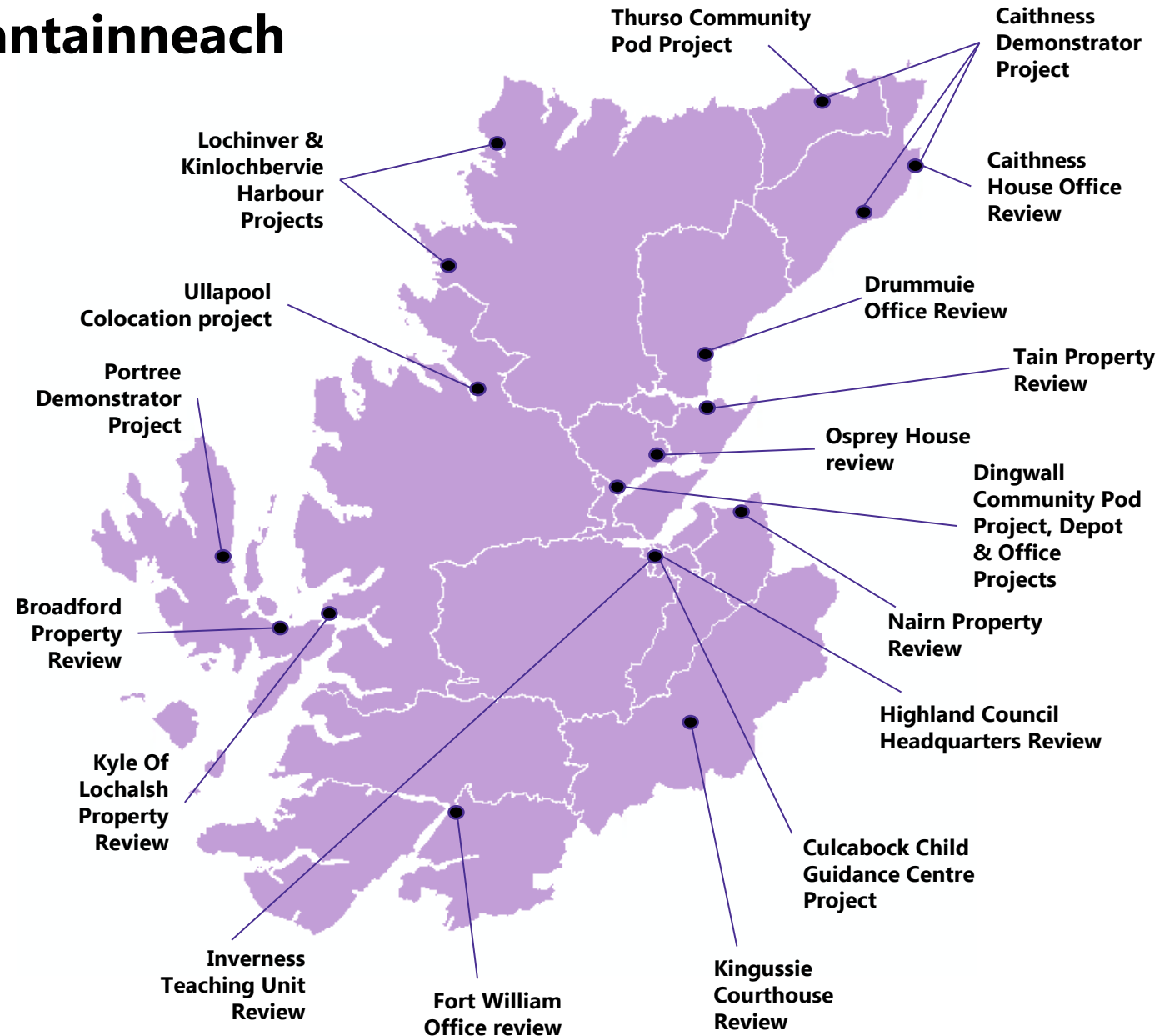
It not only highlights the scope and scale of the initiatives underway but also reflects the interconnected workstreams that are actively being developed and delivered as part of the broader working action plan.

These projects are diverse in nature, some are rationalisation-led, aiming to streamline and reduce the property estate, others are colocation-focused, seeking to bring services and teams together to improve efficiency and user experience. Several initiatives are being delivered in collaboration with other council teams or external partners, reflecting a strong emphasis on joint working and shared outcomes.

The programme also includes HIP community pod projects, which explore innovative, flexible service delivery models embedded within local communities, as well as area-based masterplans that take a strategic, place-based approach to asset planning and regeneration.

Across all these strands, the work is underpinned by a shared ambition to drive service transformation, achieve revenue savings, reduce the overall property footprint, and support organisational priorities, particularly in relation to net zero carbon targets, community empowerment, and access to vital services.

This visual overview highlights the collaborative, multi-faceted, and strategic nature of our ongoing asset management efforts, illustrating how each project aligns with and advances our organisational goals in accordance with this SAMP.



## 1.6 Plan Overview

### Foir-shealladh dhen Phlana

Building on our shared vision, strategic drivers, and a clear understanding of our current property estate, Highland Council is committed to delivering an ambitious and forward-looking future. Our vision and strategic approach are directly shaped by the Council Programme 2022–2027, Our Future Highland. The five Strategic Priority Outcomes, from creating a fair and caring Highland to ensuring a resilient and sustainable Council, have been thoughtfully embedded throughout this Strategic Asset Management Plan. These themes guide our priorities, influence our decisions, and ensure that our property estate plays a vital role in enabling transformation and delivering long-term value for communities across the Highlands. Aligned with our core values of being Ambitious, Sustainable, and Connected, we are working to make the Highlands the best place to live, visit, and invest in.

To achieve our goals, Highland Council is introducing this Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP). The SAMP sets out Highland Council’s long-term approach to managing its property assets in a way that supports service delivery, drives transformation, and delivers best value for communities. It provides the framework to shift from reactive management to a more strategic, flexible, and data-informed model. By aligning with key priorities, such as sustainability, digital transformation, and community needs, the SAMP enables the transition to a more responsive and resilient estate that actively supports new ways of working, integrated services, and long-term community outcomes. This is the first iteration of our SAMP, establishing the foundation of our core principles and current areas of focus. Future versions will delve deeper into our wider asset base, including infrastructure such as roads and bridges, highlighting the breadth of activity being undertaken across the Council. The SAMP is structured around three key parts:

- **An Asset Management Policy**
- **An Asset Management Strategy**
- **An Asset Management Action Plan**

The **policy section** sets out the principles, standards, and governance arrangements that guide how property assets are managed to align with the Council’s strategic objectives and is expected to remain consistent across the lifespan of the Council Programme.

The **strategy section** outlines the Council’s long-term approach to managing property assets, setting priorities and actions that align with service needs, transformation goals, and community outcomes. Each strategy area also includes an indication of how proposed actions align with the key policy principles and highlights the relevant actions from the action plan that support delivery in that area. The strategy will be reviewed at appropriate intervals to ensure continued alignment with organisational objectives.

The **action plan** sets out the specific actions, timelines, and accountabilities and resource required to ensure progress is measurable, accountable, and aligned with strategic goals. It is a live document that will be regularly updated and adapted to effectively manage our asset management workstreams. It brings together current Strategic Asset Management and Highland Investment Plan (HIP) activities, alongside targeted actions to address both strategic and operational requirements needed to align with SAMP principles and drive continuous improvement.





# Asset Management Policy

## Poileasaidh Stiùireadh Maoine





## 2.1 Asset Management Policy

## Poileasaidh Stiùireadh Maoine

This Asset Management Policy sets out clear principles for managing Highland Council's land and buildings. Closely aligned with our organisational objectives, these principles are designed to guide behaviours, inform decision-making, and ensure that all actions taken across the estate support the delivery of our strategic goals.

1

**Stewardship** - To work with our services to plan and manage property as a corporate resource to deliver improvement outcomes and benefit the people of the Highlands

2

**Alignment** - To provide properties that are fit for purpose and located appropriately to meet current service needs, plan for future requirements and align with current and emerging corporate initiatives

3

**Sustainability** - To design, construct, manage and maintain our estate with a whole life approach, to ensure it is effective, efficient, resilient, sustainable and in full alignment with our Net Zero targets

4

**Optimisation** - To accelerate the rationalisation and disposal of land and buildings, optimising commercial opportunities, streamlining our built estate, reducing overheads and carbon impact

5

**Empowerment** - To use land and buildings to stimulate economic growth, support local needs and address the Highland housing challenge, supporting the well-being of our communities

6

**Collaboration** - To promote collaboration, including co-locating with public sector partners and sharing resources, where it will enhance service delivery and achieve efficiencies

7

**Equity** - To commit to ensuring that there is no hierarchy of space, providing all staff, partners and service users with equitable access to high-quality accommodation

## 2.2 Actions and Behaviours

### Gnìomhan agus Giùlan

To achieve our objectives successfully, there are actions and behaviours that we all need to adopt that relate to how we use and manage our land and buildings. These behaviours are set out under the related objective. They are not in any order of priority or importance. A key challenge for Highland Council is balancing these elements during decision making around the future of our land and buildings.

#### **1. To work with our services to plan and manage property as a corporate resource to deliver improvement outcomes and benefit the people of the Highlands**

- Support the aim to be ambitious, sustainable and connected, take a holistic approach to decision making and managing our land and buildings
- Guide decision making by our strategic goals and seek to deliver maximum benefit to Highland Communities
- Work to ensure that property information is current and accurate to ensure we can make informed choices

#### **2. To provide properties that are fit for purpose and located appropriately to meet current service needs, plan for future requirements and align with current and emerging corporate initiatives**

- Work to provide a property estate that is flexible and resilient to respond to future need and changes in demand
- Work with services to understand current and future needs, challenging property use and exploring tech-based solutions.
- Balance service requirements with corporate objectives

#### **3. To design, construct, manage and maintain our estate with a whole life approach, to ensure it is effective, efficient, resilient, sustainable and in full alignment with our Net Zero targets**

- Prioritise capital investment to support corporate priorities, delivering capital projects efficiently and effectively
- Direct expenditure to ensure our buildings are suitable and sustainable for long-term service delivery
- Embed sustainability and circular economy principles across the full property lifecycle, from design and construction to operation, maintenance, end-of-life

#### **4. To accelerate the rationalisation and disposal of land and buildings, optimising commercial opportunities, streamlining our built estate, reducing overheads and carbon impact**

- Proactively identify underperforming properties and expedite rationalisation
- Drive efficiencies in occupancy/utilisation, supporting our future operating model
- Challenge property costs and related activities, ensure value for money and continuous performance improvement
- Pursue opportunities to reuse resources and minimise waste and embed circular economy principles in disposal and redevelopment processes

#### **5. To use land and buildings to stimulate economic growth, support local needs and address the Highland housing challenge, supporting the well-being of our communities**

- Challenge asset use by exploring disposal, acquisition, third-party demand, and income opportunities
- Identify and release property for housing, income generation, & redevelopment
- Promote council-owned land for housing whenever possible

#### **6. To promote collaboration, including co-locating with public sector partners and sharing resources, where it will enhance service delivery and achieve efficiencies**

- Work with other agencies to promote co-location and joint service delivery
- Be an active participant in the 'Single Scottish Estate Programme'
- Collaborate with community organisations to maximise the value and impact of local assets where appropriate and beneficial

#### **7. To commit to ensuring that there is no hierarchy of space, providing all staff, partners and service users with equitable access to high-quality accommodation**

- Seek efficiencies in occupancy and utilisation and introduce new ways of working and alternative service delivery models
- Promote high quality environments for staff and service users, seeking to support colocation, place-based service delivery models and town centre regeneration
- Ensure buildings are secure and safe to use, in relation to statutory requirements and support the health and wellbeing of our employees

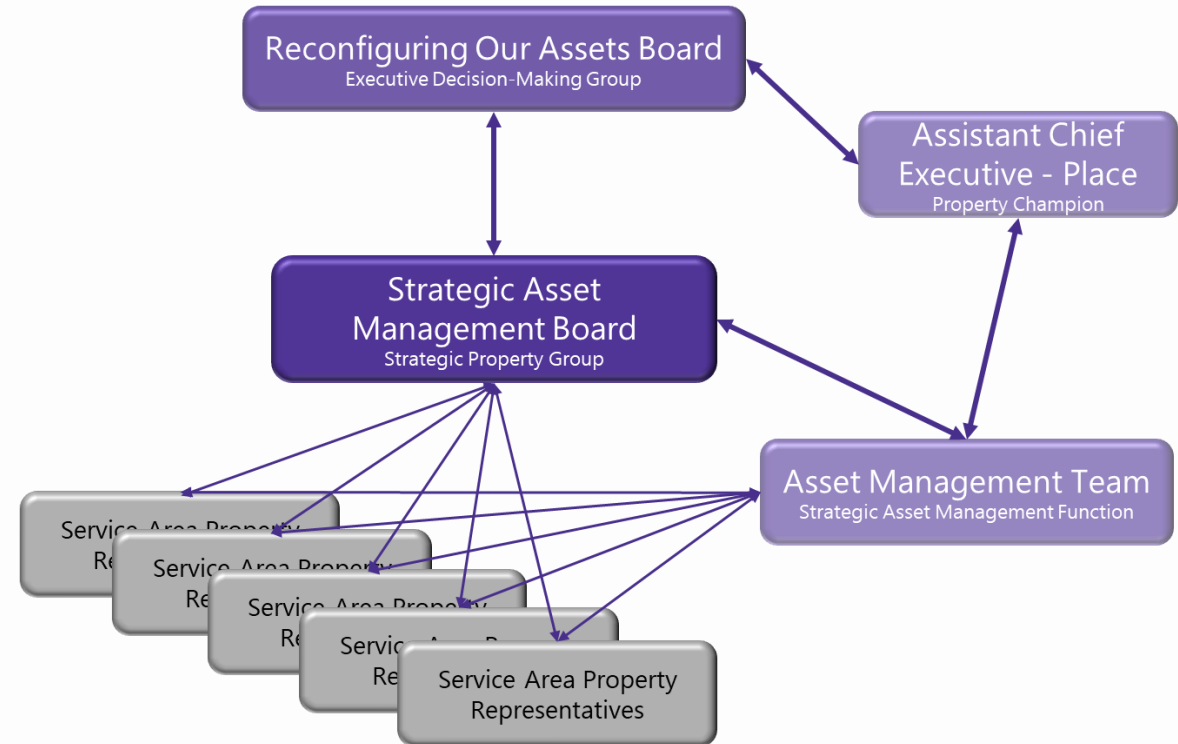
## 2.3 Governance

### Riaghladh

Effective governance is essential to delivering our Strategic Asset Management Plan and ensuring that Highland Council's property assets are managed in a way that supports strategic priorities and community outcomes.

A Strategic Asset Management Board will play a central role in this governance framework, providing cross-service leadership, scrutiny, and accountability for asset-related decisions. By aligning with corporate policy, national legislation, and the Council's transformation agenda, a Board will ensure that asset management is consistent, transparent, and strategically driven.

Responsibility for the success of the SAMP is shared across the organisation, with representatives from key services contributing to decision-making, monitoring progress, and championing change within their service areas. This collaborative approach ensures that asset management is embedded across the Council and that the transition to a more flexible, responsive, and resilient estate is both coordinated and sustainable.





# Asset Management Strategy

## Ro-innleachd Stiùireadh Maoine



## 3.1 Our Transition Plan

### Am Plana Eadar-ghluasaid Againn

A key part of this strategy is guiding Highland Council's transition toward a more modern, flexible, and resilient property estate. A static property estate is a fixed, single-purpose portfolio with limited adaptability. A flexible community focussed estate is dynamic, multi-use, and responsive to changing service needs, workforce patterns, and community demands. We will transition from a static to a flexible and responsive property estate via a strategic, multi-phase approach that aligns property assets with evolving service delivery models, workforce needs, and community expectations. Our transition is already underway through the Highland Investment Plan and the Council Delivery Plan. By formally implementing strategic asset management principles, we will ensure that future decisions and actions drive a shift towards a more efficient, sustainable, and well-aligned property estate that supports the Council's long-term goals.

#### **Phase 1 – Agreeing our Vision – in progress**

This phase assesses our estate and defines a future vision aligned with organisational and community goals. The SAMP outlines this vision, supported by an action plan focused on unified service delivery, shared responsibility for land and buildings, cross-departmental collaboration, and informed, sustainable decision-making.

#### **Phase 2 – Governance Framework – in progress**

This phase establishes governance and policy to guide estate transformation. A Strategic Asset Management Board has been formed, and work is underway to develop aligned policies and decision-making criteria. The SAMP provides the overarching framework, with tools in development to support strong governance, accelerate progress, and deliver sustainable, community-focused outcomes.

#### **Phase 3 – Understanding Demand – Service and Community Engagement – in progress**

This phase will engage services and communities to understand operational needs and ensure property decisions reflect real demand and community expectations. While currently done case-by-case, this will evolve into a structured annual programme of Service and Area reviews, incorporating strategic projects and stakeholder input to keep community needs central to decision-making.



#### **Phase 4 – Portfolio Rationalisation & opportunity identification – in progress**

This phase identifies underused assets and explores opportunities for consolidation, repurposing, or disposal, including co-location and community use. It supports efficient service delivery and the net zero transition by reducing estate size and energy use. Delivery of the Highland Investment Plan, alongside ongoing asset management reviews and projects, will be complemented by annual Service and Area reviews to guide decisions based on local needs, service priorities, and environmental goals. Progress will be driven by cross-team collaboration, robust data, and strategic board oversight.

#### **Phase 5 – Design & Implementation of Flexible, Sustainable Spaces – in progress**

This phase focuses on creating flexible, digitally enabled spaces that support hybrid working, collaboration, and community use. It includes pilot projects, design guidelines, and net zero carbon standards for new and refurbished buildings. Progress is driven through asset management, the Council Delivery Plan, and the Highland Investment Plan. Community 'Points of Delivery' are being developed to improve access and support agile working. Strengthening lifecycle costing approaches will ensure sustainable, informed investment decisions.

#### **Phase 5A – Change Management & Culture Shift – in progress**

This phase supports staff and communities through change by delivering a communications and engagement plan, training for new ways of working, and promoting a culture of flexibility and innovation. Led by the Future Operating Model team, with close collaboration across services, Asset Management ensures alignment throughout project development. Ongoing coordination with the Executive Team, Elected Members, Future Operating Model Team, Community Development, Service Representatives and Delivery Partners ensures a joined-up, strategic approach.

#### **Phase 6 – Monitoring, Evaluation & Continuous Improvement – in progress**

The objective is to ensure the estate remains responsive to evolving needs through regular strategic reviews and a culture of continuous improvement. The Strategic Asset Management Board is assuming responsibility for driving this forward, ensuring alignment with Council targets, embedding corporate priorities into decision-making, and delivering on the vision set out in this SAMP. Alongside the Reconfiguring of Assets Board, it plays a central role in coordinating efforts, monitoring progress, and ensuring that all asset-related decisions contribute meaningfully to the Council's long-term goals.

The **Highland Council Delivery Plan**, **Highland Investment Plan**, and the **Strategic Asset Management Plan**, including its detailed action plan, collectively demonstrate strong and tangible progress across all aspects of this transition approach. By implementing flexible, service-driven workspaces, the Council is actively transforming both service delivery and estate management. These efforts are not only aligned with strategic objectives but are also evidenced through operational pilots, service redesign, and clear, ongoing efforts to foster continuous improvement. Importantly, progress across all phases is being driven in parallel rather than sequentially, ensuring momentum is maintained, opportunities are captured at pace, and interdependencies between workstreams are effectively managed. Together, these initiatives reflect a strong commitment to adaptability, innovation, and inclusive service delivery.

## 3.2 Highland Investment plan

### Plana Tasgaidh na Gàidhealtachd

The Highland Investment Plan (HIP) was developed by Highland Council as a strategic response to the region's long-term infrastructure and service delivery needs. In line with rigorous financial management principles and sound investment standards, the HIP aims to ensure that public investment is affordable, sustainable, and aligned with community priorities.

The HIP emerged from extensive community engagement and place-based planning, particularly through the development of Local Place Plans, leading to the innovative Points of Delivery (PODs) model. These PODs are being designed to integrate services like education, health, leisure, and childcare into flexible, community-focused hubs. The HIP forms part of a broader 20-year vision involving over £2.1 billion in capital investment, with a current five-year plan (2025–2030) committing £756 million in net investment.

As of mid-2025, The Highland Council has made substantial progress in delivering the Highland Investment Plan (HIP). Major initiatives are advancing in areas such as Dingwall and Seaforth, where pilot Points of Delivery (PODs) are being shaped through extensive community engagement and collaboration with public sector partners. A standout project is the Thurso Masterplan, a landmark £100 million investment to redevelop Thurso High School and establish a new Community POD. This marks the first new school build in Thurso since the 1960s and represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to modernise local infrastructure and transform service delivery. In parallel, the Lochaber Area Place Plan has been formally approved and integrated into the HIP, providing a strategic framework for targeted investment in infrastructure and services across the region. The Council is also prioritising the school estate, with over 90 schools identified for major upgrades. Additional funding is being directed toward roads, transport networks, and the modernisation of community facilities to support long-term regional resilience. To ensure financial sustainability, the Council continues to monitor borrowing levels closely while preparing for the next phase of POD developments and community consultations across the Highlands.

Strategic asset management (SAM) plays a vital role in supporting the HIP by ensuring that public assets are used efficiently, sustainably, and in alignment with long-term community needs. By optimising the use of existing buildings and infrastructure, SAM principles will help us to ensure we reduce duplication and maintenance costs while improving service delivery. It will enable data-driven decision-making through asset condition assessments and lifecycle costing, which supports the HIP's focus on prioritising investments in areas like the school estate. Applying SAM principles also ensures that assets are aligned with evolving service models such as Points of Delivery (PODs), making them adaptable and community-focused. Sustainability is a core principle, with SAM embedding energy efficiency and climate resilience into asset planning, helping the Council meet its net-zero goals. Looking ahead, SAM will shape future HIP projects through comprehensive service and area review process, asset rationalisation, integrated planning, and resilience strategies, ensuring that investments remain responsive, efficient, and future-proofed.

## 3.3 Single Property Service

### Seirbheis Seilbh Singilte

A critical enabler of our transition is the adoption of a Single Property Service (SPS) model, which plays a central role in transforming how Highland Council manages its estate. By consolidating responsibility for land and buildings within the corporate centre, the SPS model establishes a clear Corporate Landlord function. This shift allows service areas to focus on delivering outcomes, while the SPS oversees the strategic acquisition, development, and disposal of assets. Through coordinated planning, stakeholder engagement, and alignment with corporate priorities, the SPS ensures that all property decisions support the Council's long-term vision and enable a more flexible, responsive, and resilient estate. It is important that the approach is supported by practical steps and behaviours.

The corporate behaviours required include:

- Strong leadership to ensure that asset management aligns with the overall strategic goals of the organisation
- Centralised decision-making ensuring property decisions are consistent and efficient
- Transparency to maintain clear and open communication about asset management decisions and processes
- Clear communication to promote organisational awareness and understanding of asset management priorities
- Collaboration between departments to ensure that property needs are met effectively
- Accountability for asset management outcomes

The service behaviours required include:

- Proactive engagement with the SPS to communicate needs and provide feedback
- Adherence to established policies and procedures for asset use and management
- Use resources efficiently and responsibly to support organisational goals
- Flexibility and adaptability to changes in asset management strategies and practices
- Continuous improvement in asset utilisation including reviewing service delivery models and reducing space requirements

To ensure the SPS model operates effectively, delivering better services and optimising the use of assets, we must adopt a culture of accountability, shared responsibility, and continuous improvement. This is not the responsibility of the Property Service alone - it requires commitment from everyone across the organisation. All staff have a role to play in contributing to our transition, constructively challenging behaviours, and supporting a more collaborative, efficient, and responsive approach to how we manage and use our assets.

## 3.4 Our Money

### An t-Airgead Againn

Delivering this transformation requires not only strategic alignment and operational change, but also a clear understanding of the financial landscape.

Scottish councils face significant financial challenges in 2025-26 due to rising operational costs, escalating demand for services, and high inflation. The broader economic context in Scotland is marked by prolonged financial pressures stemming from Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the ongoing energy crisis. These factors have led to high inflation and increased costs delivering public services. The Scottish Government's budget for 2025-26 reflects these challenges, with only a modest increase in the block grant settlement. The government has pledged to tackle these challenges through strategic investments and reforms. However, the economic outlook remains uncertain, necessitating robust financial planning and management from the Highland Council.

Between November 2023 and February 2024, the Council undertook a comprehensive engagement exercise to inform its three-year budget, receiving over 3,500 public responses that helped shape savings and income generation proposals. In February 2024, a £54.6 million savings package was approved, focusing on service redesign, property management changes, efficiencies, and income generation. For 2025–26, the Council has proposed a balanced budget, supported by a 7% Council Tax increase—2% of which is ringfenced for investment in schools and roads. This includes over £4.5 million in revenue investments and £17 million in additional reserves earmarked for major developments. Despite a projected budget gap of £38–£54 million over the next three years, the Council is taking a strategic approach to financial sustainability. As covered in section 3.2, Capital commitments are set out in the Highland Investment Plan, include £756 million of net investment from 2025–2030 as part of a £2.1 billion long-term strategy. These investments support transformational infrastructure projects such as school estate improvements funded through the Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP), place-based regeneration through demonstrator funding, and strategic asset management, all aligned with the Council's Delivery Plan and Budget Strategy.

Strategic asset management is fundamental to the success of the Council's capital investment and revenue savings ambitions. The Strategic Asset Management Plan provides a robust framework to ensure that investment decisions are evidence-based, financially sustainable, and aligned with organisational values and priorities. By optimising the use of assets, reducing maintenance liabilities, and rationalising the estate, the SAMP supports long-term savings and enhances service delivery. This approach enables the Council to reinvest in priority areas such as schools, roads, and community infrastructure. Success relies on strong leadership, clear communication, and a shared commitment across the organisation to embrace change, challenge traditional practices, and adopt smarter ways of working. Reducing energy consumption, minimising reliance on physical space, and leveraging technology are central to this transformation, ensuring that the Council's estate is fit for the future and aligned with the needs of Highland communities.







## 3.5 Strategic Alignment – A Community Focused Estate Co-thaobhadh Ro-innleachdail – Oighreachd le Fòcas air a’ Choimhearsnachd

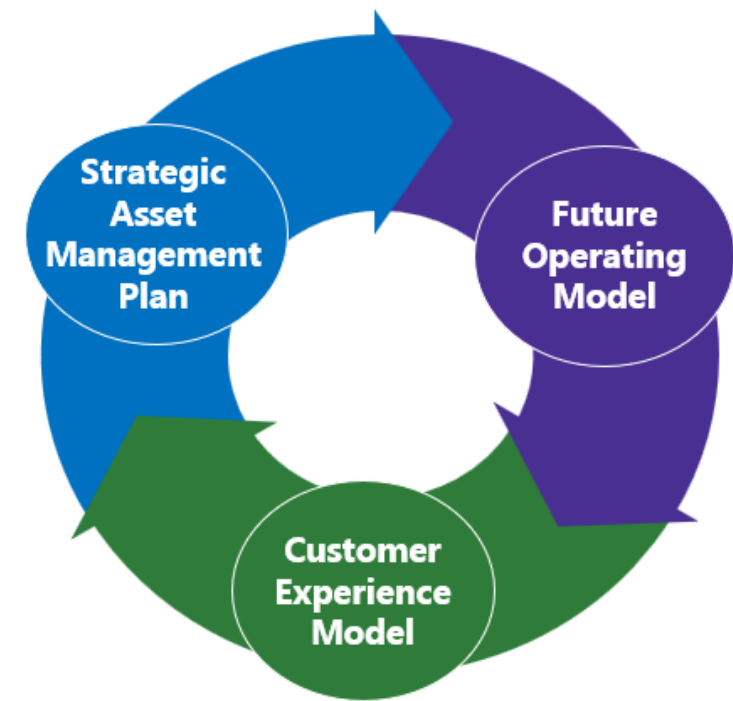
Building on our transition plan and financial framework, the Strategic Asset Management Plan (encompassing the Highland Investment Plan workstreams), Future Operating Model project, and Customer Experience initiatives bring together these interconnected elements to support a cohesive and forward-looking approach. Each plays a vital role in shaping how services are delivered and experienced across our communities. To realise a modern, community-focused estate that is both financially sustainable and responsive to evolving needs, these programmes must work in close alignment, ensuring our assets, operations, and customer interactions evolve together in a cohesive and strategic way.

Population projections indicate that by 2043, the school-age population will decline by 15%, the working-age population by 8%, while the over-65 population will increase by 40%. These demographic shifts underscore the urgency for Highland Council to adapt its service delivery model to meet changing community needs.

The Highland Council Customer Experience Model is a key part of this transformation. It aims to embed a customer-first culture across the organisation, ensuring that all employees adopt a customer-focused mindset and that services are designed around the needs of the people who use them.

Complementing this, the Future Operating Model seeks to simplify access to services and facilities, creating a more connected and seamless experience for residents. Its goal is to enhance quality of life by making the best use of available resources and working collaboratively with partners to unlock social, economic, and community opportunities.

Integrating strategic asset management, the future operating model, and the customer experience model is essential for achieving these ambitions. By aligning objectives, leveraging data, optimising resources, and fostering collaboration and engagement, Highland Council can create a more sustainable, efficient, and responsive system. This integration ensures that properties are repurposed effectively to support modernised service delivery and adapt to future needs, ultimately improving outcomes for all residents.





## 3.6 Single Public Estate

### Oighreachd Phoblach Shingilte

The Single Public Estate programme, led by the Scottish Government, complements Highland Council's ambition to create a community-focused estate. Central to this ambition is the development of a new generation of multi-use community facilities known as Points of Delivery (PODs). These facilities are designed to support the delivery of Council services while also accommodating other public sector partners and community organisations, maximising value and promoting collaboration. The Community POD approach is a cornerstone of the Highland Investment Plan, aimed at modernising service delivery and enhancing the quality and accessibility of community infrastructure. By co-locating services, PODs foster integrated local delivery, improve operational efficiency, reduce costs, and strengthen the long-term sustainability of Highland communities.

Sharing assets with partners offers significant benefits for Highland Council and its communities by maximising the use of public resources, reducing costs, and unlocking new funding opportunities. Beyond financial efficiencies, this approach fosters collaboration, skills exchange, and resilience through shared responsibilities and integrated service delivery. While traditional co-location often involves simple rental arrangements, deeper integration, such as shared operations, joint planning, and unified goals, can drive innovation, improve communication, and strengthen community ties. Transitioning to this model can be achieved incrementally, starting with space sharing and evolving toward fully collaborative partnerships that enhance service outcomes and prepare the Council for future challenges.



The Highland Council's Learning Estate Strategy provides the guiding principles for the development of Community PODs, promoting integrated, sustainable, and inclusive service delivery by co-locating education with other public services. These learning environments are designed not only to support wellbeing and community use but also to deliver long-term value for Highland communities. As part of this approach, pilot Community POD projects are playing a crucial role in transforming how we engage with partners. Through these pilots, we are actively working in collaboration with public sector bodies, third-sector organisations, and local communities to identify shared opportunities, align service needs, and co-design facilities that reflect local priorities. This collaborative process helps to build trust, encourage innovation, and ensure that each POD is tailored to the unique context of its community. By embedding collaboration from the outset, these projects are laying the groundwork for a more connected and resilient public estate across the Highlands.

## 3.7 Learning Estate Strategy

### Ro-innleachd Oighreachd Ionnsachaidh

Building on the principles of the Single Public Estate, the Learning Estate Strategy forms a vital part of the Council's capital investment programme, ensuring that school investment is underpinned by robust asset planning, promotes long-term sustainability, and delivers modern, efficient learning environments that reflect the needs of Highland communities.

The Highland Council's Learning Estate Strategy (LES) sets out a clear and ambitious vision for transforming the region's educational infrastructure in line with Scotland's national priorities for excellence, equity, and sustainability. It promotes the development of modern, inclusive, and community-integrated learning environments through strategic investment, including the creation of multi-service Points of Delivery (PODs). The strategy addresses key factors such as school capacity modelling, roll forecasting, and the condition and suitability of existing facilities, with the aim of bringing all schools to at least a "B" rating. It places a strong emphasis on inclusive education, particularly for learners with additional support needs, and aligns with the Council's £2 billion Highland Investment Plan, which includes over £1 billion for schools and roads over the next decade. The LES also incorporates national guidance and legislation, including the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the presumption of mainstreaming, ensuring that educational benefits and community engagement are central to all planning and decision-making.

Integrating the Learning Estate Strategy with the Strategic Asset Management Plan is essential to ensure that educational infrastructure investments are prioritised, efficient, and sustainable. This integration allows the Council to maximise the use of existing assets while delivering modern, inclusive, and community-focused learning environments that meet long-term educational and community needs. As the guiding framework for the Council's major capital investment in schools, the Learning Estate Strategy also plays a key role in identifying opportunities to support the Highland Housing Challenge. By coordinating educational infrastructure planning with housing delivery, the Strategy contributes to the creation of sustainable, well-connected communities through joined-up investment in both learning and living environments.



Dingwall Academy, Dingwall



## 3.8 Green Freeport & Highland Housing Challenge

### Saor-Phort Uaine & Dùbhlán Taigheadais na Gàidhealtachd

In parallel with the Council's strategic approach to educational infrastructure through the Learning Estate Strategy, wider regional growth opportunities, such as the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, are driving the need for coordinated investment in housing, infrastructure, and community assets.

Designated in January 2023, the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport is a public-private partnership, including The Highland Council, aimed at positioning the region as a global hub for green energy. By offering investment incentives and supporting decarbonisation, the Freeport is expected to generate up to 15,000 jobs and attract approximately £3 billion in inward investment, delivering a significant boost to the Highland economy.

In response to this anticipated growth, Highland Council launched the Housing Challenge in November 2023, setting out strategic objectives to address the region's acute housing needs. The resulting Highland Housing Challenge Partnership Action Plan presents a comprehensive, collaborative strategy developed through extensive stakeholder engagement, including summits and seminars. The plan targets the delivery of 24,000 new homes over the next decade, double the current projected output, and focuses on three key areas: increasing land availability, securing diverse financing models, and expanding developer capacity.

Key initiatives include a call for development sites, masterplan consent areas, mid-market rental housing for key workers, a regional skills plan to support the construction workforce. The plan also tackles systemic barriers such as grid capacity and building standards, while aligning with broader economic opportunities like the Green Freeport. It is a dynamic, evolving document embedded in the Council's operational planning and strongly supported by both public and private sector partners.

Collaboration across all property teams is essential to ensure that any rationalisation or community pod project reflects the full range of organisational priorities, particularly in the context of the Highland Housing Challenge. By aligning the Learning Estate Strategy, Highland Housing Challenge Partnership Action Plan, and other key initiatives under the Strategic Asset Management Plan, the Council can adopt a more integrated and strategic approach to asset use.

Strong governance through the Strategic Asset Management Board will ensure that decisions are transparent, prioritised, and aligned with long-term objectives. Closer cross-service working, enabled by the Single Property Service, supports a more coordinated review of surplus land and buildings, helping to identify opportunities for housing and community benefit. The principles of the SAMP underpin these efforts, supporting the creation of a more sustainable, efficient, and responsive property portfolio that meets the region's evolving needs.



# 3.9 Net Zero Strategy

## Ro-innleachd Neoni Luim

Climate change is regarded as one of the greatest challenges of our lifetime. Communities across the Highlands are already experiencing the effects of severe weather and climate-related disruptions, which impact the services we deliver, the infrastructure we manage, and the wellbeing of our residents.

The Highland Council's Net Zero Strategy outlines the Council's approach to addressing the climate emergency and contributing towards Scotland's legally binding target of achieving Net Zero by 2045, with interim targets to reduce emissions by at least 75% by 2030 and by at least 90% by 2040. Demonstrating leadership and urgency, the Council's aspiration is to reach these targets as soon as possible.

Our Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan (in development), outlines how the Highland Council, in partnership with our communities and stakeholders, will build a climate-ready and resilient Highland.

Achieving Net Zero will require transformational change across the organisation. Climate change mitigation, adaptation, and sustainability must be embedded into all operations and service delivery.

Delivery of the Council's Route Map to Net Zero requires a cross-service collaborative approach. Every member of staff and every elected member has a vital role to play in adapting the Council to climate change and delivering on our Net Zero commitments.

A Net Zero Strategy Group, comprising senior managers across Council services, leads on the operational development and delivery of the Council's Net Zero Strategy and Net Zero Programme. Seven thematic groups support this work, each focusing on key areas and reporting progress to the Climate Change Committee.

Embedding climate change and adaptation considerations into asset management processes is essential for delivering a resilient, sustainable, and future-proof estate. By embedding these principles, we promote cost efficiency, regulatory compliance, and alignment with government targets, helping to avoid potential fines and legal issues. Financial performance is strengthened through informed investment decisions that reduce exposure to climate risks via both adaptation and mitigation measures.

This integration also encourages the adoption of technologies and practices that enhance efficiency and reduce emissions, resulting in cost savings and operational improvements. It strengthens our ability to achieve our Net Zero targets and ensures that all operational and investment decisions are aligned. In doing so, we demonstrate our role as a responsible public body, supporting the delivery of high-quality, sustainable services for our communities.

Reinforcing our commitment to Net Zero also strengthens trust and credibility with stakeholders, including service users, investors, regulators, and the wider community.



## 3.10 Maintaining Our Assets

### A' Cumail Suas na Maoine Againn

Building on our Net Zero Strategy and the financial context outlined in earlier sections, maintaining our assets is essential to ensuring long-term sustainability, resilience, and value for money across our property portfolio.

Public sector organisations are responsible for ensuring their buildings meet legal, regulatory, and internal standards. However, this responsibility has become increasingly challenging due to rising legislative demands, complex governance structures, particularly those arising from shared services and persistent financial constraints. These pressures have significantly accelerated the decline in building conditions. Within Highland Council, years of budget reductions, the elimination of cyclical maintenance, staffing and resource limitations, recruitment difficulties, data gaps, and the absence of a cohesive strategic approach have all contributed to the rapid deterioration of our built estate. As a result, we are now facing serious compliance issues that require urgent and substantial investment. Notably, we have an estimated projected backlog of essential maintenance work totalling £217,108,910, underscoring the scale of the challenge ahead to restore safety, functionality, and long-term sustainability across our key assets.

In response to this challenge, the Property Maintenance Team has initiated a rolling programme of condition surveys to gain a clearer understanding of the current state of the estate. This data-driven approach is intended to inform future investment decisions, prioritise critical works, and support the development of a long-term strategy for restoring safety, functionality, and sustainability across our key assets. The main priorities for property maintenance are

1. Ensure all properties meet health and safety and statutory compliance requirements.
2. Focus on planned and preventative maintenance to reduce costly reactive repairs.
3. Use condition surveys and data to guide investment and manage long-term risks.

The Strategic Asset Management Plan seeks to align asset performance with organisational goals, to enable proactive, cost-effective maintenance planning through data-driven decisions. Governed by the Strategic Asset Management Board, it will seek to ensure strategic priorities are integrated with daily operations. Key actions include improving data quality, supporting recruitment, strengthening life-cycle costing, ensuring robust premises management, accelerating asset rationalisation, and promoting shared responsibility, ultimately reducing corporate risk and enhancing long-term asset sustainability.





## 3.11 Asset Challenge and Office Rationalisation

### Dùbhlán Maoine agus Cuibhreannachadh Oifise

The following sections reflect key property related workstreams that form the foundation of the SAMP Working Action Plan.

To achieve our goals of modernising service delivery, reducing costs, and reaching net zero, we must balance our need to accommodate services with our aim to reduce the built estate. Challenging service requirements must go hand in hand with evaluating the utilisation of our assets. By embedding an asset challenge process, we can maintain a continuous rolling programme of review, ensuring our property portfolio remains relevant and fit for purpose.

A programme for asset challenge can develop in various ways, such as through routine strategic challenges, property assets reaching a lease expiry, internal changes in direction or corporate policy, shifts in service delivery direction, or geographical reviews. Our embedded asset challenge and area review process will involve a rolling programme of reviewing our assets to ensure we retain only the buildings we need for the future. Our outline challenge process is set out below:



A key action arising from this Strategic Asset Management Plan will be the development of an **area review process**, which will be developed and facilitated by the Strategic Property Board. This process, underpinned by a place-based approach, will enable targeted reviews of property assets within specific geographic areas. By comparing and clustering compatible property functions, the reviews will help identify opportunities for co-location, rationalisation, and improved service delivery. This approach will ensure that assets are used efficiently and effectively, aligned with local priorities and community needs. It will also foster collaboration among service teams, community groups, and public sector partners, supporting more integrated and responsive services.

An **asset and project assessment tool** is also in development to ensure we align the built estate to current and emerging service delivery models and ultimately enabling us achieve our strategic objectives. The tool will be a key part of our asset challenge process and enables the evaluation of the suitability of asset management target buildings, projects, proposals, or options against a comprehensive set of criteria that is aligned with corporate objectives, our integrated impact assessment process and the SAMP principles. This tool is designed to strengthen the Council's decision-making around asset management by supporting options appraisals and business cases, while providing rigorous challenge to ensure decisions are transparent, evidence-based, and justifiable.

## 3.12 Commercial Estate

### Oighreachd Choimeirsealta

Councils hold certain property assets specifically to generate economic benefit, and this part of the estate can provide the additional benefit of generating revenue streams, which can help offset reductions in central government funding and support local services. These portfolios typically include commercial properties, and are used to provide a steady income, support economic regeneration, and create jobs in the local area. The benefits of holding such portfolios include financial sustainability, enhanced local economic development, and the ability to fund essential services. However, there are risks involved, such as market volatility, potential financial losses, and the complexities of managing diverse investments. Effective management and strategic planning are crucial to mitigate these risks and ensure the portfolios contribute positively to the council's objectives

The Council's delivery plan includes a workstream aimed at increasing industrial and commercial assets available for lease. This involves refurbishing existing commercial units and increasing the number of units available for business lease. The Council has several industrial and commercial units across Highland that require condition surveys and an upgrade programme. Additionally, there is an opportunity to conduct market testing to determine the demand for more commercial units. If demand is confirmed, a self-funding business case could be developed.

Key project elements include completing condition surveys of all industrial and investment commercial units, identifying locations suitable for small starter units for commercial lease to new businesses, and developing a business case for a self-funding programme to support the construction of additional commercial business units.

Measures of success include procuring and leasing new income-generating commercial units to private companies, supporting new start-ups, sustaining employment in rural communities through new place-based companies, developing skilled workers locally to support a local supply chain, and securing grant funding to support the programme.

The Strategic Asset Management Board should support the increase of the investment portfolio and ensure that investment decisions are made with careful deliberation, considering risk management, market conditions, and the council's financial objectives. Additionally, the board can provide oversight and governance, ensuring that investments are diversified and aligned with ethical and social considerations.



## 3.13 Depot Transformation

### Cruth-atharrachadh Ionadan-stòraidh

It is crucial to maintain a depot portfolio that is fit for purpose, provides staff with a safe working environment, aligns with our corporate objectives, and ensures efficient operations that deliver the best value service to the community.

The Depot Transformation Programme is a key action from this SAMP and part of a structured approach to asset management, aligning with the Delivery Plan and Highland Investment Plan. It aims to modernise depots, ensuring compliance with health and safety standards, improving service delivery, and supporting a place-based approach. This work will address statutory compliance, rationalisation, and aims for net zero and decarbonisation of assets and services.

A series of preparatory workstreams have laid the foundation for the current depot transformation project. In 2022/23, a feasibility study explored the potential for a long-term Super Depot solution serving the Inverness, Dingwall, and Seaforth Wards, areas accounting for 46% of the Council's backlog maintenance costs. This study assessed operational requirements, rationalisation opportunities, estate optimisation, and potential capital receipts from disposals, culminating in a proposed central Super Depot model with draft designs and cost estimates. Complementing this, condition surveys were carried out in 2021/22 across 42 depots, with further surveys planned. These provided a systematic, objective assessment of building condition and maintenance needs, following the Scottish Government's "Condition Core Fact" guidelines. The surveys identified essential repairs to bring premises up to at least Grade B standard and ensure legislative compliance. Together, these earlier assessments are directly informing the strategic direction and priorities of the depot transformation programme now underway.

This programme of work is essential to address the deteriorating condition of our depots, which are facing a significant and growing backlog in maintenance. It has been highlighted that funding opportunities are available to support improvements, including the potential to consolidate services and facilities through initiatives such as the Highland Investment Plan and Points of Delivery. As a result, the depots in Dingwall have been prioritised for the initial phase of this work. Current efforts are focused on exploring the development of a new or enhanced area depot, with opportunities for colocation being actively considered in partnership with other service providers.







## 3.14 Harbours Review

### Ath-sgrùdadh Chalaidhean

Another area of strategic interest in the property estate is the Harbours. The Council owns and manages around 90 operational ports, harbours, and marine facilities, many of which include buildings used by both Council staff and harbour users.

Harbours are vital to the Highland Council, especially in rural areas, as they support key industries like fishing, aquaculture, marine engineering, and tourism. They provide essential infrastructure for economic activity, employment, and transport, particularly for island communities reliant on ferry services. Harbours also generate income through leases and rentals, helping fund maintenance and improvements, which strengthens the resilience and sustainability of remote communities.

Harbour facilities across the Highlands are essential for both operations and local economies. Sites like Lochinver and Kinlochbervie support the fishing industry by housing Marine Scotland and vessel agents, while Gairloch and Portree offer gear storage and host marine engineering firms. The Council also maintains offices and workshops in key locations such as Uig, Kyle, and Helmsdale. Additionally, Calmac uses facilities at ports like Uig, Sconser, and Raasay, highlighting the importance of these harbours as transport and service hubs for remote communities.

The primary goal of the review is to ensure that all properties are being leased or rented at appropriate market rates. It also aims to identify underused or vacant spaces so they can be marketed and utilised more effectively. By maximising the use and income potential of these buildings, the Council can ensure their maintenance and availability, which supports the continued operation of the ports, sustains rural employment, and contributes to the Council's revenue.

The principles of the SAMP are essential to the harbour asset review because they ensure that the Council's property portfolio is managed in a way that is efficient, financially sustainable, and aligned with service delivery goals. Oversight by the Strategic Property Board will ensure informed decisions about the use, leasing, and maintenance of harbour buildings are taken, ensuring that assets are fully utilised and generating appropriate income. This is particularly important for supporting long-term planning, enabling proactive maintenance, and avoiding costly repairs. By aligning asset use with broader strategic objectives, such as supporting rural economies, transport connectivity, and community resilience, the review will ensure that harbour infrastructure continues to meet the needs of both the Council and local communities. Incorporating SAMP principles also promotes transparency and accountability, demonstrating responsible stewardship of public assets and reinforcing public trust in how these valuable resources are managed.



## 3.15 Risk

### Cunnart

The successful implementation of this Strategic Asset Management Plan is contingent upon proactively identifying and managing a range of potential risks that could compromise its effectiveness, sustainability, and alignment with organisational objectives. Key risks to the successful implementation of this plan are:

- **Lack of Visible Executive Sponsorship** - Without strong, consistent, and visible leadership support, the plan may lose strategic direction, stakeholder confidence, and the momentum needed for successful implementation
- **Failure to embrace change** - Reluctance from staff or leadership to adopt new processes, technologies, or cultural shifts, combined with a failure to take individual responsibility, can significantly undermine the plan's delivery by stalling progress, weakening accountability, and eroding collective commitment to success
- **Failure to resource action workstreams** - Failure to allocate sufficient personnel, time, or tools to key workstreams can lead to delays, reduced quality of outputs, and an inability to maintain momentum, ultimately jeopardising the timely and effective delivery of the plan
- **Underinvestment in Maintenance** - Ongoing underinvestment in preventative maintenance can accelerate asset deterioration, increase the risk of unplanned failures, and inflate long-term costs. This not only undermines the effectiveness of the SAM implementation but also compromises the safety, functionality, and value of the property estate over time
- **Failure to address poor data quality** - Failure to address known data gaps and improve the quality of asset information can lead to unreliable insights, poor decision-making, and misaligned priorities. This could undermine the overall credibility and successful implementation
- **Failure to achieve strategic alignment** - If asset management decisions are not clearly aligned with broader organisational goals, the SAM implementation may lack relevance, direction, and stakeholder support, resulting in fragmented efforts and reduced overall impact
- **Technology Implementation Failures** - Failure to coordinate property-related decisions with the rollout of new technologies can result in incompatible solutions, operational inefficiencies, and user resistance, ultimately jeopardising the successful implementation of the Strategic Asset Management Plan
- **Cultural Barriers** - A culture that resists continuous improvement or collaboration can stifle innovation and progress

# Asset Management Action Plan

## Plana Gnìomh Stiùireadh Maoine





## 4.1 Property Asset Management Action Plan – Strategic (Initiatives aligning with Organisational Objectives)

Action No.	Action Description	Objective	Completion Target		Accountability	Resources
			2025/26	2026/27		
S1	Establish Strategic Asset Management Board	Develop terms of reference and membership to align with SAMP, Delivery Plan and Highland Investment Plan	Completed		Service Lead (Asset Management and Commercial Property)	Fully Resourced
S1.1	Develop project tracker and integrate within Concerto	This initiative represents a new approach to team working programme, serving as both a reporting mechanism and a strategic coordination tool. It provides the SAM Board with a comprehensive, real-time overview of current activities and progress across all strategic asset management workstreams and enables for improved resource planning.	In progress, tracker in use		Service Lead (Asset Management and Commercial Property)	Existing Capacity
S1.2	Deploy the Strategic Property Asset Management Plan 2025-27 (SAMP)	Council approve the adoption of Highland Council’s Strategic Asset Management Plan 2025-27 at relevant boards and committees, share with Service Management Teams, Highland Property Partnership, Community Planning Partnership, staff and community.	January 2026		Assistant Chief Executive Place Service Cluster  Chief Officer Property and Assets	Fully Resourced
S1.3	Develop and implement strategic asset management assessment tool to ensure strategic alignment	Develop robust assessment criteria and a supporting tool to enable consistent, transparent, and rapid evaluation of buildings, proposals, and projects against corporate objectives, strategies, and performance targets. This tool will support asset challenge and prioritisation by ensuring decisions are evidence-based and aligned with key Council priorities, including the Highland Housing Challenge, Net Zero ambitions, community wealth building, service transformation, and financial sustainability.	Completed		Service Lead (Asset Management and Commercial Property)	Existing Capacity
S1.4	Establish a detailed risk profile and register	Developing and maintaining a strategic risk profile and comprehensive risk register enables the identification and prioritisation of high-risk properties, supporting evidence-based decisions that enhance estate performance, safety, and organisational resilience.	March 2026		Strategic Asset Management Board	Collaborative Delivery
S2	Strategic Integration of Future Operating Model, Highland Investment Plan and Single Public Sector workstreams through structured collaboration, information sharing and coordinated delivery	Drive strategic alignment of the Strategic Asset Management Plan with the Future Operating Model, Highland Investment Plan, and Single Public Estate programme by embedding property considerations into policy development and service planning. This will be achieved through coordinated engagement, integration of overlapping asset management projects, and the development of coherent, area-based plans that maximise collaboration, efficiency, and long-term value.	On-going process		Head of HR, People, Resources & Finance  Service Lead (Asset Management and Commercial Property)  Service Lead Capital Planning & Estate Strategy	Collaborative Delivery

**Note:** Resource Categories – **Fully Resourced/Existing Capacity** - All necessary resources (staff, budget, tools) are in place or expected to be supported through existing roles , **Partially Resourced** - Some resources are available, but additional support may be needed to complete the action, **Resource Gap identified** - No current resources allocated; action requires new or additional resourcing , **To Be Scoped** - Resource needs are not yet fully defined; assessment or planning is required **Collaborative Delivery** – Action delivered across multiple teams or partners; coordination required



Property Asset Management Action Plan – Strategic - continued


Action No.	Action Description	Objective	Completion Target		Accountability	Resources
			2025/26	2026/27		
S3	Area Review Programme using asset challenge tools to identify sites for retention, colocation, disposal etc	Support the Council’s Delivery Plan, Budget Strategy, Highland Investment Programme, Future Operating Model, Net Zero targets, and Highland Housing Challenge through a coordinated programme of asset review and rationalisation. This will enable place-based planning and prioritise the accelerated review of poor-performing assets and sites with housing potential, ensuring alignment with strategic objectives and maximising community and financial value.	On-going process  Areas reviewed to date incl. Nairn, Tain, Inverness City, Portree	Target Areas TBC March 2027	Service Lead (Asset Management and Commercial Property)	To Be Scoped
S3.1	Annual Service Asset Management Plan programme	To ensure property considerations are fully embedded and cross-cutting within the area review process, we will proactively engage with service contacts to understand current property-related challenges, such as suitability, condition, and capacity. This engagement will also capture emerging needs and directly inform the development and direction of area reviews, supporting more strategic and integrated planning.	March 2026 – then annually	March 2027	Service Lead (Asset Management and Commercial Property)	To Be Scoped

**Note:** Resource Categories – **Fully Resourced/Existing Capacity** - All necessary resources (staff, budget, tools) are in place or expected to be supported through existing roles , **Partially Resourced** - Some resources are available, but additional support may be needed to complete the action, **Resource Gap identified** - No current resources allocated; action requires new or additional resourcing , **To Be Scoped** - Resource needs are not yet fully defined; assessment or planning is required **Collaborative Delivery** – Action delivered across multiple teams or partners; coordination required

## 4.2 Property Asset Management Action Plan – Operational (Tasks required to manage the Estate)

Action No.	Action Description	Objective	Completion Target		Accountability	Resources
			2025/26	2026/27		
O1	Develop and deploy Single Property Service Guidance	To clearly communicate roles, responsibilities, and operational procedures across all departments, a comprehensive Single Property Service Guide will be developed. This guide will establish a consistent framework aligned with a corporate landlord model, ensuring that all parts of the Council understand how they should operate in relation to property assets. It will define ownership, accountability, and service expectations, promoting efficient, transparent, and coordinated property management practices across the organisation.	March 2026		Chief Officer Property and Assets	To Be Scoped
O1.1	Develop service property and land enquiry/request process	Establish a clear and consistent mechanism for Council services to submit property-based requests, ensuring alignment with the Single Property Service model. This process will reinforce corporate oversight of the estate, enabling coordinated decision-making and efficient use of physical space. It will provide structured guidance to ensure all service requests are managed transparently, consistently, and in line with strategic property objectives.	March 2026		Chief Officer Property and Assets	To Be Scoped
O1.2	Premises Officer strategy	Develop and implement a comprehensive Premises Officer strategy that ensures consistent application of safety protocols and compliance standards across all council buildings. This strategy will establish clear roles, responsibilities, and procedures to guarantee full coverage, promote uniformity in practice, and support a proactive approach to building management and statutory compliance.	March 2026		Chief Officer Property and Assets	To Be Scoped
O2	Data Audit and adoption of Digital Estate strategy	To ensure property data held is up to date, accurate and in line with current organisational structures, agree ongoing data standards in relation to SAMP requirements, adopt digital estate strategy and implement recommendations	TBD		Chief Officer Property and Assets	To Be Scoped
O3	Smarter Working/Workplace model development	Work with the Future Operating Model and external specialist support to develop and implement a practical and consistent smarter working/workplace standard that supports hybrid working, and modern service delivery across the retained office estate.	March 2026		Head of HR, People, Resources & Finance  Service Lead (Asset Management and Commercial Property)	Collaborative Delivery

**Note:** Resource Categories – **Fully Resourced/Existing Capacity** - All necessary resources (staff, budget, tools) are in place or expected to be supported through existing roles , **Partially Resourced** - Some resources are available, but additional support may be needed to complete the action, **Resource Gap identified** - No current resources allocated; action requires new or additional resourcing , **To Be Scoped** - Resource needs are not yet fully defined; assessment or planning is required **Collaborative Delivery** – Action delivered across multiple teams or partners; coordination required

<b>Option, Property, Proposal Title</b>		
<b>DATE: x</b>		
<b>Context and Assumptions: x</b>		
<b>Executive Summary</b> Proposal/property summary, key benefits, major risks, financial summary, recommendation		
<b>5 Case Business Case Model Summary – Highlight - Strategic, Outline or Full Business case stage</b>		
<b>Strategic Case – Business Need</b>		
<b>Economic Case – Value for money</b>		
<b>Commercial Case – Viability</b>		
<b>Financial Case – Affordability</b>		
<b>Management Case – Achievability</b>		
<b>SAMP Principle 1 - Stewardship</b> - To work with our services to plan and manage property as a corporate resource to deliver improvement outcomes and benefit the people of the Highlands		
<b>Property Information Summary</b>		
<b>Title Restrictions</b>		
<b>Service Teams &amp; Delivery Models</b>		
<b>Proposal/Intervention</b>		
<b>Benefits</b>		
<b>Key Risks</b>		
<b>SAMP Principle 2 - Alignment</b> - To provide properties that are fit for purpose and located appropriately to meet current service needs, plan for future requirements and align with current and emerging corporate initiatives		
<b>Suitability</b> Space utilisation, adaptability, functionality		
<b>Location</b> Site accessibility, transport links, proximity to services		
<b>Alignment with organisational Objectives</b> <a href="#">Council priorities</a> <a href="#">Organisational values</a>		
<b>Alignment with Future Operating Model principles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative &amp; Co-delivered heard voices</li> <li>• Owned by the Community</li> <li>• Maximized Access &amp; Inclusion</li> <li>• Meaningful, Place-Based Design</li> <li>• Universal equity &amp; inclusion</li> <li>• Net Zero Aligned &amp; Future-Fit</li> <li>• Integrated &amp; Intelligent Technology</li> <li>• Transparent Roles &amp; Agile Teams</li> <li>• Yielding to Change &amp; Learning</li> </ul>		
<b>SAMP Principle 3 - Sustainability</b> - To design, construct, manage and maintain our estate with a whole life approach, to ensure it is effective, efficient, resilient, sustainable and in full alignment with our Net Zero targets		
<b>Net Zero Considerations</b>		



<a href="#">Net Zero Strategy</a>	
<b>Energy Performance</b> <a href="#">Energy Benchmarking Tool</a> Benchmark performance	
<b>Contribution to biodiversity</b>	
<b>Condition &amp; Compliance</b> Condition rating, Structural integrity, asbestos, maintenance backlog, presence, DDA, EPC	
<b>Maintenance overview</b> Annual costs, risk level, common issues, volume of reactive repairs	
<b>Primary Heating Fuel Source</b> Ability to transition to net zero technologies	
<b>Operation Systems</b> HVAC, lighting, metering, security, ICT/SWAN,	
<b>Building works required?</b> Options considered, feasibility, capital project justification, Construction Embodied Carbon (CEC)	
<b>SAMP Principle 4 - Optimisation</b> - To accelerate the rationalisation and disposal of land and buildings, optimising commercial opportunities, streamlining our built estate, reducing overheads and carbon impact	
<b>Potential Revenue Savings or income</b>	
<b>Potential Capital Receipts</b>	
<b>Current Operating Costs</b>	
<b>Estimated Project Capital Cost</b> Whole life cost, return on investment	
<b>Estimated future Operating costs –</b> incl. rates, utilities, servicing, maintenance	
<b>Potential Disposals, Repurposed Assets, Marketability etc</b>	
<b>Space Optimisation</b> Capacity, max capacity, current utilisation, surplus space, effective space use, layout efficiency etc	
<b>SAMP Principle 5 - Empowerment</b> - To use land and buildings to stimulate economic growth, support local needs and address the Highland housing challenge, supporting the well-being of our communities	
<b>Alignment with community priorities</b> <a href="#">Community Partnerships</a> <a href="#">Local Place Plans</a>	
<b>Highland Housing Challenge</b> <a href="#">News article</a>	
<b>Alignment with investment and Economic Development</b> <a href="#">Highland Investment Plan</a> <a href="#">Economic Dev THC page</a>	
<b>Sense of Place</b>	

<a href="#">Area Place Plans</a> <a href="#">Development Plans</a>	
<b>Social / cultural / community value</b>	
<b>Connectivity / Integration of location – general</b> <a href="#">Local Living Highland</a> <a href="#">Digital Inclusion</a>	
<b>Accessibility – mobility impaired</b>	
<b>SAMP Principle 6 - Collaboration</b> - To promote collaboration, including co-locating with public sector partners and sharing resources, where it will enhance service delivery and achieve efficiencies	
<b>Alignment with partners</b> <a href="#">Community Planning HOIP</a>	
<b>Stakeholders</b> Existing or potential colocations	
<b>Opportunities</b> Cost sharing, service delivery integration, joint funding, shared facilities	
<b>SAMP Principle 7 - Equity</b> - To commit to ensuring that there is no hierarchy of space, providing all staff, partners and service users with equitable access to high-quality accommodation	
<b>Health &amp; Safety</b> Fire safety, Structural integrity, Condition, Environment, security procedures	
<b>Occupant-Centric</b> Performance, Air quality, thermal comfort, light, noise, accessibility, productivity	
<b>User Experience - Staff/ Customer well-being, Cultural and Social Inclusion</b> Design principles, consultation, neurodiversity, cultural needs, inclusivity, signage, accessibility	
<b>Access and use</b> Private offices, spaces reserved by seniority or role, welfare facilities staff/public	