The Highland Council

Committee: **Corporate Resources**

Date: **19 March 2026**

Report Title: **Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update – Corporate Solutions – Q3 25/26**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Delivery Plan 2024-27 consists of 57 projects/programmes, managed through 6 Portfolio Boards. Each project is reported to a relevant committee for consideration and scrutiny in terms of the Portfolio Reporting Cycle agreed at Council on 14 May 2025. Exceptions to this rule may apply when for example circumstances merit a standalone project/programme report to either committee or council. If exceptions apply this report will signpost to where the relevant reporting can be found.

1.2 This report provides financial, performance, risk and general information on the following Delivery Plan projects/Programme:
   - Corporate Solutions – specifically the following projects
       o Service Improvement Solutions (previously Data and Digital Solutions)
       o Food in Schools – Delivering Sustainability
       o HR Payroll & Pensions
       o TalentLink

1.3 The content and structure of the report is intended to:
   - assist Member scrutiny and performance management
   - inform decision making and aid continuous improvement, and
   - provide transparency and accessibility

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

   i.   Scrutinise and **note** progress on the projects covered in this report.
   ii. **Note** the completion of the Service Improvement Solutions project.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource:** There are no resource implications arising as a direct result of this report. Any resource implications (if any) for delivery plan projects or programmes will be detailed in the Financials sections of each of the project/programme updates provided below.

3.2 **Legal:** This report contributes to the Council's statutory duties to report performance and secure best value in terms of; Section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, and Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, respectively.

3.3 **Risk:** There are no additional risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. Project/Programme risks are identified via the council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards and are reported by exception only.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):** There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.

3.5 **Gaelic:** There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

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

5. Service Improvement Solutions (previously Data and Digital Solutions)

5.1 Introduction
The purpose of the Service Improvement Solutions programme was to engage with the consultancy Triple Value Impact (TVI) who in turn partnered with Services across the council to identify opportunities for operational transformation and develop business cases in close collaboration with service staff. This approach was envisioned as an innovative approach for Services to be exposed to new technologies and ways of working in their respective areas, whilst minimising the time requirement on service staff and impact on day-to-day operations.

The business cases created by the project would include details of Programme plans, projected benefits, associated costs as well as risks, and would be handed over to the appropriate responsible officers for a decision on implementation.

5.2 Overall Project RAG

Project: Service Improvement Solutions
R ○
A ○
G ●
C ○

5.2.1 The RAG status of the Service Improvement Solutions project is currently Green, and the project has moved to closed status as of February 2026. A closure report was generated which was accepted by the Corporate Solutions Board. Therefore, this is the final report to Corporate Resources Committee regarding this project.

Project Summary:
Through TVI's Fast Track Validation process, 2 phases of work were completed. A total of 18 proposals were presented by TVI to Services for consideration on whether they warranted the creation of a full business case.

Following feedback from responsible officers, and their teams, for each area, 9 of these proposals were taken forward to the creation of a full business case.

Of the 9 business cases completed and handed over to services for completion, 6 business cases have been approved by the relevant responsible officer, and 5 have commenced delivery.

The decision not to progress with the remaining 9 business cases was made in the early stages in full consultation with the relevant responsible officers. The primary reasons for not continuing with full business case creation was either 1) the council already had an alternative provision in place to address the need or 2) the proposed benefits were deemed unrealistic or overly ambitious.

Projects Overview:
A brief summary on each proposal for which a business case was completed and handed over to responsible officers is shown below. Responsibility for delivery now sits with the respective Services.

The projects are arranged below grouped by the Delivery Plan portfolios they will sit in.

<u>Person Centred Solutions</u>
Pre-empting Demand for Adults Services:
- Deliver an AI driven Commissioning Support tool to enable Adult Social Care (ASC) Commissioners to monitor status and financial health of Care Providers.
- Streamlining the Financial Assessment process with AI Digital agents.

Digitally involving the community in care:
- Using Technology Enabled Care (TEC) to implement AI and Alexa type Virtual Assistants in homes and care homes.
- Reducing service demand and creating additional capacity.

Finding Foster Carers
- Using data and analysis of current Foster Carers to build a profile and identify future potential foster carers.
- Marketing campaign to reach out to relevant households to promote foster care.

<u>Income Generation</u>
Maximising Benefit Take-up for carers, debtors and homeless
- Using data to identify carers, debtors and homeless individuals due additional funding and support.
- A marketing campaign would proactively reach out to individuals owed additional funding or support and encourage them to take up.

Single Person Discount review
- Comparison between internal data and external data source to identify potential instances where Council Tax Single Person Discount is being claimed in error, for follow up by council revenue staff.

Reconfiguring Our Asset Base
Planning Application intelligent automation
- Utilising AI digital agents to remove manual and time-consuming work and free up service staff to focus on high value tasks and change management initiatives.

Automated Highways Monitoring
- Using inbuilt cameras in council vehicles alongside AI software to identify potholes, excessive vegetation and damage to council property systematically.

Video-based contact (repairs, ASC etc) to improve First Time Fix (FTF) and First Time Right (FTR).
- Utilising video-based contact software for initial council contact with public.

Corporate Solutions:
Using AI to automate SARS and FOI requests
- Using AI Technology to assist in the processing of FOI and data protection requests by streamlining time consuming and manual processes such as redaction.
- Reduces risk of non-compliance fines and streamlines process for an expensive and time-consuming process

5.3   Key Milestones & Requests for Change

5.3.1   **Milestones**

Starts Apr24 / Completes Jun24	Service Improvement Solutions: Finalisation of business cases	**M5 25/26 Completed**

5.3.2   **Requests for Change:**
No requests for change. A closure report was generated and accepted by the Corporate Solutions Portfolio Board in February 2026.

5.4   Financial Summary

5.4.1   **Savings**

£	Service Improvement Solutions: Savings - FY 25-28	**£ 222,000**

Substantial savings are expected to be delivered by the projects arising. Production of the business cases alone will not realise any savings but will prepare the ground for their delivery. It is important to stress that the savings will be delivered by the relevant Services through change projects as a result of the business cases developed. With the closure of the project, savings targets, as per business cases, will transfer to the individual implementation projects.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of savings delivered so far as a result of Business Cases created by the Service Improvement Solutions project.

The £222k saving for the current financial year has been allocated to the Income Generation portfolio and is forecast to be fully delivered. Implementation of new technology through the project "Maximising Benefit Take Up for Carers, Debtors and Homeless" will ensure this is financially sustainable for future years.

Table 1: Savings already delivered:

Project	Responsible Officer	Year Delivered	Project Total Saving
Single Person Discounts review	Chief Officer - Revenues & Commercialisation	2024/25	**0.579**
Maximising Benefit Take-up for carers, debtors and homeless	Chief Officer - Revenues & Commercialisation	2025/26	**0.222**
	TOTAL		**0.801**

Table 2 provides a breakdown of savings yet to be realised but projected as per the business case documents. These figures are inclusive of any associated implementation costs. The savings listed below are included in the detailed savings list in Annex 5b of the 2026/27 budget report approved at Highland Council on 5 March 2026.

Table 2: Allocation of savings yet to be delivered:

Project	Responsible Officer	Allocation of Saving
Pre-empting demand for Adults Services (ASC)	Chief Officer - Integrated People Services	**0.204**
Digitally involving the community in care (ASC)	Chief Officer - Integrated People Services	**0.037**
Automated Highways Monitoring	Chief Officer - Operations & Maintenance	**0.263**
Using AI to automate SARS and FOI requests	Performance & Information Governance Manager	**0.042**
Planning Application intelligent automation	Strategic Lead - Planning & Building Standards	**0.174**
Total Saving Allocation (£M)		**£0.720**

 "Finding Foster Carers" has been rebased to form part of the ASC Transformation Programme and efficiencies delivered from that workstream will be reported through that Programme.

5.4.2 **Investment**

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

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

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

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

As referred to in paragraph 5.4.1, the savings profile shown above has been rebased again following agreement of the 2026/27 budget.

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	TOTAL
Savings profile	£0.579m	£0.222m	£0.361m	£0.359m	**£1.521m**

5.5 Key Risks

Fig 1: Risks tracked through lifecycle of project

KEY RISKS ASSESSED	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
Service Improvement Solutions: Savings Not Achieved	6	**Treat**
Service Improvement Solutions: Business Case Approval	9	**Treat**

Table 3: Risk status at completion of the project.

Risk	Description	Mitigating Action	Status
Savings not achieved	There is a risk that the annual savings targets are not met and/or the overall savings target not being met.	Business cases have been completed as per the project remit. Delivery of the individual savings target will be monitored and tracked via the relevant Portfolios and managed in the Delivery Plan.	Closed
Business Case Approval	There is a risk that the business cases developed will not be approved to take forward into implementation and therefore no delivery of associated savings and service improvements.	Engagement with the appropriate responsible officers from both the project and senior management to push for a decision regarding implementation where opportunities have been identified.	Closed

5.6 Forward Plan
For Business Cases which the services wish to pursue, the guidance has been that these projects are either adopted into relevant Portfolios and managed in the Delivery Plan or pursued as standalone projects by the Services.

Delivery of the individual savings target will be monitored and tracked via the relevant Portfolios and managed in the Delivery Plan

6. Food in Schools – Delivering Sustainability

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Overall Project RAG

6.2.1 The project has a RAG status of green with all activities progressing as planned.

6.3 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

6.3.1 Milestones

Starts Apr 24 / Completes Apr 24	Food in Schools: Key partner engagement commenced	**M1 24/25 Completed**
Starts Apr 24 / Completes May 24	Food in Schools: Whole system process review commenced	**M2 24/25 Completed**
Starts Apr 24 / Completes July 24	Food in Schools: Baselines and research	**M4 24/25 Completed**
Starts Nov24 / Completes Mar27	Food in Schools: Design and implement changes	**M10 25/26 On Target**
Starts Sep 25/ Completes Nov 25	Food in Schools: Survey Response Action Plan taken to Redesign Board	**M8 25/26 Completed**

6.3.2 Following the publication of the 10-point action plan, work has progressed directly between officers to address the activity required for each of the actions. Regular updates will continue to be provided to the Redesign Board, with project governance being overseen through the Corporate Solutions Portfolio Board.

Additional milestones are under consideration to reflect the specific activities within the Action Plan and will be reported against in future updates.

6.3.3 Measures of success

Measures of success baselines are currently under development.

6.4   Financial Summary

6.4.1 Savings
       The savings target is £875,000 over the period 2024 to 2027. To date the total additional
       income achieved is £357,000, demonstrating this project is on track to deliver the three-
       year target. Monitoring confirms this project is on track to deliver the £262k additional
       income target for 2025/26.

6.4.2 Investment
       There is no investment target.

6.4.3 Mitigations

6.5   Key Risks
       Risks are being managed through the Corporate Solutions Portfolio Board.

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

6.6   Forward Plan
       Progress is being made on all aspects of the Action Plan including the development of
       baseline data to measure the success of interventions. Work is also progressing within the
       context of the National Good Food Nation Plan to ensure alignment between this project
       and a local Good Food Nation Plan.

7.   HR Payroll & Pensions and TalentLink Recruitment Systems Improvements

7.1   A separate report is included on today's the agenda detailing progress within the wider HR
       & Payroll Programme. This project is a part of that programme so please refer to that
       separate report for a full progress update.

       Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate

       Date: 6 March 2026

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