

Agenda Item	13
Report No	ECI/34/26

The Highland Council

Committee: Economy and Infrastructure

Date: 20 August 2026

Report Title: Performance Monitoring Report Q1 2026/27

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides performance information for Quarter 1 2026/27 regarding:-

- Corporate Indicators;
- Contribution to the Performance Plan;
- Statutory Performance Indicators; and
- Service Plan Progress

1.2 The content and structure are intended to:-

- assist Member scrutiny and performance management;
- inform decision making to aid continuous improvement; and
- provide transparency and accessibility.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

Scrutinise and **note** the service performance information

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – Any resource implications are detailed in the report.

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 implications arising as a direct result of this report.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no immediate health and safety implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** – There are no implications for Gaelic arising from 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 Performance – Corporate Indicators

- 5.1 Service performance in relation to Absence, Complaints, FOIs, and Invoice Payments are set out in the following sub-sections.

5.2 Service Attendance Management

- 5.2.1 Staff absence is a nationally benchmarked indicator. Effective absence management supports staff, maintains productivity, and contributes to the Council's benchmarked performance.
- 5.2.2 Absence data is now reported by Chief Officer service area. This is available from Quarter 4 2025/26 and detailed in the table below. Previous data trends are provided for comparator purposes in the third table.

Average number working days per employee lost through sickness absence

Average Days Lost	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26	Q1 26/27	Q2 26/27	Q3 26/27	Q4 26/27	Q1 27/28
Enterprise and Investment			0.82					
Facilities and Fleet Management	3.32	4.36	4.77					
Housing and Communities	3.06	4.83	4.48					
Operations and Maintenance	5.50	5.32	5.35					
Property and Assets	1.53	1.29	1.86					
Highland Council	3.02	4.09	3.97					

Data is not yet available for Quarter 1 2026/27; however, absence figures are provided for April and May 2026 below which provides the monthly days lost.

Place Absence Stats	Average Days Lost (April 26)	Average Days Lost (May 26)
Enterprise and Investment	0.3	0.1
Facilities and Fleet Management	1.3	1.5
Housing and Communities	1.2	1.4
Operations and Maintenance	1.6	1.9
Property and Assets	0.7	1.1
Place Total	1.3	1.5

Service Sickness Absence - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy

Average number working days per employee lost through sickness absence

Average Days Lost	Q2 23/24	Q3 23/24	Q4 23/24	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26
Infrastructure, Environment and Economy	2.11	2.03	1.59	2.32	1.81	2.33	2.91	2.54
Highland Council	2.08	3.35	3.48	3.24	2.54	3.42	3.95	3.55

- 5.2.3 For Enterprise and Investment, absence levels have varied over the last year but remain lower than the Council and Cluster average levels.
- 5.2.4 Reducing absence rates through a strong and consistent approach to attendance management is a particular focus for the service. Mandatory online and face-to-face training is available for managers. Attendance Support Officers continue to play a vital role in assisting both managers and employees. Managers are undertaking employee review and development (ERD) meetings with staff to identify any training and wellbeing requirements. The Employee Assistance Programme also provides staff and their families with access to a confidential counselling service and many other wellbeing services including legal and financial information, life coaching and health information.
- 5.2.5 Mental health related absences continue to appear within the top three long term absence reasons for all Clusters. Stress related absences, including non-work-related stress is the most common reason for absence within the service and some managers requested additional support and training on how to support staff dealing with stress. This additional support is being explored and will be rolled out across the services. The mental health and wellbeing helpline is available to employees which provides easy access to the following mental health support services: EAP; NHS 24; Samaritans and mental health representatives. There has also been a focus on recruiting and training an additional 21 mental health representatives, bringing the total in the Council to 91 reps. It should be noted that employees often require multiple treatments and ongoing support which may extend periods of absence. Additionally, there continues to be long NHS waiting lists to access appropriate mental health services.

5.2.6 Musculoskeletal reasons also continue to appear in the top three absence reasons for the service and managers are mindful of the manual workforce and the impact of those jobs on employee health and wellbeing. Therefore, occupational health and physiotherapy referrals are progressed as and when required. This is particularly important based on the aging workforce and the requirement to ensure staff receive the appropriate risk assessments, training and PPE to undertake their roles safely.

5.2.7 As detailed within the Place Cluster Workforce Planning report, key proactive intervention measures include:-

- recruitment of three additional Attendance Support Officers to increase capacity and provide targeted support to managers in managing attendance across the Council;
- mandatory and earlier referrals to Occupational Health for stress-related absence to ensure timely medical advice and appropriate intervention;
- consistent use of structured return-to-work meetings to identify required support, reasonable adjustments and return arrangements;
- increased promotion and consistent use of the Occupational Health physiotherapy service to support early intervention for musculoskeletal conditions, reduce the likelihood of absence escalating into long-term cases and support earlier and sustainable returns to work;
- formal attendance management review meetings undertaken in line with policy to address short-term absence patterns and progress long-term cases;
- enhanced training and ongoing support for line managers to strengthen confidence, consistency and capability in managing attendance;
- completion and regular review of stress risk assessments to identify and mitigate workplace factors contributing to absence;
- targeted management support to address workload pressures and role clarity, reducing the risk of escalation of stress-related absence; and
- continued promotion and utilisation of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), providing confidential access to counselling and mental health and wellbeing support at an early stage.

5.3 Service Complaints Response Times

5.3.1 The Complaints data up to and including Q1 2026/27 is shown below:-

Service Complaints - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy

Number of closed complaints and the % compliant with the legislative timescale

Frontline Resolution within 5 days

	Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26		Q2 25/26		Q3 25/26		Q4 25/26		Q1 26/27	
Infrastructure, Environment & Economy	22	59 %	31	90 %	45	93 %	33	94 %	49	86 %	45	80 %	82	83 %	35	86 %
Highland Council	196	78 %	155	88 %	183	87 %	174	91 %	223	90 %	200	85 %	262	82 %	261	84 %

Investigation Resolution within 20 days

	Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26		Q2 25/26		Q3 25/26		Q4 25/26		Q1 26/27	
Infrastructure, Environment & Economy	13	31 %	16	6 %	16	44 %	8	38 %	2	50 %	13	38 %	20	45 %	18	33 %
Highland Council	101	57 %	90	42 %	71	51 %	68	47 %	86	40 %	94	55 %	110	51 %	111	43 %

Escalated Resolution within 20 days

	Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26		Q2 25/26		Q3 25/26		Q4 25/26		Q1 26/27	
Infrastructure, Environment & Economy	7	57 %	4	50 %	10	20 %	10	30 %	3	33 %	3	33 %	4	0 %	5	20 %
Highland Council	28	50 %	26	46 %	34	44 %	30	33 %	27	26 %	22	27 %	31	23 %	45	24 %

5.4 Service Freedom of Information ('FOI') Response Times

5.4.1 The FOI data up to and including Q1 2026/27 is shown below:-

% of FOIs closed compliant with the legislative timescale

% FOIs Compliant - Housing and Communities Quarterly	Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26		Q2 25/26		Q3 25/26		Q4 25/26		Q1 26/27	
	86	65 %	89	69 %	83	69 %	97	76 %	110	74 %	146	73 %	97	67 %	70	87 %
% FOIs Compliant - Property and Assets Quarterly	Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26		Q2 25/26		Q3 25/26		Q4 25/26		Q1 26/27	
	11	73 %	5	60 %	17	53 %	15	67 %	30	60 %	16	56 %	17	29 %	12	67 %
% FOIs Compliant - Operations and Maintenance Quarterly	Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26		Q2 25/26		Q3 25/26		Q4 25/26		Q1 26/27	
	123	82 %	155	75 %	191	76 %	149	81 %	150	83 %	132	70 %	149	70 %	184	91 %
% FOIs Compliant - Facilities and Fleet Quarterly	Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26		Q2 25/26		Q3 25/26		Q4 25/26		Q1 26/27	
	17	71 %	22	68 %	28	57 %	18	94 %	20	65 %	25	72 %	24	75 %	17	94 %
% FOIs Compliant - Enterprise and Investment Quarterly	Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26		Q2 25/26		Q3 25/26		Q4 25/26		Q1 26/27	
	72	76 %	73	67 %	69	65 %	79	77 %	87	80 %	109	70 %	88	59 %	51	82 %
% FOIs Compliant - Highland Council Quarterly	Q2 24/25		Q3 24/25		Q4 24/25		Q1 25/26		Q2 25/26		Q3 25/26		Q4 25/26		Q1 26/27	
	481	76 %	570	73 %	617	71 %	577	81 %	601	77 %	581	73 %	578	65 %	563	84 %

5.5 Service Invoice Payment Times

5.5.1 Payment of invoices within 30 days of receipt is a Council Statutory Performance Indicator. The Council also monitors the number of invoices paid within 10 days of receipt.

5.5.2 The performance for invoice payment times within 30- and 10-days during Quarter 1 2026/27 against a target of 95% and 77%, respectively, was as follows:-

Invoice Payment within 30 days	Q1 26/27	Q2 26/27	Q3 26/27	Q4 26/27	Q1 27/28	Q2 27/28	Q3 27/28	Q4 27/28
Place	94.2 %							
Highland Council	93.7 %							

Invoice Payment less than 10 days	Q1 26/27	Q2 26/27	Q3 26/27	Q4 26/27	Q1 27/28	Q2 27/28	Q3 27/28	Q4 27/28
Place	62.0 %							
Highland Council	63.5 %							

Invoice Payment within 30 days	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26
Infrastructure, Environment and Economy	90.3 %	93.5 %	95.9 %	94.8 %	93.3 %	95.5 %	97.0 %	98.1 %
Highland Council	87.7 %	91.4 %	92.9 %	92.9 %	93.0 %	94.8 %	94.3 %	95.2 %

Invoice Payment less than 10 days	Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26	Q2 25/26	Q3 25/26	Q4 25/26
Infrastructure, Environment and Economy	70.7 %	77.0 %	81.2 %	78.9 %	78.1 %	84.8 %	86.1 %	85.3 %
Highland Council	57.0 %	68.5 %	63.8 %	63.3 %	64.7 %	72.5 %	72.3 %	69.6 %

6 Service Contribution to the Performance Plan

6.1 The following summarises performance against the Economy and Infrastructure performance indicators in the Council's Performance Plan.

6.2

Economy & Infrastructure: Contribution to the Performance Plan						
Strategic Priority 2 Resilient and Sustainable Communities	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/ Update Date
No. of community transport projects supported	FY 24/25	29	FY 25/26	29		
Income from hire of council buses - start reporting FY23/24	FY 24/25	£ 60,047	FY 25/26	£ 61,600		
No. low carbon buses in Council fleet - start reporting 26/27 CP2.01	FY 24/25		FY 25/26	1		
Early Adoption of 20mph speed limits - start reporting 23/24	FY 24/25	127	FY 25/26	127		
Road network to be considered for maintenance	FY 24/25	39.1 %	FY 25/26	38.9 %		annual update June
Delivery of 22 Tier 1 priority projects in Highland Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Pla	Q4 25/26	Some Slippage	Q1 26/27	Some Slippage		Due to complete Q4 26/27
Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband (ECON08)	FY 24/25	87 %	FY 25/26	91 %		annual update December
Progression of Inverness Railway Station Master Plan to detailed design	Q4 25/26	Some Slippage	Q1 26/27	Some Slippage		Due to complete Q1 24/25

6.3

Economy & Infrastructure: Contribution to the Performance Plan						
Strategic Priority 3 Accessible and Sustainable Highland Homes	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/ Update Date
Deliver Affordable Housing: No. council houses built/ purchased per year 2022-27	FY 24/25	189	FY 25/26	222		annual update August
Deliver Affordable Housing: No. affordable houses built by others per year 2022-27	FY 24/25	175	FY 25/26	277		Target: 170/year
Avg time [wks] per planning application - all Local Developments	FY 24/25	17.1	FY 25/26			annual update September
Avg time [wks] per planning application - all Majors	FY 24/25	52.2	FY 25/26			annual update September
Avg time [wks] per planning application - Other Consents	FY 24/25	10.4	FY 25/26			annual update September
Deliver Affordable Housing: No. key worker homes made available avg p.a. 2022-27	FY 24/25	10	FY 25/26	9		Target: 10/year
Bus Service Improvement Project submitted to Economy and Infrastructure Committee	Q4 25/26	Some Slippage	Q1 26/27	Some Slippage		Due to complete Q3 24/25 [revised]

6.4

Economy & Infrastructure: Contribution to the Performance Plan						
Strategic Priority 4 A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/ Update Date
Deliver Active Travel Infrastructure project: Wick	Q4 25/26	Some Slippage	Q1 26/27	Some Slippage		Design due to complete Q2 23/24
No. Funding Opportunities aimed at Community Energy Projects	FY 24/25	6	FY 25/26	2		
% of Nature Restoration Fund Allocated Annually	FY 24/25	0 %	FY 25/26	100 %		
Street lighting energy consumption	FY 24/25	7,975,464	FY 25/26	7,671,747		annual update June

6.5

Economy & Infrastructure: Contribution to the Performance Plan							
Strategic Priority 5 A Resilient and Sustainable Council		Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/ Update Date
ERDs being completed - IEE CP5.01		Q4 25/26	Some Slippage	Q1 26/27	Completed		Completed Q1 26/27
No. Business Gateway start-ups per 10000 popn (ECON05)		FY 24/25	16.22	FY 25/26	16.01		annual update October
Number of businesses supported by Council ED and BG		FY 24/25	2,357	FY 25/26	2,235		annual update October

7 SPI's Not Included in the Performance Plan

7.1 The following outlines Economy and Infrastructure Statutory Performance Indicators out with the Performance Plan.

7.2

Economy & Infrastructure: SPIs						
SPIs not monitored in Performance Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/ Update Date
School Transport - cost per pupil transported	FY 24/25		FY 25/26			annual update June
% of traffic light failures completed in 3 hours	FY 24/25	96.00 %	FY 25/26	95.00 %	95.33 %	annual update June
% of street light failures completed in 7 days	FY 24/25	66.00 %	FY 25/26	67.00 %	62.00 %	annual update June
Average Bridge Stock Condition Index [BSCI Average]	FY 24/25		FY 25/26	79.1	80.0	annual update June
Cost of electricity/street lighting unit	FY 24/25	£ 38.04	FY 25/26	£ 32.65	£ 35.18	annual update June
Cost of maintenance/street lighting unit	FY 24/25	£ 18.35	FY 25/26	£ 19.17	£ 16.17	annual update June

8 Service Plan Progress

8.1 The following outlines service performance against the service plan.

8.2

Planning, Environment and Low-Carbon Transport Q1 26/27						
Actions PIs being Monitored in Service Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/ Update Date
Increase length of core path networks across Highland	FY 24/25	2,724	FY 25/26	2,714	2,742	
Local nature conservation sites identified and designated	FY 24/25		FY 25/26	0	5	Starts reporting Q1 26/27
National Customer Satisfaction Survey for Building Standards	FY 24/25	8.4	FY 25/26	8.6	8.9	

8.3

Roads and Infrastructure Q1 26/27						
Actions PIs being Monitored in Service Plan	Period	Data	Period	Data	Target Value	Completion/ Update Date
Develop the Health and Safety system structure for Roads Service activities	Q4 25/26	Some Slippage	Q1 26/27	Some Slippage		Due to complete Q2 24/25
Road network - A Class ENV04b	FY 24/25	30.1 %	FY 25/26	31.1 %	30.3 %	annual update June
Road network - B Class ENV04c	FY 24/25	39.8 %	FY 25/26	37.7 %	33.4 %	annual update June
Road network - C Class ENV04d	FY 24/25	42.8 %	FY 25/26	39.5 %	32.9 %	annual update June
Road Network - U Class ENV04e	FY 24/25	41.3 %	FY 25/26	42.7 %	36.4 %	annual update June
Initiate reviewing and updating the Road Guidelines for new developments	Q4 25/26	Some Slippage	Q1 26/27	No Significant Progress		Due to complete Q2 24/25
Reduce CO2 emissions for street lighting [tonnes CO2]	FY 24/25		FY 25/26		5,135	

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 30 July 2026

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Background Papers: None

Appendices: None