

Agenda Item	10
Report No	RDB/12/26

The Highland Council

Committee: **Redesign Board**

Date: **27 August 2026**

Report Title: **My Council Programme – Progress Update**

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

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Delivery Plan 2024-27 consists of 57 projects/programmes, managed through 6 Portfolio Boards. Each project is reported to a relevant committee for consideration and scrutiny in terms of the Portfolio Reporting Cycle agreed at Council on 9 May 2024. Exceptions to this general rule may apply when for example circumstances merit a standalone project/programme report to either committee or council. If exceptions apply this report will signpost to where the relevant reporting can be found.
- 1.2 This report provides financial, performance, risk and general information on the following Delivery Plan projects/Programme:
 - My Council Programme.
- 1.3 The content and structure 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:
 - Note the updates against the My Council programme and future governance for the remaining project
 - Note the closure of the Web Project in line with agreed plan and timeline
 - Note that updates on the work of the remaining project, MyHighland, along with updates on the continued work to improve customer experience and contact with the Council, will continue to be provided to the Redesign Board.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. The programme remains on target to deliver on budget. Project Sponsors manage the resource commitments required for the successful delivery of their projects from a corporate perspective, ensuring targeted deployment of resource for the effective redesign of Council services in line with the Council's priorities
- 3.2 **Legal** - This report contributes to the Council's statutory duties to report performance and secure best value in terms of; Section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, and Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, respectively. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Project Sponsors seek legal advice and take appropriate action as required in respect of their projects
- 3.3 **Risk** - There are no risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. Project/Programme risks are identified via the council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards and are reported by exception only in paragraph/s (see Section 8).
- 3.4 **Health and Safety** (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people): There are no direct Health and Safety implications arising from this report. Project Sponsors will consider any specific relevant Health and Safety implications as part of the management and delivery of their projects
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - There are no specific Gaelic implications arising from this report. All projects will ensure the Council's bilingual policy is appropriately applied

4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is a monitoring report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5 My Council Programme

- 5.1 The Programme continues to deliver on time, to budget and to the required quality, therefore the status of the Programme is Green.
- 5.2 The Programme Brief was approved at the 28 November 2022 Redesign Board, the purpose of the programme in summary is to

Review, improve and create a joined-up customer contact experience at the Highland Council, including the opportunities to further utilise digital approaches to support improved outcomes for our citizens, our staff, and the Council. By developing the use of technology, resources are released to better support customers who need it the most.

- 5.3 The My Council Programme aims to transform how citizens interact with The Highland Council by creating a seamless, integrated customer experience across digital, telephone and face-to-face channels. The programme places the customer at the centre of service design, improving accessibility, consistency and ease of contact while expanding digital self-service options for those who can use them. This enables resources to be targeted towards customers who require greater support, helping to deliver better outcomes for citizens, staff and the Council. The programme is expected to enable the generation of financial efficiencies, reduce failure demand through improved processes, and increase customer satisfaction through a more responsive and joined-up service experience.
- 5.4 The Redesign Board Members assigned to this Programme are Cllrs Jackie Hendry and Bill Boyd.

6 Programme Progress

- 6.1 The Programme Comprises of 3 core Projects, progress against which is as follows: -

Project	Status
1. Customer Contact Strategy	Closed
2. Customer Contact Methods & Web Redesign	Closed
3. My Highland	In Progress

6.2 Customer Contact Strategy – Closed

This Project included the development of a Customer Charter & Customer Experience Strategy which aims to ensure

- Customers will have multiple ways to contact us, and they all will receive the same customer experience.
- Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations.
- We will improve online self-service options, and for those that can use them
- Self-serve online can be our customer's option of choice to contact us.
- We focus on getting it right for customers the first time, wherever this is possible.
- Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations.

- 6.3 The Charter and Strategy were launched in early 2026 and are set out in detail on the Councils new website here - [Our commitment to Customer Experience - Customer Experience - Highland Council](#)
- 6.4 From a Programme perspective, the Customer Experience Strategy is closed, the deliverables, in line with the agreed scope, were the creation of the Strategy &

Charter. Accountability for taking that forward sits right across the organisation with all Services ensuring that changes to or provision of new services are aligned with the Strategy & Charter. This is further supported by the Customer Experience training module available on our Learning Management System.

- 6.5 Service standards continue to be developed by Service Teams, with performance against standards to be published on the Council Website and reported to the respective Strategic Committees as required. Reporting on the service standards for the 4 service areas already published on the website is due to commence in Q2 26/27. The 4 service areas are Blue Badge Scheme; Housing; Registrars and Waste.
- 6.6 The implementation of the new telephony system, development of the new website and the target operating model to build and maintain defined web content ownership and standards through the Online Customer Experience Working Group (OCE-WG) as well as the ongoing development of the customer account – My Highland, are primary examples of the Strategy and Charter in action.

6.7 **Customer Contact Methods & Web Redesign - Closed**

Members will recall that the report to Redesign on March 19th advised the new website successfully launched on February 17th. The new telephony system was implemented in 2025.

In line with the planned approach

- The Hyper Care period ran until April 1st with the Project and Web Development Teams working providing high support to deal with any immediate issues and feedback
- The Project has moved to closure with accountability for website and content transitioned to service teams.
- The Target Operating Model is being implemented via the Online Customer Experience -Working Group which includes representation from all Services, to ensure quality standards and accountability for web content sits across the organisation, protecting the investment made in the design and implementation of the new website.
- The Web Team continue to monitor and action feedback on the website with 1269 feedback items received to date, of which 85% are closed with the rest being actioned or monitored accordingly.
- The volume of feedback has progressively reduced since the launch, reducing from an average of 270 per month for the first two months to 192 received in July.
- Most of the feedback related to the content of web pages as opposed to functionality of the website, for example only 3% of feedback related to content being hard to find.

This project has now moved into business as usual and the My Council Programme Board agree the closure report at its meeting on 29th July 2026. As noted at the last Redesign Board, reports on My Council to the Redesign Board will continue to provide updates on the progress made to improve customer contact and experience across the organisation.

6.8 My Highland – In Progress

This project centres on the development of a unified customer account. The initial focus is on building the account functionality with Council Tax Online and paperless billing being the first service to be offered through it. Future phases of work offer a significant opportunity to deliver on key elements of the Customer Experience Strategy providing a more tailored and seamless customer experience by combining access to information and services such as “bin calendars”, “school closures”, and “find my councillor”.

The first phase of work to create the account and launch Council Tax Online is progressing well with the launch of council tax online scheduled as planned for early 2027.

7 Financial Summary

- 7.1 Council tax online has a £20k per annum agreed saving for years 2027/28 and 2028/29, achieved through implementing online facilities to enable council taxpayers to access their Council tax bills in digital format instead of receiving paper bills. Around 250,000 paper Council tax bills and reminders are issued to Council taxpayers each year. Council tax online facilities will extend access for Council taxpayers, is a key element of the My Council programme, and may increase the number of council tax payments received by Direct Debit.

The My Council programme budget is £0.5m, funded from earmarked reserves. This funding has been sufficient to progress projects 1 (Customer Contact Strategy) and 4 (Customer Contact Methods), with this coming in on budget. No further budget spend is anticipated, the table below set outs the budget position.

My Council Programme financial outlook – August 2027.

Budget - Earmarked Reserves (EMR)	£0.500m
24/25 Actual Spend	£0.226m
25/26 Forecast Spend	£0.257m
Current Balance	£0.017m

As previously reported, My Highland will be led by existing in-house resources to design and implement solutions. There may be one-off and/or additional annual recurring IT infrastructure costs to implement changes, and such will be informed by robust business cases including financial impact assessments, affordability and funding identified/secured as part of the process.

8 Key Risks

- 8.1 No new risks have been identified, no change to risk action RAG status as of last review and risks reducing as key projects within the programme close.

KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
My Council Programme: Programme Resources and Affordability	6	Treat
My Council Programme: Competing Tensions between day job and change initiatives	6	Treat
My Council Programme: Scope and Scale of organisational culture change	9	Treat

- Programme resources are not sufficient to achieve all outcomes – mitigated by regular review and planning of resource utilisation and presentation of business cases for additional resources if required.
- Competing tensions between operations and project work – mitigated by resource planning and input as required from senior management to prioritise work.
- Scope and scale of organisational culture change required – mitigated by leadership from senior management and work at multiple levels to embed change within the Council.

8 Forward Plan

As reported at section 6, two of the three projects comprising the My Council programme are now complete and closed:

1. Customer Contact Strategy – Closed, transitioned to business as usual
2. Customer Contact Methods
 - a. Telephony, closed and transitioned to business as usual
 - b. Web, closed and transitioning to business as usual via the Target Operating Model and Online Customer Experience Working Group

The My Council Programme has successfully delivered a significant step change in how The Highland Council engages with its customers, modernising customer contact and establishing a strong foundation for future service transformation. The changes implemented have moved into business as usual and this is now about ensuring that this is embedded within ways of working and service delivery across the organisation.

The programme has achieved the majority of its core strategic outcomes, including the introduction of a Customer Experience Strategy, redesigned website, enhanced telephony services, with the development of a new digital customer platform (My Highland) well underway.

Together, these improvements are already strengthening customer experience, increasing digital access, and enabling more efficient service delivery. The programme has also demonstrated strong financial stewardship, delivering all outcomes within budget.

The work under My Highland was managed as a Programme to ensure the co-ordinated delivery of a set of interrelated projects. As there is now only one live

project (My Highland) remaining, the requirement to manage the work as a programme no longer exists.

As such, and in accordance with best practice, streamlined governance arrangements are being established with the My Highland project continuing under a simpler project governance structure, operating with a reduced Board whilst still reporting through the established governance model of the Corporate Solutions Portfolio Board. This approach has been agreed at the My Council Board on 29th July 2026. A Programme closure report would come forward to the next Redesign Board.

As highlighted at 6.7, this would continue to report to Redesign Board and provide updates on overall implementation of the My Council approach.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate

Date: 05 August 2026

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