Agenda Item	14.b
Report No	RES/55/26

The Highland Council

Committee: **Corporate Resources**

Date: **19 November 2026**

Report Title: **Delivery Plan Budget monitoring & Progress update –** Corporate Solutions – Q2 26/27

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

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Delivery Plan 2024-27 consists of 66 projects/programmes, managed through 6 Portfolio Boards. This number will fluctuate as future work is developed, current projects close or work is restructured in order to improve an approach for successful delivery. 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 2026. 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:

- Data Foundations
- Digital Foundations
- Efficiencies from Procurement
- Future Operating model
- 1% Efficiency Target
- My Council Programme

1.3 The content and structure of the report is intended to:

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

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

i. **Scrutinise and note** the project/programme updates provided in this report
ii. **Scrutinise and note** the closure reports for the following projects:
    a. Digital Foundations
    b. My Council Programme

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.

3.4 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.

3.5 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)

3.6 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. Data Foundations

5.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Below is an extract of the first page of the PRMS project dashboard which contains the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.



MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Oct 24 / Completes Jan 25	Data Foundations Milestone 01: Project team fully-resourced	M12 24/25 Completed
Starts Jul 24 / Completes Nov 24	Data Foundations Milestone 02: CBIR discovery carried out	M8 24/25 Completed
Starts Mar 25 /Completes Oct 25	Data Foundations Milestone 03: Data Governance oversight and draft Data Governance policy established	M12 25/26 Completed
Starts Jan 25 / Completes Feb 26	Data Foundations Milestone 04: Data Platform Onboarded	M11 25/26 Completed
Starts Feb 26 / Completes Apr 26	Data Foundations Milestone 05: Data platform architecture implemented	M4 26/27 Completed
Starts Oct 25 / Completes Oct 26	Data Foundations Milestone 06: First automated 'Operational Reporting' example dashboard published	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Nov 25 / Completes Nov 26	Data Foundations Milestone 07: First automated 'Performance Indicator' dashboard published	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Aug 25 / Completes Nov 26	Data Foundations Milestone 08: UPRNs matched and input into Housing and Rev's & Ben's applications	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts May 26 / Completes Mar 27	Data Foundations Milestone 09: Golden Record for Property established and published	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Jan 26 / Completes Apr 27	Data Foundations Milestone10: Data Governance Policy implemented	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Dec 26 / Completes May 27	Data Foundations Milestone11: Data/BI Opportunity Roadmap documented	
Starts Oct 26 / Completes May 27	Data Foundations Milestone12: Project End	

Overall Project RAG

Data Foundations is currently Green as it is running to budget and is on track to achieve the re-baselined milestones which were approved by the Project Board in August 2026. This re-baselining was driven primarily by recruitment delays in hiring a fully resourced project team and extended Microsoft lead times for key engagements on Data Platform design. Impact was to time of delivery only, with no impact to cost or quality of final product.

Milestones

The milestones for data foundations are on track as per latest re-baselining as documented in the Project RAG above.

Forward Plan

October to December 2026 will be a key quarter for the project. This will see delivery of both our example dashboards which show the benefit of an enterprise-wide data platform. That is, daily automated updates of key performance and service information, providing managers with Business Intelligence and insight, and enabling automation opportunities.

During this quarter we will also begin populating the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) within our first few service source systems, a key step to enable us to link datasets together and ultimately deliver on our Golden Record for Property.

Within the data governance space, we will begin implementing our data quality rules which have been agreed with services and highlighting exceptions to service staff for review.

5.2 Key Risks & Measures of Success

Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out the Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project.

INVESTMENT	CURRENT STATUS
£ Data Foundations: Investment : EMR (Current FY Forecast)	£ 237,955

MEASURES OF SUCCESS	CURRENT STATUS
Number of fields populated within the golden record with an assigned Data Owner. Starts Mar 27	
Percentage of properties with a populated UPRN. Starts October 26	

KEY RISKS ASSESSED	CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE
Data Foundations Risk: Failure to Sustain Business Commitment	9	Treat
Data Foundations Risk: Insufficient Resource	6	Treat
Data Foundations Risk: Failure to Secure Data for Golden Record for Property	6	Treat
Data Foundations Risk: Services fail to embrace new way of working	9	Treat
Data Foundations Risk: Uncertain timeframes and complexity due to new technology	9	Treat
Data Foundations Risk: Limited sustainability of project benefits if existing expertise is lost	6	Treat

Key Risks

Please find the latest Data Foundations Risks with associated narrative:

1. Failure to sustain business commitment:
    a. There is a Risk that we will fail to continuously secure the sustained business commitment needed to achieve the project outcomes.
    b. To treat this risk, service subject matter experts and board members have been engaged throughout the lifecycle of the project. Future opportunities are documented which will inform potential future data projects.

2. Insufficient Resource
    a. There is a Risk that we will not have the staff resource required to deliver the project outcomes and deliverables.
    b. To treat this, the project has hired additional resource, particularly within the Data Engineering space to reduce any key person dependencies and enable us to deliver within project timelines.

3. Failure to secure data for the Golden Record for Property.
    a. There is a Risk that we will not be able to secure the full scope of necessary data to support our Golden Record for property.
    b. To treat this, approvals were sought and received from Service Data Owners to connect source systems to our data platform.

4. Services fail to embrace new way of working
    a. There is a risk that the project delivers on its outputs, but services will not adopt them in their day-to-day functions and therefore project outcomes will not be realised.
    b. To treat this, the project continues to engage with project board members to ensure benefits are realised. Our first dashboard will be delivered by end of October which will be showcased to project board members to aid adoption.

5. Uncertain timeframes and complexity due to new technology.
    a. There is a risk of uncertain timeframes around milestone completion dates as much of what we will be tackling within Data Foundations is a first for the organisation and onboarding of new technology.
    b. Project is treating this risk by working in an Agile manner and engaging with Microsoft consultants for the design and delivery of our data platform.

6. Limited sustainability of project benefits if existing expertise is lost.
    a. There is a risk that the benefits delivered by Data Foundations are not sustainable in the long term if a permanent data team is not established to maintain the technology and assist in future implementations for other services.
    b. To treat this risk, the project hired additional data engineering resource and is continuing to work with the Senior Responsible Officer for the project to identify budget for contract extension for staff on fixed term contracts, with a goal of securing a permanent data team.

Financial Measures

Savings: No savings targets are associated with this project.

Investment: As of September 2026, £80,350 expenditure has been incurred and an annual forecast of £237,955 for FY 26/27.

Mitigations: No mitigation action currently required. Project is currently within budget and financial forecasting.

6.0 Digital Foundations

The Digital Foundations Project Closure Report (**Appendix 1**) sets out the successful completion of the Digital Foundations Project, which was established to deliver key outcomes from the Council's Digital Strategy and create the organisational capability, governance and support arrangements required to enable sustainable digital transformation across Highland Council. All project milestones were delivered within budget and on schedule, and the Digital Business Partner team has transitioned into a permanent business-as-usual resource within the Strategic Improvement and Performance Team.

The project has successfully translated the Council's Digital Strategy (2022-2027) from strategic ambition into practical delivery. The Digital Strategy recognised the need for dedicated resources to support Services in identifying, developing and implementing digital improvements. Through the creation of a Digital Development Lead and three Digital Business Partners, the project has delivered the core capacity required to achieve this objective, embedding digital transformation support within the organisation and establishing a structured approach to service-led change.

6.1 Key achievements

As detailed in the closure report the project has delivered significant organisational benefits and has strengthened the Council's approach to digital transformation by bringing together people, process, data and technology within a coordinated framework including:

- Progression of more than 185 service-led digital initiatives across Corporate, People and Place Services.
- Creation of a Digital Champions Network with more than 200 active members supporting peer-to-peer learning and digital adoption.
- Delivery of the Council's first Digital Week, promoting innovation, digital capability and service learning.

- Establishment of the Improvement Hub as a central resource for digital transformation, project delivery and improvement activity.
- Provision of over 1,100 one-to-one digital skills support sessions for employees.
- Mapping of more than 200 Council processes using structured business analysis and process modelling techniques.
- Development of a Digital Centre of Excellence, strengthening access to best practice, sector learning and innovation.
- Progression of digital inclusion initiatives designed to improve access to technology and online services for harder-to-reach employee groups.

The project has also directly supported delivery of a number of Digital Strategy outcomes, including:

- Establishing dedicated resources to support Services to develop and implement digital plans.
- Embedding digital within service planning and improvement activity.
- Developing workforce digital skills and confidence.
- Creating accessible peer-to-peer support networks.
- Strengthening leadership and governance for digital transformation.
- Promoting data-informed decision making, process improvement and innovation.
- Supporting continuous improvement in digital maturity

6.2 **Digital Maturity**

A digital maturity assessment (DMA) is a structured way for an organisation to understand how well it uses digital, data, and technology to deliver its services and operate effectively and where it needs to improve. The Highland Council has been carrying out DMAs for several years in conjunction with the Local Government Digital Office (LGDO).

The closure report notes that digital maturity scores should be interpreted within the context of an increasingly sophisticated digital landscape. As organisational awareness grows, expectations rise and emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence create new benchmarks for maturity. The report highlights that a DMA score of 3 is widely regarded as representing a strong level of digital maturity within a local government setting.

The Council's overall Digital Maturity Assessment (DMA) score increased from 2.5 in 2021 to 2.63 in 2025, alongside improvements in Digital Workforce and Skills, Capacity for Change, Vision and Strategy, and Research and Analysis. Digital Workforce and Skills increased to 3.23, exceeding the national average reported through the assessment

The review of the Digital Strategy due next year will formally review targets for Members consideration.

6.3 Future Strategic Direction

The closure report concludes that the project has established many of the foundations required to support long-term transformation but recognises that further progress will require a more integrated strategic approach. The Council's current Digital Strategy, ICT Strategy and Information and Data Strategy are all scheduled to conclude in 2027, creating a timely opportunity to review and align these strategic frameworks.

It is therefore intended that preparatory work begins on the development of a new Digital, Data and Technology Strategy which brings together the Council's digital, data and technology ambitions within a single overarching framework. This strategy should be supported by three complementary strategic delivery plans covering:

- Digital - focused on service transformation, inclusion, customer experience, workforce capability and adoption.
- Data - focused on governance, data quality, insight, business intelligence and evidence-based decision making.
- Technology - focused on infrastructure, architecture, cyber security, platforms and technical capability.

This approach would provide clearer strategic alignment, stronger governance and greater integration between transformation, data and technology investment and support the Council's progression from viewing digital transformation as a standalone programme to recognising digital, data and technology as core enablers of wider service improvement, organisational performance and modern public service delivery.

7 Efficiencies from Procurement

7.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Project: Efficiencies from Procurement — R

A Council wide approach in conjunction with the Shared Procurement Service to deliver cost reduction in relation to purchasing and procurement.

ACTIVITY
A Council wide approach in conjunction with the Shared Procurement Service to deliver cost reduction in relation to purchasing and procurement.

PROJECT ELEMENTS
- Proactive engagement between contract managers and Shared Procurement Service
- Analysis to reveal where supplier competition exists
- Direct negotiation with existing suppliers to develop minimum orders & reduced delivery points and therefore savings
- Service review of Contract Registers to consider – termination, renegotiation or extension.

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Apr24 / Completes Dec24	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Develop corporate process to flag contract end-dates	M4 24/25 Completed
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Mar 25	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Update Delegated Procurement Authority training	M7 24/25 Completed
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Jun 25	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Consolidate stores product ranges & review core pricing	M9 25/26 Completed
Starts Apr 25 / Completes Jun 25	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Review and update annual procurement workplan	M6 25/26 Completed
Starts Apr25 / Completes Jun25	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Corporate process to identify/report off contract spend	M12 25/26 Completed
Starts Apr 25 / Completes May 26	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Mandate core list items and report on exceptions	M6 26/27 Some Slippage
Starts Apr 25 / Completes Mar 26	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Conclude review of inflation challenges/budget pressures	M12 25/26 Completed
Starts Apr 26 / Completes Apr 26	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: End Stage Milestone	M5 26/27 Completed
Starts Apr 26 / Completes Mar 27	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Procurement Savings Pipeline Established and Prioritised	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Apr 26 / Completes Mar 27	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Savings Opportunities Validated with Services	M6 26/27 On Target
Starts Apr 27 / Completes Mar 28	Efficiencies from Procurement Milestone: Procurement Efficiencies Programme Closure	M6 26/27

Overall Project RAG

The project is currently rated Red because the forecast level of general revenue procurement savings for 2026/27 is below the £1.853m annual target. Although the current pipeline is in excess of £2m and therefore exceeds the target, the latest forecast is £1.070m.

Action is underway to intensify joint work with Services and Finance to confirm delivery plans and evidence for the highest-value initiatives, accelerate implementation and financial sign-off where achievable, and identify additional in-year opportunities. Progress and forecast delivery will continue to be reviewed regularly through the relevant governance arrangements.

In addition to savings contributing directly to the general revenue target, a further £0.690m of savings has been enabled, principally against HRA budgets. These savings do not contribute to the general revenue target but demonstrate the wider commercial value being delivered through procurement activity.

Milestones

The procurement savings pipeline has been established and prioritised, with a process in place to track delivery and regular engagement between Commercial & Procurement and Finance to review progress and address barriers. Initial validation of savings opportunities with Services has been completed, and further work is continuing to strengthen the evidence base, confirm delivery dates and progress additional opportunities.

Since the previous report, additional milestones have been introduced to provide clearer oversight of the savings pipeline, validation of opportunities with Services and overall programme closure. The programme is currently expected to conclude by 31 March 2028, reflecting the period over which the remaining savings and associated benefits are expected to be delivered and realised.

The milestone relating to mandating core-list items remains subject to slippage. PPE and janitorial requirements have been completed; however, completion of the Tools and Equipment element has taken longer than anticipated due to the complexity of the supply market and supplier-side absence. Negotiation remains ongoing, with completion targeted for the end of October 2026.

Over the remainder of 2026/27 the immediate focus will be on converting the existing pipeline into validated and realised savings, progressing the highest-value opportunities and working with Services to identify further opportunities capable of contributing in-year. Some benefits will carry forward into 2027/28 as initiatives are implemented and signed off. Updated progress and forecasts will be reported through the established quarterly governance arrangements

7.2 **Key Risks & Measures of Success**

Key Risks

Inflationary, market and wider geopolitical pressures continue to present a risk to the delivery of procurement efficiencies. These factors can affect supplier pricing, implementation timescales and the value ultimately achievable from individual savings initiatives. Price movements and requests for increases continue to be monitored through the established process, with commercial negotiation and other appropriate mitigations applied where opportunities arise. The latest assessment of this risk remains unchanged.

Service engagement and capacity also remain important to successful delivery, particularly where Services are required to validate opportunities, implement commercial changes and support financial sign-off. Engagement has improved, reflected in the reduced likelihood assessment for this risk, although competing operational priorities and capacity constraints continue to be monitored. Commercial & Procurement will continue to work closely with Services and Finance to confirm ownership, address delivery barriers and accelerate conversion of opportunities wherever possible.

Measures of Success

The principal measure of success remains delivery of validated procurement savings against the agreed programme target. The Red RAG status will remain under review and will improve only when there is sufficient evidenced and deliverable in-year benefit to materially close the forecast gap against target.

8 Future Operating Model

8.1 Overall Project RAG & Milestones

Below is an extract of the PRMS project dashboards which contain the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.

Programme: Future Operating Model — G

Providing intuitive and seamless access to integrated facilities and services.

ACTIVITY
Reducing variation in service management, the future operating model will align management to geographic areas, with a hub and spoke model for delivering local services. This will align to the single public estate project (part of Asset Reconfiguration) providing intuitive and seamless access to integrated facilities and services.

PROJECT ELEMENTS
-Assemble project team and resources.
-Draft project plan.
-Engagement across Council and with partners.
-Strong linkages to network of community facilities, Demonstrator Projects and HOIP.

G	Future Operating Model: Asset M4 26/27	Dashboard
G	Future Operating Model: Collaborative M4 26/27	Dashboard
G	Future Operating Model: Operational M4 26/27	Dashboard
G	Future Operating Model: Community M4 26/27	Dashboard

PROGRAM MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Sep 26 / Completes Dec 26	Future Operating Model: Next Stage Proposals drafted and considered for approval	M5 26/27

Future Operating Model: Collaborative — G

Develop new ways of working across services, partners and stakeholders. This includes shared services, joint delivery models, stronger governance arrangements and improved cross-functional collaboration to achieve better outcomes and efficiencies.

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Nov 25 / CompletesApr 27	Future Operating Model: Community Transport - improving local connectivity	M5 26/27 On Target
Starts Apr 26 / Completes Apr 27	Future Operating Model: Kinlochbervie - Collaboration with NorthWest 2045 - Opportunity proposals	M5 26/27 On Target

Future Operating Model: Asset — G

Optimise how physical assets (buildings, infrastructure, fleet, equipment, land) are utilised. The aim is to improve performance, reduce costs, support sustainability goals and ensure assets align with future service delivery needs.

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Feb 26 / Completes Feb 27	Future Operating Model: Taigh na Sgire (Portree) - Implementation of smarter working	M5 26/27 On Target

Future Operating Model: Operational — G

Improve day-to-day business processes, systems and service delivery. This includes streamlining workflows, standardising processes, introducing digital solutions, improving productivity and ensuring the operating model is efficient, resilient and customer focused.

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Feb 26 / Completes Apr 27	Future Operating Model: Local Transport Strategy Implementation - Embedding, monitoring and reporting - 300+ project actions	M5 26/27 On Target
Starts Nov 25 / Completes Jun 26	Future Operating Model: Smarter Working Approach Proposal	M4 26/27 Completed
Starts Nov 25 / Completes Apr 27	Future Operating Model: Smarter working Property Floor Pilot	M5 26/27 On Target



8.2 Overall Project RAG

The Future Operating Model (FOM) Programme currently has a green RAG rating. Ongoing work is being progressed on all projects with focus on outcomes.

8.3 Milestones

The Future Operating Model Programme has successfully transitioned into the delivery phase as approved by The Highland Council on 30 October 2025. This report provides Members with an update on progress since the last report on 19 March 2026 and next steps.

Core programme infrastructure is now in place, key leadership and delivery roles have largely been recruited, and a range of transformational projects have been completed, initiated, or progressed into delivery phases. Since the last report, there has been a change within the team, with the new Programme Manager taking up post on 9 November 2026. This post reports to the Chief Officer – Facilities and Fleet Management.

Governance arrangements are embedded: the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate is the sponsor for the Future Operating Model Programme and Chair of the Programme Board. The CO Facilities & Fleet is the Senior Supplier – Lead Officer and Vice Chair and the COHR & Communications is the Senior Supplier – Depute Lead Officer. Members are reminded that governance of the FOM revenue budget is taken through the Communities and Place Committee, led by the Chief Officer – Facilities and Fleet Management.

Several projects have now moved into delivery, including the Enterprise Car Share initiative with NHS Highland, work on the Community Transport Hub, the rollout of Smarter Working, and development of the mobile service delivery unit.

Alongside project delivery, substantial engagement has taken place across services, partners, and community groups. This has helped clarify programme boundaries, identify opportunities for service transformation, and build a comprehensive understanding of activity occurring across Highland to support future project identification and prioritisation.

Community Transport and Mobility

Progress has accelerated across the Community Transport and Mobility workstream, delivering tangible outcomes with partners. The Enterprise Car Share project has been successfully delivered in partnership with NHS Highland, strengthening shared fleet arrangements and improving vehicle accessibility across Highland.

Agreement has been secured with NHS Highland to expand the Community Transport Hub through grant funding, supporting wider transport connectivity and service integration. The Council is providing a renal transport service for NHS Highland patients from 1st October 2026. This is a blended model between community transport, highland council and volunteer groups.

Delivery of the Community Transport Action Plan continues, with 24 actions currently being progressed to improve community transport connectivity across Highland. The programme also continues to support engagement and monitoring activities linked to the Local Transport Strategy.

Discussions are underway with Employability colleagues regarding the use of existing funding streams and the Enterprise Public Car Club model to improve accessibility and transport options for individuals attending interviews, training opportunities, and other employment-related activities. This initiative has the potential to remove transport barriers and provide no-cost access to travel for eligible users.

Smarter Working

Smarter Working project, a joint project with the Property team, has been developed and is ready for rollout across pilot locations. This represents a key milestone in supporting more flexible, efficient, and collaborative ways of working across Council services.

Mobile Bus Service Delivery

Significant progress has been made in developing the mobile service delivery model. The bus conversion is currently underway and engagement events are scheduled for the start of 2027, ahead of the pilot. These events will be delivered in partnership with stakeholders. Design work and delivery arrangements have been agreed, with delivery scheduled for April 2027.

Service Transformation Activity

Several transformation opportunities have been identified and are being developed or progressed through implementation stages. These include:

- Meal Provision in the Community opportunities
- Refuse and Recycling Service opportunities
- Care Provision in Inverness
- Funding Circle for Highland opportunities
- Care Staff Bank development

Place-Based Working

Development work continues across several place-based initiatives. Dedicated place-based activity is being planned within Merkinch, while engagement through the Northwest 2045 and Fort William 2040 programmes continues to identify opportunities for future transformation, collaboration, and service improvement.

8.4 Next Steps

In addition to existing projects, the programme is undertaking a feasibility study into a Single Logistics Hub and is actively supporting the development work.

8.5 **Key Risks & Measures of Success**

Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out the Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS		CURRENT STATUS
£	Future Operating Model: Total Project Savings (Current FY Forecast)	£ 100,000

INVESTMENTS		CURRENT STATUS
£	Future Operating Model: Investment FY 24-26: EMR (Current FY Forecast)	£ 50,500
£	Future Operating Model: Investment FY 25 : Recurring Budget (Current FY Forecast)	£ 1,000,000

KEY RISKS ASSESSED		CURRENT STATUS
Future Operating Model: Lack of Stakeholder Engagement	2	Tolerate
Future Operating Model: Asset_Reconfiguration_Dependencies	9	Treat

Risks associated with the delivery and operation of the Future Operating Model continue to be actively monitored and managed through established governance arrangements. Regular reviews are undertaken to identify emerging risks, assess potential impacts, and implement appropriate mitigation measures where required.

Financial Measures

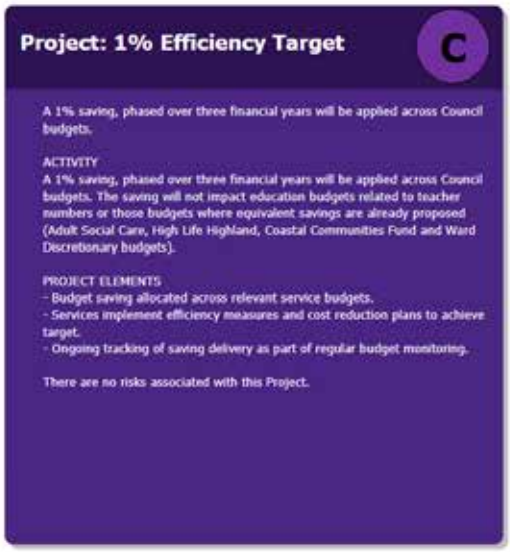
Savings: the associated savings are forecast to be achieved.

Mitigations: No mitigation action currently required. Project is currently within budget and financial forecasting.

9 **1% Efficiency Target**

This project has gone through formal project closure, following the implementation of the final phase of the savings as part of the 2026/27 revenue budget process.

9.1 **Overall Project RAG & Milestones**



MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Apr 24	1% Efficiency Target: Saving allocated to service budgets	M7 24/25 Completed
Starts Apr 24 / Completes June 24	1% Efficiency Target: Specific reduction measures implemented by services	M8 24/25 Completed
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Mar 27	1% Efficiency Target: ongoing monitoring of savings delivery	M4 26/27 Closed
Starts Apr 26 / Completes Apr 26	1% Efficiency Target: Project End	M4 26/27 Completed

Overall Project RAG

As noted earlier, this project has now been formally closed as reflected in the table above. Ongoing saving delivery tracking will be part of routine revenue budget monitoring across Council Services.

Milestones

Completed and closed as set out in the table above.

9.2 **Key Risks & Measures of Success**

Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out the Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS		CURRENT STATUS
£	1% Efficiency Target: Savings - FY 26-27 (Current FY Forecast)	**£ 945,000**

10 My Council Programme

The My Council Programme Closure Report (**Appendix 2**) sets out how the programme has delivered a significant improvement in how the Council engages with customers, modernising customer contact, increasing digital access and establishing a stronger foundation for continued service transformation. The programme has delivered the majority of its intended outcomes and has reached a natural point for formal closure, with the remaining activity continuing through operational arrangements and the standalone My Highland project.

10.1 **Key achievements**

Key achievements include:

- development of the Customer Experience Strategy, Customer Charter and published Customer Service Standards, providing a consistent framework for putting customer needs at the centre of service design and delivery.
- launch of the redesigned Council website, with improved navigation, clearer and more accessible content, enhanced functionality and a consistent mechanism for capturing customer feedback.
- implementation of a modern organisational telephony system, improving flexibility, business information and service resilience, while reducing supervisory administration within the Customer Contact Centre.
- service improvements arising from the strategic review of customer contact, including changes to housing repairs processes, call routing, scheduling and supporting systems.
- establishment of data-led approaches to customer and service improvement, with the wider work transferred to the Data Foundations Project within the Corporate Solutions Portfolio.
- effective programme governance, stakeholder engagement and financial management. The programme is reported as having been delivered within its approved £500,000 budget, and no outstanding programme risks at closure.

10.2 **My Highland**

My Highland will continue as a standalone project under a simpler governance structure, with ongoing reporting through the Corporate Solutions Portfolio Board. Its purpose is to provide customers with a unified online account, initially focused on Council Tax Online and paperless billing, with the potential to bring together access to other services such as bin calendars, councillor information and road fault reporting. The remaining planned activity includes delivery of online account functionality, billing and paperless billing capability, followed by the public launch and promotion of Council Tax Online currently planned for early 2027.

10.3 **Benefits realisation and continuing work**

Closure of the programme does not represent the end of this improvement work. Responsibility for sustaining and extending the benefits has transferred into business-as-usual arrangements. Continuing activity includes:

- reviewing whether the programme's intended outcomes, new capabilities and wider benefits have been realised;
- promoting Customer Experience Strategy training and monitoring staff participation;
- measuring telephony-related time savings and improvements in service resilience;
- embedding the website Target Operating Model and standardised web-content processes;
- completing migration of remaining legacy web content;
- reporting on website customer satisfaction and identifying further improvement activity
- progressing My Highland and once implemented monitoring take-up of the new Council Tax Online account.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate

Date: 05 November 2026

Author: Richard Whetton, Chief Officer (Business Solutions)
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Appendices: Appendix 1: Digital Foundations Closure Report
Appendix 2: My Council Programme Closure Report

The Highland Council

Digital Foundations

End Project Report

DOCUMENT DETAILS

DOCUMENT		AUTHOR
Ref:	DFPCR_2026	Kerry Duff Digital Development Lead Strategic Improvement & Performance>Business Solutions Dan Scott Chief Officer>Business Solutions
Revision:	5	
Status:	Approved	
CONTROL DATES		**APPROVED BY**
RO Review:	03/09/2026	Dan Scott CO Business Solutions Interim Corporate Cluster
SI&P Review:		

Portfolio Board Review DD/MM/YYYY

DISTRIBUTION

NAME	TITLE	SERVICE
Dan Scott	Chief Officer	Business Solutions
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Hannah Kollef	Portfolio Manager	Business Solutions
Allan Gunn	Assistant Chief Executive	Corporate

CHANGE HISTORY

REVISION	DATE	AUTHOR	CHANGE SUMMARY
1	01/05/2026	Kerry Duff/Dan Scott	First review of benefits section
2	11/06/2026	Kerry Duff/Dan Scott	More content to be added around the scope of work
3	01/07/2026	Kerry Duff/Dan Scott	More added around the DMA
4	12/08/2026	Kerry Duff/Dan Scott	More to be added around the entire digital journey
5	03/09/2026	Kerry Duff/Dan Scott	Some additional comment around the DMA
6	03/09/2026	Kerry Duff/Dan Scott	Final reviewed and signed off by Dan Scott

REFERENCES

The following items are referenced [n] in the text or are associated with this document and should be read in conjunction with this document.

REFERENCE	TITLE	REVISION	AUTHOR
1	DMA model		

SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

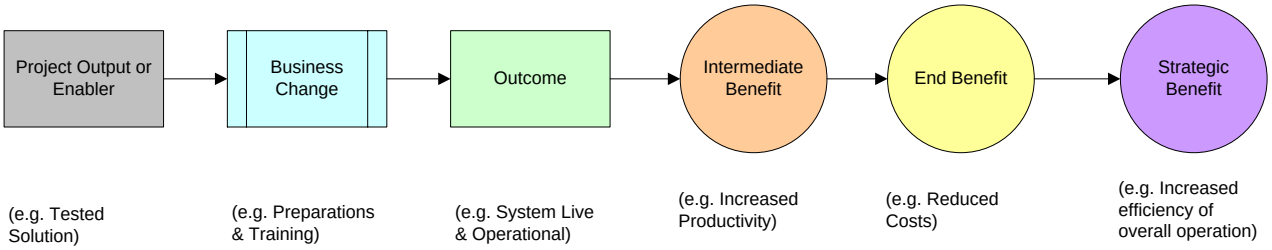
The following items are superseded by this document; they should be withdrawn from current use and destroyed or retained as per their retention requirements.

REFERENCE	TITLE	REVISION

GLOSSARY & ABBREVIATIONS

TERM	DEFINITION

KEY TO TERMINOLOGY



Contents

1. Project Managers Report 5
1.1 Empowering People and Services 6
1.2 Digital Transformation Roadmap 7
1.3 Delivering Lasting Digital Change 8
1.4 The Highland Council's Digital Maturity journey 8
1.5 Key metrics 9
2. Review Of Business Case 10
3. Review Of Project Milestones 11
4. Review of project objectives, outcomes and benefits – 12
5. A spotlight on some of the digital initiatives 20
6. Digital Strategy Achievement Wider context 23
7. Strategic story and moving beyond the foundations 24
7.1 Delivering on other Council Strategies 24
7.2 Delivering on the National Digital Strategy 26
8. Review Of Team Performance 27
8.1. Project Product Handover 28
8.2. Summary Of Follow On Actions Recommendations 28
9. Lessons 30
10. Appendix 1 - table summary of new operational requirements progressed (2024-2026) 32
11. Appendix 2 - DMA Model and results with commentary 37

1. Project Managers Report - Introduction

The Digital Foundations Project was established as part of the Council's Operational Delivery Plan to deliver key outcomes from the Digital Strategy and create the organisational conditions required to support digital transformation. The project focused on building the foundations to underpin digital transformation including; developing organisational capability, improving digital skills, strengthening governance and creating the structures and support mechanisms needed to embed a sustainable approach to digital development across the Council.

Through the delivery of the project objectives (section 4), the team have demonstrated that a dedicated Digital Business Partner model can successfully build organisational capability, strengthen digital confidence and empower service-led transformation across the Council. Over the life of the project, the team has moved digital change beyond technology adoption alone, establishing a more structured, evidence-led approach that brings together people, process, data, governance and technology to deliver sustainable improvement. The scale of delivery is significant: from progressing over 185 Service new operational requirements to growing Digital Champions community (200+), launching Digital Week, introducing the Improvement Hub and providing practical digital skills support to staff across Services.

One way we have measured the impact of this project is through the Digital Maturity Assessment (see appendix 2), conducted by the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government. The Council's overall DMA score increased from 2.59 in 2021 to 2.63 in 2025. While this appears to be a modest improvement, it should be viewed in the context of a rapidly evolving digital landscape and a much stronger organisational understanding of digital maturity.

As awareness of digital maturity grows, expectations also increase and the landscape against which the 2021 score was measured has shifted considerably. The progress made through the Digital Foundations Project is therefore better evidenced through the outcomes and benefits set out in this report, rather than the headline score alone. It also highlights the need to review the approach to assessing digital maturity, ensuring the model continues to reflect emerging priorities such as artificial intelligence, which were not a significant consideration when the original assessment was undertaken. Research into digital maturity has evidenced that a score of around 3 is considered high for the sector.

"What stands out about Highland Council's approach is how the Digital Maturity Assessment has been embedded into the organisation's digital transformation journey. The Council has aligned its Digital Foundations work to the DMA pillars, implemented recommendations from previous assessments, and is using Digital Week to engage staff about the DMA, celebrate progress and shape future priorities. It is exactly the kind of approach we want to see, where digital maturity is not simply measured, but actively used to drive continuous improvement and organisational change."

Verity Hislop – Senior Project Manager
The Digital Office for Scottish Local Government
(Speaking at Highland Council's Digital Week, 2025)

The project's legacy is not just the activity delivered, but the capability created. It has shown that successful transformation depends on people, process, data and technology working together. The lessons and follow-on actions in this document provide a clear route into the next phase: building on these foundations through a more integrated Digital, Data and Technology Strategy that supports sustainable improvement, inclusion and modern service delivery. But first we will share the project's story, highlight the achievements, the outcomes, the strategic story and the lessons learned.

1.1 Empowering People and Services – Project Story

Following the recruitment of three Digital Business Partners in autumn 2024, the project built upon existing digital improvement activity to establish a consistent and structured framework for progressing transformation opportunities. This introduced a standard approach to service engagement, business analysis, process mapping, benefits identification, and compliance with the Council's Digital, ICT and Information and Data Strategies. As a result, Services are now better equipped to identify, evaluate, and progress digital improvement opportunities aligned to strategic priorities, with support from their Digital Business Partner.

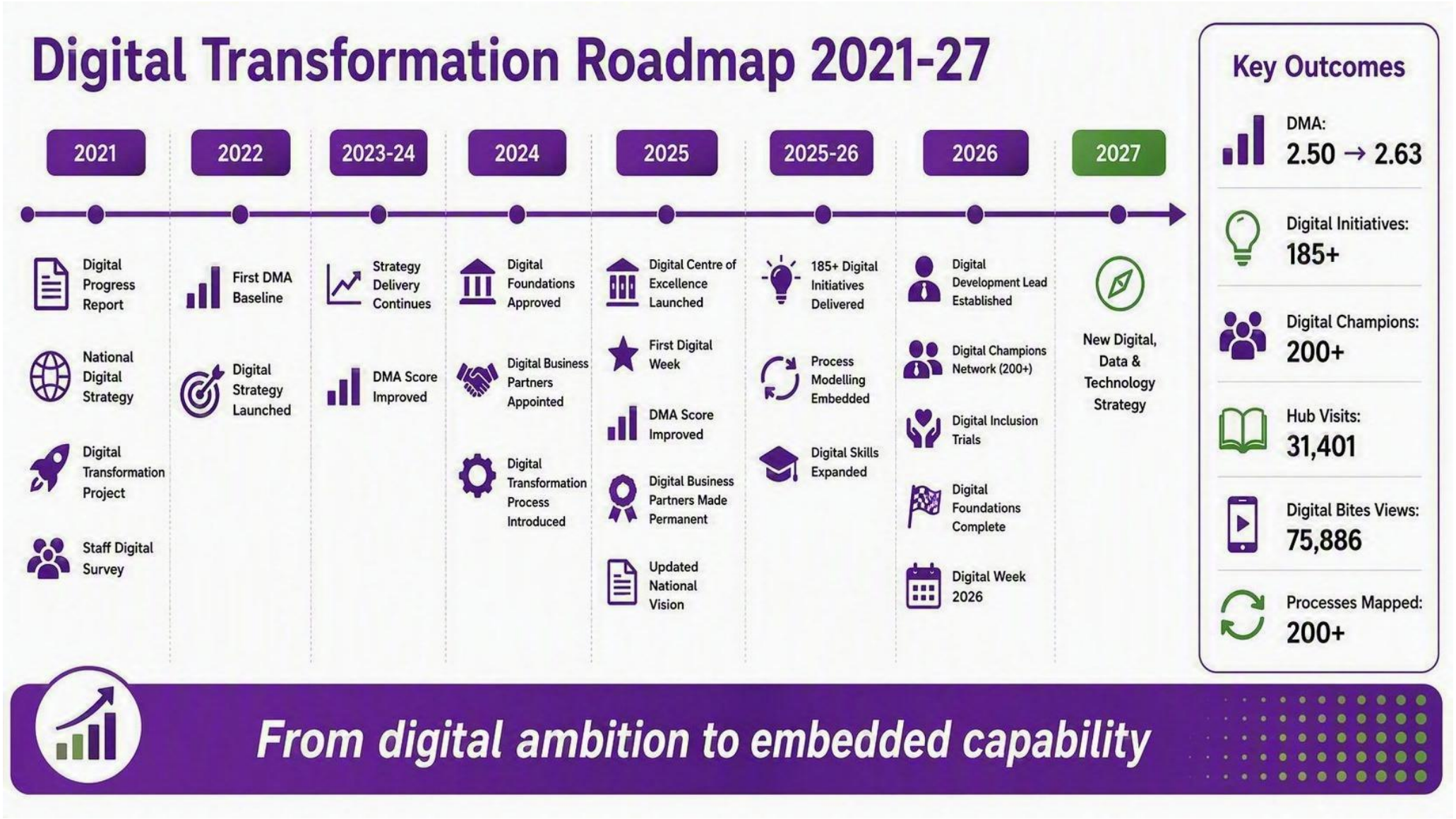
As this approach became embedded, the team's focus expanded to improving communication, guidance, and self-service support. 'The Improvement Hub' was developed and launched as a central resource for Strategic Improvement and Performance services, digital skills development and project and programme management guidance. Complementing this, the team introduced 'Digital Bites' through Viva Engage, creating a new channel for promoting digital awareness, sharing best practice, and encouraging greater use of existing technology. This initiative generated significant interest across the organisation, attracting more than 10,000 views within its first two months.

Attention then turned to evidencing impact and demonstrating the value of dedicated digital support within the Council. Performance measures and evidence-gathering arrangements were established to support the case for a permanent Digital Team. During this period, the team successfully planned and delivered the Council's first Digital Week, showcasing innovation and digital success stories from across Services and elsewhere in local government, while also coordinating the Council's 2025/26 Digital Maturity Assessment in partnership with the Local Government Digital Office. The assessment provided valuable insight into organisational strengths and opportunities for further development (see appendix 2).

Recognising that successful digital transformation must be inclusive, the team worked closely with Waste Operations, Learning and Development, and other partners to support staff who are less digitally connected. Through site visits and engagement activities, a trial was developed to improve digital access and confidence, enabling employees to access mandatory online learning, view payslips, and use the pensions portal. This work has established a strong foundation for continued activity aimed at reducing digital exclusion and ensuring that all employees can benefit from the Council's digital investment.

Diagram **1.2**: Digital Transformation Roadmap on the next page visually portrays the Council's digital transformation journey, highlighting key milestones, achievements and outcomes from 2021-2027.

1.2


Digital Transformation Roadmap 2021-27
2021
Digital Progress Report
National Digital Strategy
Digital Transformation Project
Staff Digital Survey
2022
First DMA Baseline
Digital Strategy Launched
2023-24
Strategy Delivery Continues
DMA Score Improved
2024
Digital Foundations Approved
Digital Business Partners Appointed
Digital Transformation Process Introduced
2025
Digital Centre of Excellence Launched
First Digital Week
DMA Score Improved
Digital Business Partners Made Permanent
Updated National Vision
2025-26
185+ Digital Initiatives Delivered
Process Modelling Embedded
Digital Skills Expanded
2026
Digital Development Lead Established
Digital Champions Network (200+)
Digital Inclusion Trials
Digital Foundations Complete
Digital Week 2026
2027
New Digital, Data & Technology Strategy
Key Outcomes
DMA: 2.50 → 2.63
Digital Initiatives: 185+
Digital Champions: 200+
Hub Visits: 31,401
Digital Bites Views: 75,886
Processes Mapped: 200+
From digital ambition to embedded capability

1.3 Delivering Lasting Digital Change

The project has successfully established the foundations for a more coordinated, capable, and digitally enabled organisation. The Digital Team, now embedded within the Strategic Improvement and Performance function, operates at the intersection of innovation, insight, and delivery, working collaboratively with Services to identify opportunities, align priorities, and translate business needs into practical outcomes. Through engagement, support, and capability-building activities, the team has created a growing community of practice around digital skills and transformation, helping to maximise the value of the Council's investment in technology, particularly the Microsoft 365 platform.

Importantly, the project has left a legacy of governance, expertise, and organisational capability that will continue to support the Council's digital transformation journey and ensure that no one is left behind.

1.4 The Highland Council's Digital Maturity journey

This table sets out the key milestones in the Council's digital maturity journey to date which began in 2021:

Year	Digital transformation – key milestones
2021	Digital Transformation Project team established
2021-22	Digital Maturity Assessment completed through manager and leader interviews and workshops, establishing a baseline score[1] of 2.5.
2022	Assessment findings and recommendations informed the Council's first Digital Strategy and implementation plan, but no dedicated resources were funded at this time, to support delivery.
2023-24	Digital Strategy Delivery continued with limited resource supporting digital skills and Service engagement through workforce planning. The Digital Maturity Assessment was expanded to capture insight from all staff this time, with a reported score of 2.59.
2024	Digital planning was shaped around DMA recommendations and key enabling activity. Project measures of success were aligned with core pillars of the DMA.
June 2024	Digital Foundations Project initiated to support delivery of the Council's Digital Strategy outcomes. Project Manager and 3 Digital Business Partners recruited.

2024/2025	Digital Foundations workstreams progressed activity across the core DMA pillars, strengthening digital workforce and skills, improving capacity for change, supporting Service engagement, and embedding research, analysis and improvement practice.
November 2025	The Digital Maturity assessment is rolled out again alongside the Council's first ever digital week. A new baseline of 2.63* established. The Digital Business Partner team are made a permanent resource based upon data collated to support the case.
September 2026	Digital Foundations Project completed, providing a stronger basis for future digital transformation activity. The team transition to business as usual.

*As organisations become more digitally aware increases to digital maturity scores naturally slow or can even fall back. Industry best practice indicates that a score of 3 is considered a strong level of maturity within the local government sector.

1.5 Key metrics

The project has delivered a broad range of benefits as set out in section 4. The table below highlights key metrics that demonstrate the reach and impact of the team's initiatives across the Council.

Area	Measure	Result
Digital & Data Skills Support Network	Digital Bites Post Views (24 months)	**75,886**
Digital Centre of Excellence	Improvement Hub Visits	**31,401**
Digital Centre of Excellence	Digital Week Content Engagements	**4,024**
Peer to peer support	People Supported 1:1 with Digital Skills	**1,197**
Service & Process Improvement	New operational requirements progressed Council processes modelled	**185** **200**
Peer to peer support	Active Digital Champions	**209**
Digital Centre of Excellence	Articles Published	**56**
Overall Digital Maturity Score	DMA Score (2021, 2023, 2025)	**2.50→ 2.59 → 2.63**

2. Review Of Business Case

The Councils Digital Strategy (2022 -2027) was developed alongside the Council's ICT Strategy, Information and Data Strategy, and People Strategy.

The strategy was:

- Guided by the National Programme for Digital Transformation ('A changing Nation: How Scotland will thrive in a Digital World 21-24' and 'Digital Progress in Local Government, 2021')
- Informed by user insights and recommendations from the Digital Maturity Assessment conducted by the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, and the internal Digital Transformation Staff Survey in 2022.
- Informed by best practices for digital transformation gathered from Strategic Partners and other Scottish Local Authorities.

The strategy sets out a vision for digital at Highland Council:

- Digital Transformation is recognised as an integral part of the Councils organisational development, is consistently aligned with the corporate vision and is supported by strong leadership.
- It is enabled by an engaged, valued and committed staff with a transformative digital culture where people take pride in constantly learning and evolving to meet customer needs.
- Digital Tools and transformative digital solutions are integrated throughout the organisation. This is evident across all services.
- Digital is led and owned by services teams, supported, and enabled by a dedicated ICT and Digital Services Team.

With the 10 Outcomes of the Digital Strategy stated as follows;

1. Our citizens and our people are at the heart of service design and development.
2. Digital and Data and Technology (DDaT) skills and development are a core part of workforce planning.
3. Digital is an integral part of Service Planning and delivery.
4. Elected Members are supported in the development of digital skills.
5. Core resources are established to support Services develop and implement plans for digital.
6. Digital is sponsored by the Council's Executive Leadership Team and is a core component of the Authority's organisational development journey.
7. Established and accessible peer-to-peer support for digital in place.
8. A Business Intelligence and data-informed, collaborative cross service approach is adopted throughout day-to-day operations.
9. The Council has an agile Digital Strategy that continues to evolve and improve with active monitoring and adoption of new technology, innovation, and skills development.
10. The Councils Digital Maturity increases by 2027

Whilst the Strategy was launched in October 2022, progress was constrained in the first 18 months due to limited resources, it was not until the Delivery Plan was launched in March 2024 that investment was secured to deliver on the outcomes more meaningfully.

The business case recognised that several of the outcomes set out in the Digital Strategy, and subsequently approved by Members, were unlikely to be achieved without additional dedicated capacity. To address this, an investment of £355k was secured in support of outcome 5 of the digital strategy (core resources are established to support Services develop and implement plans for digital) to fund an initial 24-month Digital Foundations Project.

This investment enabled the establishment of a dedicated digital team, with the intention of assessing its impact, value and contribution to supporting Services and delivering the Digital Strategy, while informing the case for a longer-term commitment to a permanent digital capability within the Council.

Section 3 will show the project's milestones. Section 4 will set out the project's objectives, outcomes, benefits and alignment to Digital Strategy outcomes to evidence the return on investment.

3. Review Of Project Milestones

All project milestones were delivered on schedule and within budget. Approval sought to complete closure milestone at the Corporate Solutions Portfolio Board.

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Apr24 / Completes Sep24	Digital Foundations Milestone: Creation of Digital team	**M6 24/25 Completed**
Starts Apr24 / Completes Dec24	Digital Foundations Milestone: Digital and Data Skills Support Network Established	**M11 24/25 Completed**
Starts Apr24 / Completes Dec24	Digital Foundations Milestone: Digital Centre of Excellence, Improvement Hub and Network launched	**M11 24/25 Completed**
Starts Mar 25 / Completes Jun 25	Digital Foundations Milestone: Frontline Worker Enablement: Discovery	**M3 25/26 Completed**
Starts Jul 25 / Completes Dec 25	Digital Foundations Milestone: Extending Digital Access Phase 1	**M10 25/26 Completed**
Starts Jan 26 / Completes Apr 26	Digital Foundations Milestone:Launch a Digital Champions community	**M1 26/27 Completed**
Starts Sep 25 / Completes May 26	Digital Foundations Milestone:Digital Maturity Assessment and Digital Strategy Delivery	**M2 26/27 Completed**
Starts Jan 26 / Completes May 26	Digital Foundations Milestone: Extending Digital Access Phase 2	**M2 26/27 Completed**
Start Jan 26/ Completes May 26	Digital Foundations Milestone: Digital Strategy Refresh	**M2 26/27 Completed**
Starts Jun 25 / Completes Jun 26	Digital Foundations Milestone: Engage Process Adoption and Best Practice	**M7 25/26 Completed**
Starts Mar 25 / Completes Jul 26	Digital Foundations Milestone: Digital Foundations: Capturing Data	**M4 26/27 Completed**
Starts Jun 26 / Completes Jul 26	Digital Foundations Milestone: Extending Digital Access Phase 3 (review)	**M5 26/27 On Target**
Starts May 26 /Completes Jul 26	Digital Foundations Milestone: Project Closure	**M5 26/27 On Target**

4. Review of project objectives, outcomes and benefits –

Objectives	Outcomes	Benefit
Creation of a Digital Team 1. Establish a dedicated Digital team by onboarding three Service Digital Business Partners. 1. Enhance digital transformation capacity across Services by embedding Digital Business Partners who provide targeted support, expertise, and coordination. 2. Support the Council's journey toward greater digital maturity by implementing foundational digital capabilities and driving the successful delivery of the Digital Strategy and Implementation Plan by 2027. The team will work across six core workstreams: • Digital Centre of Excellence • Digital Workforce • Digital Communications • ICT New Operational Requirements • Open Innovation • Operational Planning	Aligns to Digital Strategy Outcome 5: core resources are established to support Services develop and implement plans for digital. Digital Team created with three Digital Business Partners onboard lead by a Digital Development Lead.	An increase in score can be seen under the Capacity for Change pillar of the DMA for 24/25 2.30 +0.12, people referenced the digital team and strategic improvement and performance as the available change capacity at Highland Council. Although improvements have been achieved, Organisational Change remains one of the lower-scoring areas within the Digital Maturity Assessment. This reinforces the importance of continued investment in change management, engagement and capability-building to ensure staff are equipped and confident to adopt new ways of working and maximise the benefits of digital transformation.
	Enhanced digital transformation capacity across Services by embedding Digital Business Partners who provide targeted support, expertise, and coordination.	The new team increased our capacity to support service led digital initiatives with an average of 65 new operational requirements per month being managed via the ICT Portal, enabling delivery of over 185 digital changes (most of which are set out in appendix 1, highlights include: • Beam Notes (People), • Grant management platform (Place) • Cloud-based GIS platform (Corporate) The team have reduced delays and duplication by coordinating stakeholders across Strategic Improvement & Performance, Digital Innovation, Business Analysis, ICT, Finance, Procurement, Suppliers, and Services through a single engagement route.

Objectives	Outcomes	Benefit
		The Digital team have maintained a structured, end-to-end delivery approach for all service requests, ensuring governance and alignment with strategic priorities.
	Support the Council's journey toward greater digital maturity by implementing foundational digital capabilities and driving the successful delivery of the Digital Strategy and Implementation Plan by 2027.	An increase can be seen in the overall DMA score (2.59 → 2.63), reflecting typical incremental progress; a score of 3 is considered high for the sector. The target for implementation of a new strategy should align with expected scoring for the sector and is noted further in the carry forward actions.
Digital and Data Skills Support Network Established Create a digital and data skills support network and foster a community of practice for all staff and Members. This will be delivered through Viva Engage and coordinated by a 'Digital Skills Working Group' a collaboration between the Digital Team and People Development, guided by Platform Support and supported by input from our strategic supplier, Microsoft.	Aligns to Digital Strategy outcome 7: Established and accessible peer-to-peer support for digital in place.	Since its launch in February 2025, Digital Bites on Viva Engage has consistently attracted around 2,000 visits per month on average, demonstrating a clear demand for of this type of support among staff. The project team's increased visibility and accessibility have enabled around 100 staff (prior to Digital Champions being established) each month to receive one-to-one digital skills support. Together, these support mechanisms are helping to build digital confidence across the organisation, encouraging continuous learning and ensuring no one is left behind.

Objectives	Outcomes	Benefit
	An increase in score can be seen under the DMA pillar Digital Workforce and Skills.	An increase in score was realised under the DMA's Digital Workforce and Skills pillar (3.11 → 3.23), this sits above the national average of 3.12. Commentary from the Local Government Digital Office: *The results highlight strong capability growth across the workforce and increased confidence in the digital tools and learning available*
	Digital transformation and digital skills development become participatory, and a culture of experimentation emerges.	Alongside the high engagement figures we see people comfortable sharing articles, tips, asking questions and starting conversations around improvements/efficiencies using the available productivity tools. This type of engagement created an opportunity for introducing a more structured and sustainable Digital Champions community.
Digital Centre of Excellence, Improvement Hub and Network launched A digital centre of excellence is in place to ensure digital transformation is guided by best practices and sources of innovation garnered from working with other local authorities and our Strategic Partners and suppliers; The Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, SOCITM, Improvement Service, Microsoft and Google. The Improvement Hub and the associated Viva Engage community 'Improvement Network' serve as our primary channels for connecting with staff and Members. The digital team will maintain clear, visible, accessible and inclusive communications to keep	Aligns to Digital Strategy Outcome 5: core resources are established to support Services develop and implement plans for digital.	A Digital Centre of Excellence ensures that Services have access to current sector insight, innovation and best practice without needing to undertake extensive research themselves. This improves the quality of decision-making, accelerates the identification of digital opportunities, reduces duplication of effort, and supports more consistent and effective delivery of digital transformation across the Council.

Objectives	Outcomes	Benefit
people informed on innovation and improvements happening across the Council and elsewhere in local government.	Digital Projects and Initiatives are well researched and informed by best practice meaning we don't need to reinvent the wheel.	Researching best practice has been built into the new process for progressing all new operational requirements. Learning from other Local Authorities and Public Sector organisations reduces time spent on market research and increases opportunities for joint procurement exercises where we may receive a reduction in cost.
	A structured approach is developed for sharing insights re: innovation in the public sector and opportunities for development/improvements found through working with Strategic Partners and other local authorities. This is shared via articles that will inform and inspire Service improvements.	To date, the team has published 54 articles in 24 months through the Improvement Hub, sharing updates on strategic improvement activity, Digital Week, Digital Champions, and insights from strategic partners. Going forward, the aim is to establish a more regular programme of communications, publishing at least 40 innovation and improvement-focused articles each year to inform, inspire and support service improvement across the Council.
	The Improvement Hub is established as a trusted and valued resource for staff delivering service improvements and those seeking visibility of ongoing activity, evidenced by strong engagement levels.	Since its launch in February 2025, the Improvement Hub has become a key component of the Council's improvement and digital support infrastructure. Averaging around 2,200 visits per month, the site provides staff and Members with a single point of access to guidance, tools and resources relating to improvement, performance, digital skills and project delivery. Sustained levels of usage demonstrate the demand for and value of the service, helping to improve access to information, promote consistency of practice and support organisational capability-building across the Council.

Objectives	Outcomes	Benefit
Extending Digital Access 1. Work with HRP&P Project staff, Unions, HR, Payroll and People Development to identify staff in the harder to reach groups and understand current barriers/improve access to mandatory training and accessing payslips and pensions. 2. In collaboration with People Development conduct a trial with Waste staff identifying benefits from them having digital access and exploring the best routes for completion and recording compliance for mandatory training.	Improved compliance, safety and access to information: More staff can complete mandatory training on time, access payslips and essential employment information, and identify issues early supporting compliance, financial transparency, and safer working practices.	Greater digital inclusion and equity: Barriers to access are better understood and addressed, ensuring equitable access to digital tools and resources, supporting staff wellbeing and reinforcing fairness and inclusion across all roles and locations. This work will continue to be tracked beyond the project and is captured in the carry forward actions.
Digital Foundations Capturing Data	Collect and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the success of the project and the Digital Business Partner team. Findings will be shared via the Improvement Hub, used as key success measures in PRMS, and incorporated into the final report and recommendations.	Clear metrics and strong engagement demonstrate the value of the service, supporting the case for a permanent digital team. The team will continue to monitor performance and drive continuous improvement to meet the evolving needs of Services, staff and Members.

Objectives	Outcomes	Benefit
Digital Maturity Assessment and Digital Strategy Delivery • Translate Strategy into action by delivering on Highland Council's Digital Strategy and implementation plans by 2027 • Lead the roll-out and communications for the 2025–26 biennial Digital Maturity Assessment, conducted by the digital office.	The project team evidence delivery of Highland Council's Digital Strategy and implementation plan by 2027.	The project team have created measurable impact through the Digital Foundations project. This can be seen through the team's engagement stats: Digital Bites post views: 75,886 Improvement Hub Visits: 31,401 Digital Week content engagement: 4024 People supported 1:1 with Digital skills: 1197 New operational requirements progressed: 185+ Active Digital Champions: 200+ Articles published: 54
	The Digital Maturity Assessment has been rolled out, with improved scores overall and across key pillars Digital Workforce and Skill, Capacity for Change, Research & Analysis, and Vision and Strategy reflecting the positive impact of embedding digital foundations across the organisation.	An increase can be seen in the overall DMA score (2.59 → 2.63), reflecting typical incremental progress; a score of 3 is considered high for the sector. Other increases can be seen under the following pillars: Digital Workforce and Skills: (3.11 → 3.23) Capacity for Change: (2.18 → 2.30) Vision & Strategy: (2.39 → 2.48) Research & Analysis: (2.47 → 2.51) Vision and Strategy: (2.39 → 2.48) For the full table of results with commentary please go to appendix 2

Objectives	Outcomes	Benefit
Engage Process Adoption and Best Practice Coordinate the rollout of process modelling technology, working with key stakeholders to embed best practice and ensure benefits are systematically identified and realised.	Process modelling is embedded as a standard part of assessing new operational requirements, enabling a clear understanding of business problems or opportunities and ensuring that any changes implemented deliver measurable improvements for teams and their service users.	We see an increase in the consistent use of process modelling, with over 200 Council processes mapped in the last 24 months by business analysts and DBP's, embedding Engage Process as a standard approach to defining business problems, opportunities and requirements for change. Projects and initiatives supported with process mapping: • HRP • Data Foundations • Elections improvements • Empty homes • Licensing • Travel and accommodation Using Engage Process eliminates ad hoc or unclear approaches to capturing requirements and moves away from solution-led approaches to digital change, ensuring all new operational requests are supported by structured, evidence-based analysis.
	An increase in score can be seen under the research and analysis pillar of the DMA.	Research & Analysis (DMA pillar): we saw a rise in score for 25/26 DMA, (2.47 → 2.51). Questions under this pillar asked about research into innovation and analysis. A rise in score shows an increase in awareness around analysis being used to support digital transformation.

Objectives	Outcomes	Benefit
Launch a Digital Champions Community As recommended by the Digital Office for Scottish Local Government, launch the Council's Digital Champions community, offering learning and peer to peer support for Microsoft365 tools.	Building on the success of Digital Bites and Digital Week we see an active Digital Champions community emerge with engaged staff who are actively supporting their peers in adopting digital tools to deliver efficiencies. This aligns to Digital Strategy outcome 7: established and accessible peer-to-peer support for digital in place.	One of the most significant achievements of the project has been the establishment of a thriving Digital Champions Network, which has grown to over 200 members from across the Council. The network has created a sustainable model of peer-to-peer learning and support, helping to build digital confidence, share best practice, and encourage the adoption of digital tools within Services. The success of this approach is evidenced by a substantial reduction in demand for individual support, with requests for 1:1 assistance falling from an average of around 100 per month to approximately 20 per month in recent months. The impact of the network has been further strengthened through initiatives such as Digital Bites and Digital Week, which have increased engagement with digital learning opportunities and fostered a growing culture of knowledge sharing and continuous improvement. The Digital Champions community has become a key enabler of digital transformation, extending the reach and influence of the Digital Team far beyond what could be achieved through dedicated resources alone. Importantly, the benefits of this investment will continue beyond the life of the project. The network has established lasting organisational capability, creating a self-sustaining community of digitally confident staff who can support colleagues, champion new ways of working, and help maximise the value of the Council's investment in technology. This strong level of engagement and demonstrable return on investment has provided confidence that continued support for the initiative represents a sustainable and effective approach to developing digital capability across the organisation

5. A spotlight on some of the digital initiatives led and supported by the Digital Business Partner team

A selection of initiatives supported from early concept through to adoption and business as usual are outlined below:

Service challenge or opportunity	Digital Business Partner contribution	Outcome or wider benefit
AI Guidance	Responded to increasing concern across the Council about the use of readily available AI tools for work purposes (such as ChatGPT). The Digital Team worked collaboratively with Microsoft, Google, ICT technical teams and the Information Governance Officer to understand available tools, enterprise protections and appropriate use.	Produced clear guidance on which AI tools are protected by enterprise agreements, helping staff make safer choices and reducing the risk of Council data being entered into unapproved generative AI tools-which could lead to a data breach.
AI Policy	Contributing practical insight, researching best practice from other local authorities and co-writing the Policy.	Supported a clearer governance framework for AI adoption, giving staff and Services greater confidence to explore AI opportunities responsibly, while managing risk, data protection and alignment with Council priorities.
GIS – move to cloud	Evidenced the need to move the GIS platform to a cloud-based solution, worked with stakeholders to understand requirements, and supported the procurement process.	Future-proofed the GIS platform by enabling additional functionality, reducing dependency on the Council's data centre, and supporting alignment with the ICT Strategy's cloud-first approach.

Service challenge or opportunity	Digital Business Partner contribution	Outcome or wider benefit
Waste – in-cab devices	Supported Waste Services to move from an initial concept to a robust, outcome-led business case by researching approaches used by other Councils, facilitating discussion beyond the technology itself, and helping the Service define the operational improvements it needed to achieve. This included focusing the case on the ability to evidence missed bins more accurately, distinguish between service and customer error, and reduce unnecessary return journeys for recollection.	Created a stronger evidence base for investment in in-cab technology, with clear links to operational efficiency, cost avoidance and improved customer accountability. The proposed approach supports better real-time recording of collection activity, reduces time and fuel spent on avoidable return visits, and enables the Service to make fairer, data-informed decisions when responding to missed-bin reports.
Cashless Catering	Supported the senior stakeholder to develop a stronger, evidence-led business case by mapping current processes and using customer feedback from the Council's customer relationship management system to understand the issues being experienced by parents and carers. The Digital Business Partners also helped shape the delivery approach, identifying the need for clear reporting, governance and project management arrangements to support implementation and reduce delivery risk.	Helped move the work beyond a solution-led request by focusing on the day-to-day needs of the people who would use or be affected by the service, including teachers, pupils, catering staff and parents. This supported a more user-centred approach to change, helping the Service consider how cashless catering could deliver efficiencies, improve the user experience and minimise disruption during implementation and ongoing operation.
Corran Ferry Ticketing Project	Worked with portfolio managers to evidence the link between the Corran Ferry Ticketing Project and the Council's Delivery Plan, while coaching subject matter experts and providing structure until project management support was in place. The Digital Development Lead also supported the mapping of user stories from customer data and personas to inform requirements for the bespoke solution and introduced the team to Mhor Collective to support digital inclusion and change management for local ferry users.	Strengthened the project's strategic alignment, delivery readiness and user focus by ensuring the proposed change was connected to wider Council priorities and informed by real customer needs. The user story and persona work will support developers to design a bespoke solution that reflects the day-to-day journeys of ferry users, while also providing a basis for future user testing. Early consideration of digital inclusion, communications and change management will help reduce barriers for local ferry users, support smoother adoption and increase confidence in the transition to the new ticketing approach.

Service challenge or opportunity	Digital Business Partner contribution	Outcome or wider benefit
Beam Notes	Working with Health and Social Care, identified options for AI notetaking, researched best practice through other local authorities and our strategic partner the Digital Office, supported development of the project brief, wrote the business case, supported procurement, and led the trial and adoption activity. Finally, the People Digital Business Partner presented findings from the trial to SMT to secure the adoption and scaling of this tool based on trial data.	Reduced administrative burden for Justice Service staff, freeing up more time to focus on clients. The trial also supported improved employee wellbeing, more accurate reporting, and approval to scale the approach across Education and the wider Health and Social Care service.
Replacement for Google Signbuilder	Worked with ICT colleagues to identify possible replacement options for Google Sign Builder, which was due to go out of support for school users. The Digital Business Partner coordinated a trial with Tain Academy to test whether the preferred solution was suitable for a school environment and worked through the practical, technical and operational considerations before wider use. This included establishing a clear pathway for schools to order the solution and creating guidance to support effective use.	Ensured continuity of digital signage provision for schools by identifying a replacement approach before the existing solution became unsupported. The trial provided assurance that the preferred option worked in practice, was suitable for school use, and had been subjected to appropriate due diligence around security and data. This reduced implementation risk, supported safer adoption and provided schools with a clearer, more consistent route to access and use the replacement solution.

For a full list of new operational requirements progressed by the digital team please visit appendix 1

6. Digital Strategy Achievement Wider context

The achievements delivered through the Digital Foundations Project should be viewed alongside a broader programme of transformation activity taking place across the Council. While this report focuses on the outcomes delivered by the project team, there is broad evidence that digital, data and technology have become embedded as key enablers of service improvement and organisational change. This reflects progress against several of the core ambitions of the Digital Strategy, including ensuring that digital is an integral part of service planning and delivery, that citizens and staff are at the heart of service design, and that Services are supported by the resources, skills and governance required to deliver sustainable change.

We can see digital and data components as fundamental elements of delivery, across the Operational Delivery Plan demonstrating increasing recognition across Services that successful transformation requires consideration of people, process, data and technology together. This shift indicates that digital thinking is becoming embedded within mainstream service planning rather than being viewed as a standalone activity. It also reflects strong sponsorship and leadership from the Executive Leadership Team, positioning digital, data and technology as a core component of the Council's wider organisational development journey.

The period of the Digital Foundations Project has also seen several complementary developments that have strengthened the Council's overall transformation capability and digital maturity. This includes the progression of Data Foundations activity, development of the ICT Strategy, expansion of business intelligence capability, and the continued evolution of the Business Solutions function. Collectively, these initiatives provide the strategic, operational and technical foundations required to support data-informed decision-making, collaborative working and modern service delivery, whilst creating the conditions necessary for further increases in digital maturity.

Within Business Solutions, the alignment of Digital Innovation, Strategic Improvement & Performance, ICT and Business Analysis capabilities has created a stronger and more coordinated model for supporting transformation. The introduction of the New Operational Requirements process has provided a clear and consistent route for Services to progress technology-enabled change, ensuring proposals are appropriately assessed, aligned to strategic priorities and supported by the right expertise from across the organisation.

However, the work is not complete. The project has successfully established many of the foundations required to support long-term digital transformation, but continued progress will require a sustained and strategic approach. Critically, this includes investing in capacity across technical teams such as Technical Design, Support and Data resources to support the throughput of demand across the organisation, at the time of writing this report there are 73 live digital initiative requests for support across the clusters.

The next phase should build on the momentum created through Digital Foundations. The current Digital, ICT and Data strategies are all due to be reviewed, future transformation should be enabled by a new Digital, Data and Technology Strategy that brings together the Council's digital, data and technology ambitions within a single overarching framework. This in turn should be underpinned by fully resourced delivery plans to ensure the organisation continues to evolve, embrace innovation, develop its workforce capability, and respond to changing citizen and service needs.

As the organisation matures, there is an opportunity to move away from describing activity purely as "digital transformation" and instead focus on transformation and improvement more broadly, recognising that digital, data and technology are critical enablers rather than ends in themselves. Future success will depend on maintaining strong leadership, developing workforce capabilities, growing digital confidence amongst staff and Members, strengthening the use of insight and business intelligence, and continuing to support Services to modernise and improve outcomes for citizens. The Digital Foundations Project has demonstrated the value of this approach and delivered many of the key outcomes envisaged within the Digital Strategy. The next phase is about embedding and scaling these achievements across the organisation, supporting continued improvements in digital maturity and ensuring the Council is well positioned to meet future challenges and opportunities

7. Strategic story and moving beyond the foundations

It's important to highlight that the work on digital foundations supported the delivery of outcomes of not only the Digital Strategy, also the Council's People Strategy, ICT Strategy and Information and Data Strategy and the principles of Scotland's National Digital Strategy: 'A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world.'

Examples are set out in tables 7.1 and 7.2:

7.1

Strategy	Core outcome supported	How Digital Foundations delivered
People Strategy	Build workforce capability, confidence and inclusion	Established digital skills support through Digital Bites, one-to-one support, Digital Week and the Digital Champions community, helping staff and Members build confidence with digital tools and encouraging peer-to-peer learning.
People Strategy	Improve access to learning, information and development	Progressed work to extend digital access for harder-to-reach staff groups, particularly Waste Operations, supporting access to mandatory training, payslips, pensions information and wider employment resources.
People Strategy	Strengthen engagement and	Created visible communication channels through the Improvement Hub, Viva Engage and the Improvement

Strategy	Core outcome supported	How Digital Foundations delivered
	organisational culture	Network, helping staff engage with improvement activity, share ideas and feel more connected to digital change.
ICT Strategy	Support cloud-first, secure and sustainable technology adoption	Supporting legacy applications to be removed from the data centre and replaced by Cloud solutions. Embedded a more structured approach to new operational requirements, ensuring digital solutions are assessed for strategic fit, cloud suitability, security, single sign-on, network compatibility and value for money.
ICT Strategy	Improve governance and coordination of technology change	Established the Digital Business Partner role to coordinate activities around technology change and engagement between Services, ICT, Digital Innovation, Strategic Improvement, PMO & performance, Business Analysis, Finance, Procurement, suppliers and strategic partners.
ICT Strategy	Maximise value from existing technology investments	Promoted better use of Microsoft 365 and existing Council platforms through guidance, communications, Digital Champions and targeted support, helping Services make more effective use of tools already available.
Information and Data Strategy	Support better use of data and evidence in decision-making	Collected and reported performance evidence, engagement metrics and Digital Maturity Assessment results to demonstrate impact, inform future recommendations and support the case for a permanent digital capability. Also supported Service stakeholders to evidence the need for transformation.
Information and Data Strategy	Embed data-informed service improvement	Used process modelling, business analysis and benefits identification to help Services better understand problems, opportunities, data needs and desired outcomes before selecting technology solutions.
Information and Data Strategy	Improve information governance and responsible data use	Strengthened early assessment of digital requests so that proposed solutions consider data handling, compliance, UK data residency, security and integration requirements before implementation.

7.2

Digital Nation principle	Evidence from Digital Foundations delivery	Strategic alignment and contribution
Inclusive, Ethical and User Focused	Digital access trials with Waste Operations, HR, Payroll, People Development and Unions generated evidence of barriers faced by harder-to-reach staff groups. AI Guidance and AI Policy work also supported safer and more ethical use of emerging technologies.	Demonstrates a user-focused approach that considers staff needs, inclusion, access, fairness, data protection and responsible technology use before scaling digital change.
Digital Leadership and Culture	Digital Week, Digital Bites, the Improvement Hub, the Improvement Network and the Digital Business Partner model increased visibility of digital transformation and encouraged staff, Members and Services to engage with digital learning and lead digital change with support from a dedicated team.	Shows that digital transformation is becoming part of organisational culture and service planning, rather than being viewed as an ICT-only activity.
Collaborative	The Digital Business Partner team coordinated work across Services, Strategic Improvement & Performance, ICT, Digital Innovation, Business Analysis, Procurement, Finance, suppliers and strategic partners. Examples include Licensing, Engage Process, new payment solutions, AI Guidance and Digital Champions.	Provides evidence of a more joined-up model for delivering technology-enabled change, reducing duplication and supporting cross-service transformation.
Data-Driven	The project used DMA scores, engagement statistics, Digital Bites views, Improvement Hub visits, Digital Week engagement, one-to-one support data, new operational requirement volumes and mapped processes to evidence progress and inform recommendations.	Strengthens evidence-based decision-making and supports the case for permanent digital capability, future investment and a more integrated Digital, Data and Technology Strategy.
Technology-Enabled	Through initiatives such as the New Operational Requirements process, new digital systems and payment capabilities, Microsoft 365 adoption, and cloud-first solution reviews, the Council has embedded technology into service design and delivery, enabling more efficient processes, improved user experiences and better service outcomes.	Shows that technology is being positioned as an enabler of transformation, with stronger governance around requirements, procurement, security, integration and strategic fit.

Innovative and Sustainable	The Digital Centre of Excellence, Improvement Hub articles, strategic partner engagement, Digital Week, AI Guidance, process mapping and cloud migration activity all supported innovation and sustainable improvement.	Demonstrates that innovation is being supported in a more structured way, with horizon scanning, best practice, procurement routes and sustainability considered before adoption.
A Skilled Digital Workforce	Digital Bites, one-to-one support, Digital Week, Digital Champions and Microsoft 365 guidance helped staff and Members build practical digital confidence. The DMA: Digital Workforce and Skills score is at 3.23, sitting above the national average.	Provides evidence that the project has strengthened digital confidence, peer learning and workforce capability, supporting the Council's ambition to embed digital and data skills in workforce development.
Secured by Design	AI Guidance clarified which tools are protected by enterprise agreements, while the New Operational Requirements process supports early assessment of security, information governance, data residency, single sign-on, network compatibility and ICT Strategy alignment.	Shows that security, data protection and responsible technology use are being considered earlier in digital change, reducing risk and supporting safer adoption

8. Review Of Team Performance

The project successfully recruited three Digital Business Partners between August and October 2024. Following a change in personnel, the Place Digital Business Partner role was successfully backfilled in February 2025. Despite the challenges associated with establishing a new team and onboarding new colleagues into a complex role, the team has performed exceptionally well.

The Digital Business Partner role requires a broad understanding of digital transformation, business analysis, service improvement, stakeholder engagement, and technology delivery. Throughout the project, the team has demonstrated a strong commitment to building relationships, increasing visibility across the organisation, and supporting services through digital change. The significant volume of activities delivered and the positive results achieved are reflected in the performance metrics and outcomes outlined within this report.

8.1. Project Product Handover

The project team are now all permanent members of staff and will maintain the workstreams put in place through the digital foundations project

8.2. Summary Of Follow-on Actions and Recommendations

1. **Develop a new Digital, Data and Technology Strategy**
    - Build on the progress made through the Digital Foundations project.
    - Align digital, data and ICT priorities into a more integrated transformation roadmap.
    - Underpin the strategy with resourced strategic implementation plans
    - Strengthen executive sponsorship and wider organisational ownership of transformation through the development of Chief Officer Led implementation plans.
2. **Maintain and strengthen the Digital Business Partner team**
    - Continue investment in the Digital Development Lead and Digital Business Partner model.
    - Increase organisational capacity for change and provide ongoing support for service-led transformation.
3. **Strengthen digital leadership across the Council**
    - Develop leaders' understanding of Digital Transformation framing this as modern world service delivery.
    - Embed the principle of understanding problems, opportunities and desired outcomes before considering technology solutions.
4. **Increase technical capability**
    - Increase technical resources to support solution development and design and build on data capacity recognising this as a cornerstone to support, transformation and improvement.
5. **Expand the Digital Centre of Excellence function**
    - Protect dedicated time for innovation research, horizon scanning and engagement with strategic partners.
    - Continue sharing best practice and insights from across local government and the wider public sector.

6. **Deliver a structured innovation and communications programme**
    - Continue developing the Improvement Hub as a central source of improvement and digital insight.
    - Establish a regular programme of innovation-focused communications and case studies.
7. **Grow and sustain the Digital Champions network**
    - Build on the existing community of Digital Champions to increase the adoption of productivity tools to deliver efficiencies.
    - Utilise this group for supporting trials and change management.
8. **Continue extending digital access to harder-to-reach staff groups**
    - Build on trial activity.
    - Continue tracking impacts on training compliance, inclusion, engagement and access to information.
9. **Increase adoption of the New Operational Requirements process**
    - Improve awareness and compliance with the agreed process for progressing technology requests.
    - Encourage earlier engagement to ensure best value, realistic planning and alignment with existing investments.
10. **Embed process modelling and evidence-based improvement**
    - Continue expanding the use of Engage Process and business analysis techniques.
    - Ensure improvement initiatives are driven by evidence, user needs and clearly defined outcomes.
11. **Improve project delivery capability**
    - Continue developing guidance, templates and training resources.
    - Support subject matter experts with guidance for delivering digital projects
12. **Monitor and improve digital maturity**
    - Continue participation in future Digital Maturity Assessments.
    - Focus improvement activity on lower-scoring areas, particularly organisational capacity for change.

9. Lessons

- The resource and coordination effort required to deliver the Council's first Digital Week was underestimated, resulting in delays to publishing the programme. Future events should allocate additional planning capacity and aim to publish the programme at least eight weeks in advance to support diary planning and maximise participation.

- Despite regular communications and guidance on the process for progressing new operational requirements, some technology purchases continue to be initiated outside the established approach. This can limit opportunities to fully assess options, align with existing technology investments, and accurately understand the resources and timescales required for successful implementation. In some cases, this can create unrealistic delivery expectations or increase the risk of service disruption where sufficient transition planning has not been undertaken. Future efforts should focus on strengthening awareness and adoption of the process to ensure technology investments deliver best value and achieve sustainable outcomes for services. In addition, establishing leads within each Service that are able to initiate requests should be considered in order to build on the quality of requests and ensure the organisational objectives can be prioritised.

- While progress has been made in promoting outcome-focused digital change, evidence remains of a technology-first approach to improvement, where solutions are sometimes considered before the problem, opportunity, desired outcomes, and requirements are fully understood. The project has demonstrated the value of facilitating a more structured approach; however, sustained change will require stronger digital leadership across services. The next Digital Strategy and implementation plan provide an opportunity to introduce targeted digital leadership development, helping leaders champion outcome-led transformation and embed the mindset needed to deliver lasting improvement. Technology does not solve business problems alone, digital transformation is about people, process, data and technology.

- Digital projects are often led by subject matter experts who bring valuable service knowledge but may have limited capacity or experience in delivering digital change. As a result, the Digital Team has frequently provided project management and coordination support to help initiatives progress successfully. This highlights an opportunity to strengthen delivery capability through clearer guidance, shared ways of working, and closer collaboration between project managers and ICT colleagues. A cross-functional working group has been established to develop practical guidance, supported by existing PPMO training such as Effective Project Delivery and Benefiting from Change, also templates and resources on the Improvement Hub.

- The project identified a need for dedicated time to support the Digital Team's Centre of Excellence function. Allocating capacity for horizon scanning, engagement with strategic partners and peers, and sharing insights across the organisation will strengthen innovation and continuous improvement. To support this, the team is introducing a rota that provides one week per month for strategic and development activities.

10. Appendix 1 - table summary of new operational requirements progressed (2024-2026)

sys_created_on	number	Service	short_description	State
30/08/2023 08:40	REQ0393072	Corporate	Safety Marker Approach - New joined-up approach to violence and aggression markers/environment/data sharing	Closed
11/01/2024 14:58	REQ0401836	Corporate	Traineasy Access for Elections staff	Closed
02/02/2024 11:53	REQ0403750	Corporate	Time recording/monitoring for Audits (also action tracking and reporting)	Closed
19/02/2024 11:33	REQ0405086	Corporate	BT Phone book being discontinued : customer contact strategy	Closed
08/05/2024 09:31	REQ0411337	Corporate	Implementation of Engage Process Exploration Tool	Closed
18/12/2024 11:54	REQ0430073	Corporate	Link to 'Nudge' function via My money matters and vivup	Closed
04/03/2025 13:59	REQ0435002	Corporate	Request for non-HC user access to Traineasy	Closed
19/03/2025 12:32	REQ0436334	Corporate	Implementation of client management database Advice Pro	Closed
13/05/2025 16:00	REQ0440381	Corporate	Dataverse in Teams	Closed
20/05/2025 10:04	REQ0440852	Corporate	Improvement to Traineasy to allow for 2nd and 3rd Roles to be identified	Closed
26/05/2025 10:07	REQ0441315	Corporate	Restoring Vertical Taskbar Positioning to Enhance Workflow Efficiency in Data Foundations Project	Closed
10/06/2025 11:07	REQ0442627	Corporate	Refining the process for adding new starts to Traineasy LMSx	Closed
12/06/2025 10:01	REQ0442842	Corporate	Improving Processes - New Operational Requirements	Closed
25/06/2025 09:35	REQ0443758	Corporate	Recording engagement and 1:1's - KPI's	Closed
26/06/2025 14:26	REQ0443908	Corporate	ICT Approval for CallSecure PLUS implementation	Closed
22/07/2025 13:40	REQ0445635	Corporate	Enable Clipboard history	Closed
23/07/2025 10:22	REQ0445675	Corporate	Allow Rentsense to access NEC data	Closed
24/07/2025 09:19	REQ0445742	Corporate	Add survey monkey as an app in Teams	Closed
11/09/2025 08:50	REQ0450435	Corporate	ICT Assessment, Procurement and deployment of Digital Champions Management Platform/Managed Service	Closed
16/09/2025 14:42	REQ0450919	Corporate	TVI purchase of software to assist the processing of FOI and data protection requests	Active
21/09/2025 14:41	REQ0451328	Corporate	Payment for Services - Digital Week	Closed
07/10/2025 10:00	REQ0452865	Corporate	Procurement of Complete Control	Closed
25/11/2025 14:37	REQ0456818	Corporate	Space/room booking system	Closed

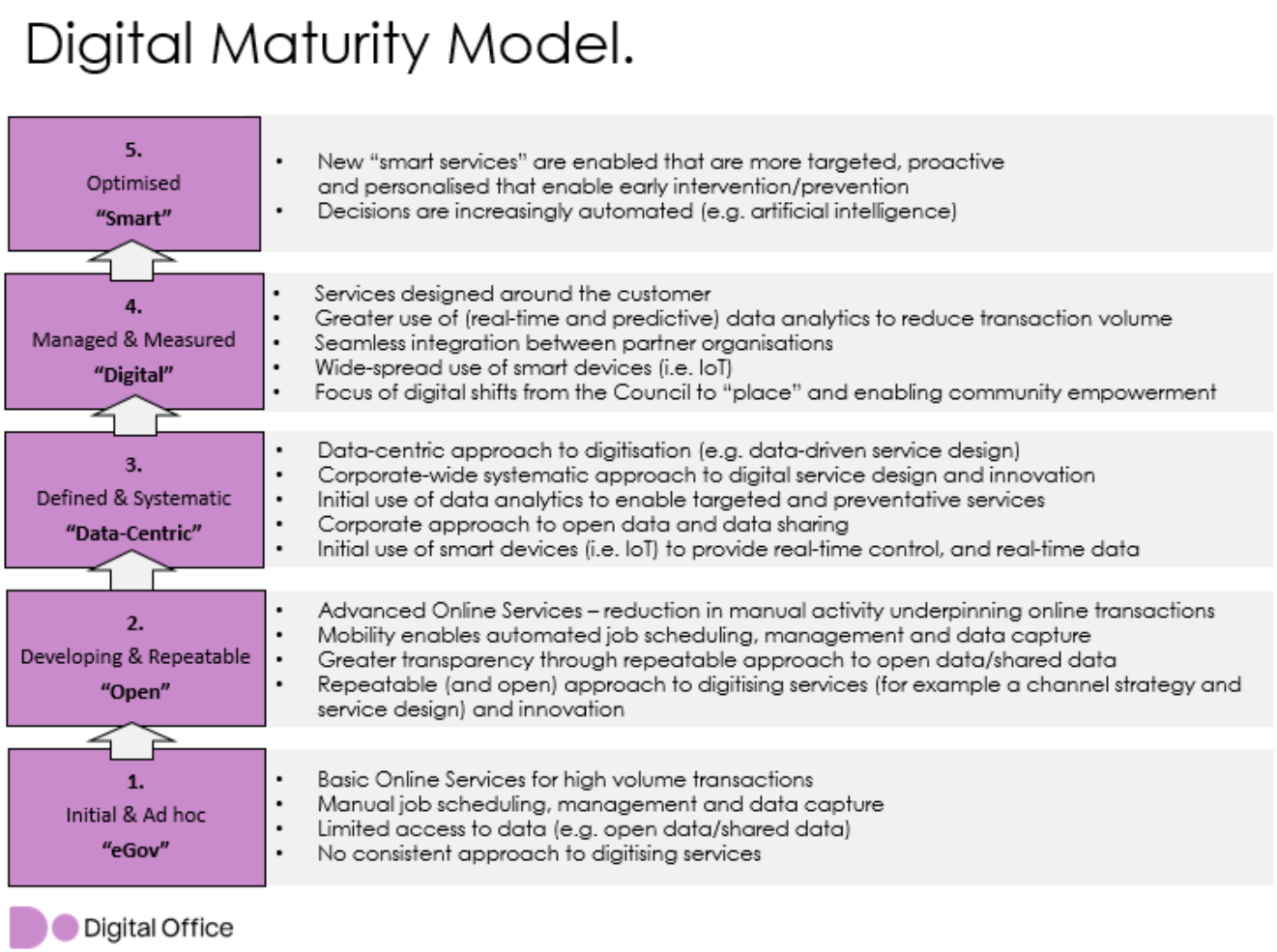
25/11/2025 16:33	REQ0456833	Corporate	Replacement for www.engagehighland.co.uk	Closed
27/11/2025 15:46	REQ0457037	Corporate	System for overtime requests	Closed
09/01/2026 15:10	REQ0459312	Corporate	Scottish Welfare Fund - use of PayPoint to issue Crisis Grants. New contract procurement being undertaken.	Closed
21/02/2026 14:24	REQ0462769	Corporate	Sheriff's Officer Contract - ICT resource required for new provider	Active
02/03/2026 12:35	REQ0463320	Corporate	Improving Process: for new starts in Traineasy	Closed
09/03/2026 14:59	REQ0463760	Corporate	Mobile delivery service - support identifying requirements (hardware/software/process) before design	Active
01/05/2026 13:02	REQ0467598	Corporate	MFA for Altair Pensions	Active
06/05/2026 10:50	REQ0467778	Corporate	Change to process for Petty Cash (imprest)	Active
26/05/2026 10:32	REQ0469201	Corporate	Taxi knowledge tests	Active
27/05/2026 10:06	REQ0469307	Corporate	Direct link between PRMS and Power BI	Closed
30/06/2026 14:11	REQ0471956	Corporate	Adobe Firefly as part of the Adobe Creative Cloud suite	Active
10/07/2026 09:28	REQ0472698	Corporate	Nairn Waste Ops staff Trial - Extending Digital Access	Active
10/07/2026 09:30	REQ0472699	Corporate	Brora Waste Ops staff Trial - Extending Digital Access	Active
10/07/2026 16:45	REQ0472743	Corporate	HLH - Explore the use of Talentlink (01/04/2027)	Active
31/12/2024 15:10	REQ0430389	Corporate	GIS system - upgrade to cloud version	Closed
17/03/2025 10:04	REQ0436070	Corporate	Licensing solution for Liquor and Short-term lets	Active
09/02/2024 12:25	REQ0404380	People	Improving process for home education requests	Closed
29/05/2024 13:42	REQ0413046	People	Use of 'Mind of my own' mobile app for children in care	Closed
26/08/2024 15:03	REQ0420405	People	Solution requested to 'record requests for educational records'	Closed
15/01/2025 10:58	REQ0431337	People	Beam- Magic Notes - trial and implementation	Closed
29/01/2025 17:35	REQ0432548	People	Wifi access for Hostel Children	Closed
07/02/2025 16:56	REQ0433241	People	Newsletter sharing with External Partners	Closed
12/02/2025 09:48	REQ0433463	People	Adult Learning Numeracy	Closed
11/03/2025 15:10	REQ0435667	People	Gaelic translation kit for public meetings	Closed
13/03/2025 11:30	REQ0435889	People	Solution to streamline payments for Gaelic language classes	Closed
27/03/2025 11:08	REQ0437028	People	Replacement for Google Signbuilder (trial at Tain Academy)	Active
13/05/2025 11:30	REQ0440322	People	Connect wildlife Camera to network	Closed
15/05/2025 11:35	REQ0440569	People	Record and Share teams meetings	Closed
19/05/2025 14:27	REQ0440800	People	Mapping software for linguistic statistics	Closed

20/05/2025 15:10	REQ0440928	People	Clinic text reminders	Closed
21/05/2025 15:10	REQ0441048	People	Podcast with St Clements and Ross County FC	Closed
27/05/2025 13:44	REQ0441494	People	User request- Beam Notes Pilot.	Closed
27/05/2025 14:30	REQ0441507	People	Protected Learning Monthly Summary	Closed
03/06/2025 11:42	REQ0442045	People	The Orchard Rota	Active
20/06/2025 11:19	REQ0443480	People	Space for photographs	Closed
06/10/2025 15:15	REQ0452803	People	SEEMIS Replacement	Active
09/10/2025 12:14	REQ0453103	People	Whitelist all unifrog emails.	Closed
14/10/2025 11:19	REQ0453415	People	Microsoft Form Help	Closed
20/11/2025 09:52	REQ0456402	People	Private Family Time- Hardware required for Video Calls.	Closed
21/11/2025 14:45	REQ0456603	People	Shift Planning tool	Closed
01/12/2025 09:39	REQ0457105	People	Gaelic Language in staff profiles	Active
07/01/2026 17:08	REQ0459054	People	Fostering & Adoption Service User Journey and Service redesign (	Active
08/01/2026 17:06	REQ0459242	People	ELearning for Health Visitors	Closed
04/02/2026 08:14	REQ0461299	People	Tracking platform for pupils - Thurso High School	Closed
06/02/2026 10:56	REQ0461590	People	Application for displaying school announcements	Active
13/03/2026 16:37	REQ0464169	People	Electronic Child Health Record	Closed
25/03/2026 14:28	REQ0465030	People	Schools Requesting Mobile Devices To Take Pictures of Children.	Closed
31/03/2026 11:35	REQ0465417	People	Enabling newsletters and subscriber lists	Closed
16/04/2026 15:53	REQ0466404	People	Access to admin space in InVentry - sign-in system - Ardnamurchan & Strontian Cluster	Closed
15/05/2026 12:12	REQ0468546	People	Education- Professional Learning Website	Active
01/06/2026 16:26	REQ0469717	People	InVentry integration with SEEMis	Active
02/06/2026 12:58	REQ0469799	People	My phonak app install - Nairn Academy	Active
02/06/2026 13:30	REQ0469805	People	Project timeline tracker for the Areas of Linguistic Significance (ALS) process	Closed
05/06/2026 15:45	REQ0470136	People	Enhance security by using staff role information held within SEEMiS	Active
10/06/2026 09:53	REQ0470419	People	Website Redesign - The Highland Literacy website	Active
10/06/2026 11:51	REQ0470448	People	Automatic updates for school master list on the website	Active
22/06/2026 15:22	REQ0471346	People	Kingussie High School - automation of school reports	Active
06/07/2026 09:48	REQ0472322	People	Beam Notes- Teams Notification	Active
06/04/2023 12:03	REQ0384561	Place	Change to Garden Waste to allow automatic renewal of service and DD	Active
11/10/2023 11:41	REQ0396077	Place	CRF New Online platform to apply for funding (Community Regeneration Funding)	Active

12/02/2024 15:37	REQ0404535	Place	Travel Desk - deprecation of MS InfoPath - New Solution Required	Active
12/02/2024 17:56	REQ0404553	Place	Plant Hire application - deprecation of MS InfoPath - New Solution Required	Active
08/04/2024 09:41	REQ0409015	Place	Income from online payments for energy efficiency schemes	Closed
03/09/2024 08:47	REQ0421483	Place	Electronic Sign In Process	Active
17/09/2024 13:10	REQ0422773	Place	Nurse call system to be installed across all public toilets	Closed
02/10/2024 11:43	REQ0424156	Place	Request for Power BI Pro licence and diamond workspace	Closed
22/11/2024 15:14	REQ0428232	Place	Procurement of Cloud based Routeware software	Closed
22/01/2025 15:51	REQ0431989	Place	To re-establish the sales page/shopping cart function on the Great Glen way website	Closed
03/02/2025 15:20	REQ0432803	Place	Proposal for new approach to Homeless Accomodation applications	Active
14/02/2025 12:07	REQ0433740	Place	Smart Phones for multiple users (waste)	Closed
24/02/2025 11:04	REQ0434293	Place	Software solution to manage Traffic Regulation Orders	Closed
13/03/2025 11:26	REQ0435886	Place	Upgrade to OmniHUB	Closed
17/03/2025 11:26	REQ0436085	Place	Corran Ferry Ticketing System Transformation	Active
28/03/2025 09:09	REQ0437107	Place	PDQ machines for Catering	Closed
14/04/2025 11:11	REQ0438162	Place	Solution for storing offline data on phone (bat surveys)	Closed
28/04/2025 15:19	REQ0439173	Place	Integrating Firmstep with CRM	Active
08/05/2025 11:08	REQ0439953	Place	Sway application for Housing newsletter	Closed
14/05/2025 11:15	REQ0440449	Place	Offline Housing Database	Active
02/06/2025 06:28	REQ0441849	Place	Require solution to send SMS messages from laptop to trades	Closed
06/06/2025 17:13	REQ0442456	Place	Abnormal Loads Software	Closed
09/06/2025 14:23	REQ0442560	Place	Case Management system for Members	Active
11/07/2025 13:16	REQ0444984	Place	Storage solution for large sized video files of road condition and traffic count data files	Closed
15/07/2025 12:52	REQ0445176	Place	Cloud solution for Building Management System - replacing data centre servers	Active
21/07/2025 15:01	REQ0445552	Place	Publish live feed on the Council's website from Masternaut - showing gritter locations-Roads	Active
25/07/2025 12:01	REQ0445838	Place	Uploading weather cam images to Council's website	Active
19/08/2025 08:24	REQ0447830	Place	Form for Gaelic classes	Closed
21/08/2025 15:22	REQ0448432	Place	New form required for building control	Closed
15/09/2025 13:59	REQ0450767	Place	Delivery Plan - Roads Monitoring AI cameras	Active
15/09/2025 14:02	REQ0450770	Place	Delivery Plan - Roads - route optimisation software	Active
01/10/2025 15:17	REQ0452386	Place	Digitised job card system_ROADS	Active

27/10/2025 15:17	REQ0454253	Place	Change of Provider CDE (common data environment) cloud-hosted platform	Active
28/10/2025 14:23	REQ0454398	Place	Implement Ezytreev	Closed
18/11/2025 15:30	REQ0456164	Place	Road Safety Improvement Data	Closed
12/01/2026 11:57	REQ0459397	Place	Request for Beam Magic Notes	Closed
24/01/2026 10:27	REQ0460520	Place	In Cab Devices in Waste Refuse Collection Vehicles	Active
06/02/2026 16:52	REQ0461644	Place	Publishing RPO's from Concerto - workaround needed following SWAN2 delivery	Closed
13/02/2026 11:17	REQ0462167	Place	SRWR Aurora app on my personal phone	Closed
19/02/2026 13:09	REQ0462639	Place	Provide a safer working environment for lone/remote workers (Rangers)	Active
26/02/2026 17:48	REQ0463155	Place	Read-only access to the NEC database	Closed
03/03/2026 16:31	REQ0463460	Place	Connecting handheld devices to internet	Closed
04/03/2026 15:57	REQ0463548	Place	New NEC4 Contract Management System	Active
05/03/2026 08:36	REQ0463567	Place	New hardware and software for noise complaints	Active
31/03/2026 12:31	REQ0465428	Place	Form for small grants	Closed
02/04/2026 11:17	REQ0465676	Place	Setting Up On Premises Data Gateway: Publishing via PowerBI Service	Active
13/04/2026 15:03	REQ0466115	Place	ICT Review - potential weighbridge software change Weightron Bilanciai Ltd	Closed
14/04/2026 15:06	REQ0466206	Place	Use of AI	Closed
23/04/2026 18:06	REQ0466992	Place	AI for PPP Contract Management	Active
13/05/2026 14:56	REQ0468374	Place	Software to enable in-house completion of non domestic EPCs /NDEAs	Active
15/05/2026 11:40	REQ0468539	Place	Housing Perks App	Active
03/06/2026 10:37	REQ0469886	Place	Telematics replacement - deployment support	Active
03/06/2026 13:37	REQ0469917	Place	Copilot Premium licence request	Active
04/06/2026 12:13	REQ0469997	Place	Operations & Maintenance Service review - Streamlining Asset Management Processes	Active
12/06/2026 16:25	REQ0470686	Place	Explore tools to manage database of contacts for consultation	Active
16/06/2026 14:42	REQ0470919	Place	THC bus service website and booking app	Active
21/11/2024 09:38	REQ0428097	Place	Cashless Catering upgrade to a cloud-based system	Active
25/04/2025 15:29	REQ0439034	Place	Tranman replacement with Jaama Key 2	Active

11. Appendix 2 - DMA Model and results with commentary



Scored on	23/24	25/26	Difference	LGDO Notes	Notes from Digital Foundations/Strategic Improvement & Performance	Recommendations from the Digital Office
Digital Maturity (overall)	2.59	2.63	+0.04	The Highland Council received 372 responses in total, which is 49 more than the overall average of completions of the automated survey for the participating councils, however 180 less responses than the previous assessment.	The score is lower than anticipated, which may be partly due to a reduced response rate this year. We have provided feedback to the Digital Office on simplifying the survey to encourage wider participation. It's also worth noting, based on discussions with leading Digital Transformation experts Gartner, that achieving a score of three represents strong digital maturity; organisations reaching this level across Europe are performing at an advanced digital standard.	N/A

Scored on	23/24	25/26	Difference	LGDO Notes	Notes from Digital Foundations/Strategic Improvement & Performance	Recommendations from the Digital Office
Pillar: Digital Workforce and Skills	3.11	3.23	+0.12	This continues to be one of the Council's strongest areas and it sits +0.11 above the national average of 3.12. The results highlight strong capability growth across the workforce and increased confidence in the digital tools and learning available	This highlights the success seen through 'Digital Bites', 'Digital Week' and 1:1 support provided by the Digital Business Partner team.	Embed digital skills in organisational culture and processes Provide accessible, tailored and mandatory training Allocate protected time and resources for learning Improve communication, peer support and awareness
Pillar: Capacity for Change	2.18	2.30	+0.12	The Highland Council scored 2.30 for the Capacity for Change pillar, improving from 2.18 in 2023. This score is above the national average of 2.26 (+0.04)	This continues to be one of the lowest-scoring areas, indicating that building readiness, confidence and consistency around change remains a key priority for the organisation.	N/A

Scored on	23/24	25/26	Difference	LGDO Notes	Notes from Digital Foundations/Strategic Improvement & Performance	Recommendations from the Digital Office
Pillar: Digital Competency	2.45	2.36	-0.09	This places the Council -0.13 below the national average of 2.49, indicating that while staff feel moderately confident in their digital capabilities, there remains an opportunity to strengthen core competencies and ensure more consistent capability across teams.	It should be noted that the slight decrease in survey responses and their roles in the organisation could be impacting this score and this is based on a self-assessment of the competency of oneself and colleagues.	Encourage operational middle management teams to share their best practices, tools, and techniques Develop targeted training to address digital skills gaps, focusing on the specific tools, technologies and competencies needed by teams less connected to service delivery.

Scored on	23/24	25/26	Difference	LGDO Notes	Notes from Digital Foundations/Strategic Improvement & Performance	Recommendations from the Digital Office
Pillar: Vision & Strategy	2.39	2.48	+0.09	With a score of 2.48, The Highland Council has shown strong improvement in the Vision and Strategy pillar compared to its 2023 score of 2.39. This result also exceeds the overall council average of 2.43 by +0.05	Establishing a team of Digital Business Partners to deliver the Digital Strategy demonstrates how we've turned strategic intent into practical action, providing dedicated support for service-led transformation across the Council.	Re-establish a clear, accessible Digital Strategy narrative using simple language, visuals and service-relevant examples. Broaden communication channels to reach all parts of the organisation. Implement a Council-wide Digital Strategy "Story of Change" pack outlining priorities and strategic direction. Establish a Change Agent Network with representation from frontline, operational, middle and senior management. Address digital exclusion by embedding inclusive design and maintaining non-digital access routes.

Scored on	23/24	25/26	Difference	LGDO Notes	Notes from Digital Foundations/Strategic Improvement & Performance	Recommendations from the Digital Office
Pillar: Research & Analysis	2.47	2.51	+0.04	The Highland Council scored 2.51 in the Research and Analysis pillar, showing an uplift from the 2023 score of 2.47. This result places the council slightly below the national average of 2.54 (–0.03), yet it still reflects forward movement in how the organisation gathers and uses insight to inform its decision-making.	There is an opportunity here to make this work more visible and share insights from research and analysis more frequently through our communication channels; Improvement Hub and Digital Bites.	Establish a structured research framework for gathering evidence from surveys, focus groups, interviews, analytics and community insight. Expand continuous feedback loops using digital channels, short polls, online forms and embedded service touchpoints. Conduct in-depth service process reviews to identify inefficiencies and bottlenecks. Strengthen partnerships with universities and research bodies to bring in best practice, innovation and benchmarking. Develop the digital centre of excellence and the Improvement Hub to support organisation-wide innovation and transformation. Build internal analytical capability through training in data literacy, qualitative analysis and research methods.

Scored on	23/24	25/26	Difference	LGDO Notes	Notes from Digital Foundations/Strategic Improvement & Performance	Recommendations from the Digital Office
Pillar: Data & Technology	2.92	2.90	-0.02	The Highland Council achieved a score of 2.90 for the Data and Technology pillar, a slight decrease from its 2023 score of 2.92. This places the council -0.11 below the national average of 3.01, indicating that while there is a solid foundation in data use and technology adoption, further development in data integration, quality, analytics and tooling would help close the gap with wider national performance	This drop in score could reflect a growing awareness of where we are at with Data Maturity.	Improve data quality and integration Invest in analytics platforms and capability Upskill staff in data literacy and analysis Rationalise and modernise storage practices Standardise data collection methods and tools

APPENDIX 2

Highland Council

My Council Programme

Closure Report

DOCUMENT DETAILS		
Document		**Author**
Ref:	Programme Closure Report	Scott Clement / Dan Scott
Revision:	1.0	Project Manager / Strategic Lead
Status:	FINAL	ICT Services

Distribution

NAME	TITLE	SERVICE
	My Council Programme Board	

Change History

REVISION	DATE	AUTHOR	CHANGE SUMMARY
0.1	11/06/26	Scott Clement	1st Draft
0.2	14/07/26	Scott Clement	Updated feedback from Dan S
1.0	29/07/26	Scott Clement	Final amendments updated

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary 3
2. Programme Overview 4
3. Delivery Performance 7
4. Governance and Assurance 11
5. Risks and Issues 13
6. Financial Summary 14
7. Lessons Learned 15
8. Transition to Business as Usual (BAU) 16
9. Formal Closure Statement 17

1. Executive Summary

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 programme has achieved 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. The Programme Manager has moved into a new position and there are no funds available to initiative further projects, as such, in accordance with best practice, the Programme has reached a natural and appropriate point for closure. The remaining My Highland project will continue 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.

2. Programme Overview

The My Council Programme has enabled modern and integrated customer contact across The Highland Council, resulting in a seamless and consistent experience for citizens regardless of how they engage with services. The programme's strategic outcomes have successfully placed the customer at the heart of service design, improved operational efficiency through data-led insights, reduced duplication, and enhanced overall service quality and accessibility.

The programme objectives outlined below established a clear framework for the transformation of customer contact and service delivery:

- Deliver a joined-up, seamless customer contact experience across all channels, supported by increased use of digital solutions to improve outcomes for citizens, staff, and the Council.
- Establish a customer-centred approach to service delivery, with consistent and efficient processes across digital, telephone, and face-to-face interactions.
- Strengthen the use of data-driven insights to inform delivery and enable continuous improvement beyond programme closure.

These objectives informed the development of several key projects, as outlined below.

Project	Description	Status
Project 1 – Customer Contact Strategy	The project delivered the production of a Highland Council Customer Contact Strategy, a Customer Charter/Agreement, and established & published Customer Service Standards for each Service	**Complete**
Project 2 – Data-Led and Customer Informed	The project was focused on ensuring that both the work through the lifecycle of the programme and the longer-term cycle of continuous improvement is informed by data and information that provides business intelligence. It became apparent through the lifecycle of the Programme that the scope of this project was far broader than My Highland. As such the project under My Highland was closed and the work transferred to the Data Foundations Project which sits within the Corporate Solutions Portfolio.	**Closed /Transferred**
Project 3 – My Highland (formally end to end customer journey)	The MyHighland project is set to deliver a new customer account to empower delivered customer specific tailored content, further enable self-service and customer feedback loops. The initial focus is on a proof of concept "Council Tax Online & Paperless Billing service", which will act as a gateway for the continued development and addition of other services such as, bin calendars, find your Councillor and reporting road faults.	**In Progress**
Project 4A – Strategic Review (Workstream)	This workstream used the Customer Experience Strategy framework to conduct a review of generic requests within the Service Centre which did not have an assigned category for calls. Increasing staff admin time to manage customer requests. Assessment discovered that the Housing Service needed to improve their processes to support customers. This led to the council conducting a Housing LEAN review to further enhance their	**Complete**

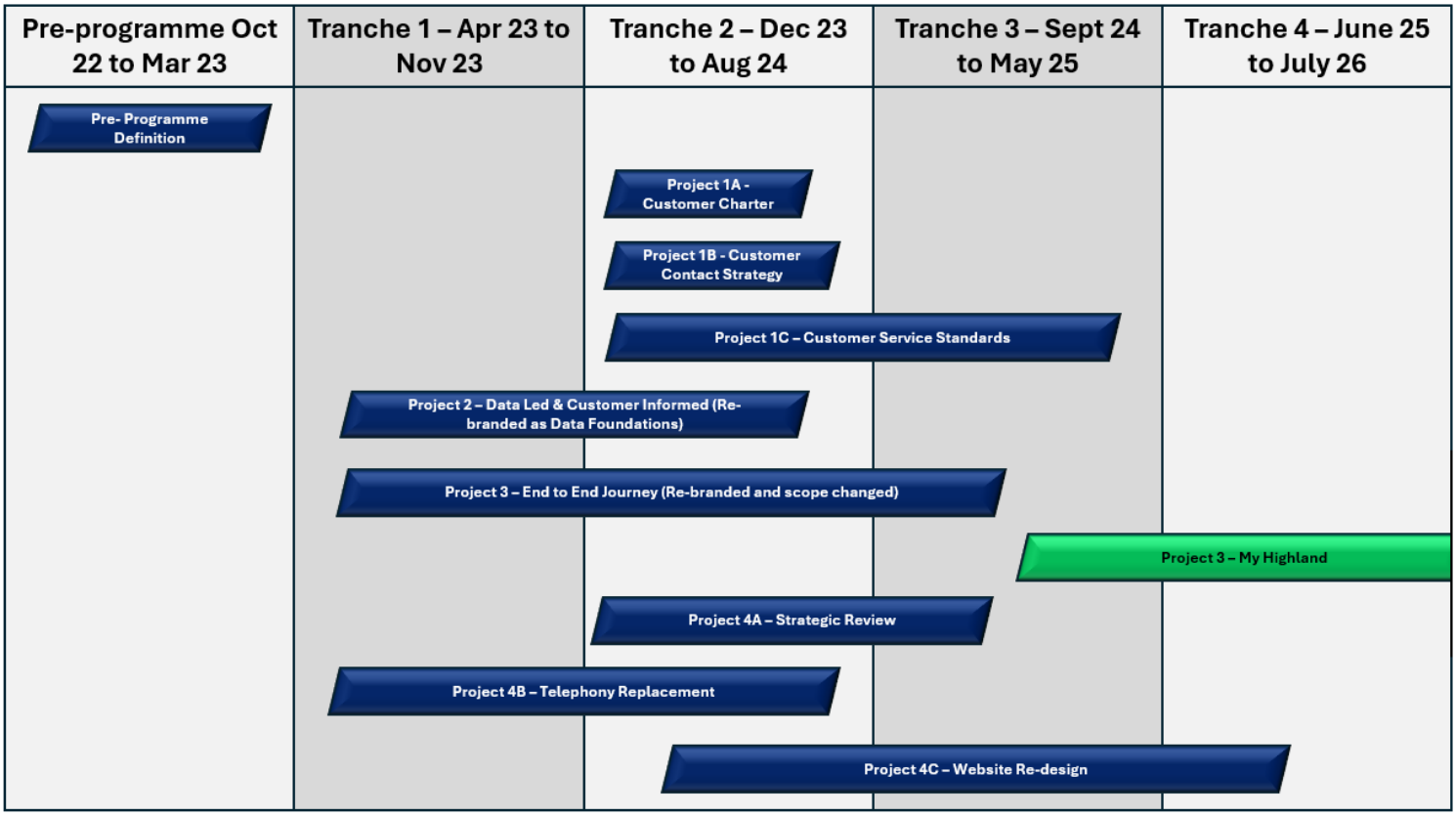
	processes and procedures. Several key actions such as scheduling, call routing and technical system changes were identified and implemented to enhance the service for both council staff and customers, this led to an increased customer experience, customer satisfaction, first contact resolution and more efficient use of Council resources as evidenced in a performance report from 2024/2025 which saw the average time taken to complete emergency repairs for the first quarter of 2024/25 to be 3.4 hours, reduced from 10.5 hours in quarter one of 2022/23. For non-emergency repairs, the report noted a significant improvement from the previous quarter by reducing the time to 6.1 days. The Scottish Housing Network benchmark for 2022/23 was 8.7 days.	
Project 4B – Telephony	The Highland Council ICT Strategy (2022-2027), approved by the council Corporate Resources Committee in September 2022, described an ambitious vision and plan to improve access to information and communication through technology and thus enhance the ability of ICT to meet the future requirements of the Council. The Cloud Telephony project was initiated to deliver key ICT Strategy Programme outcomes. The project aim was to replace a legacy telephony system for both corporate and education. Offering a single digital council solution, that offered staff to work from anywhere without hardware restrictions and improved business analytics.	**Complete**
Project 4C – Web Redesign	The My Council Programme recognised the continued shift in how customers want to interact with the Highland Council, with growing expectations for accessible, user-friendly digital services. A review of the current website -guided by analytics, customer feedback, and an assessment of the online customer journey confirmed that a full transition to a new website platform was necessary. The Website Redesign Project aimed to modernise the council's digital presence to better meet user needs and comply with key legislative and technical requirements.	**Complete**

The My Council Programme established 10 key milestones to monitor delivery progress. Most of these milestones have been successfully completed, with only those relating to the My Highland project remaining in progress.

Date	Description	Status
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Jun 24	My Council Programme: Customer Charter Implemented with staff	**Completed Jun 24**
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Sep 24	My Council Programme: Customer Contact Strategy agreed	**Completed Sept 24**
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Mar 25	My Council Programme: Assessment of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system	**Completed May 25**
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Oct 25	My Council Programme: Customer Service Standards Published	**Completed Sep 25**
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Feb 26	My Council Programme: New redesigned website in place	**Completed Feb 26**

Starts Sep 25 / Completes Jul 26	My Council Programme: My Highland 1 – Online Account Functionality Available	**In Progress**
Starts Feb 26 / Completes Oct 26	My Council Programme: My Highland 2 – Online Account Bill Available	**In Progress**
Starts Feb 26 / Completes Jan 27	My Council Programme: My Highland 3 – Paperless Billing Functionality Available	**In Progress**
Starts Jan 27 / Completes Feb 27	My Council Programme: My Highland 4 – Council Tax Online Public Launch	Not Started
Starts Oct 26 / Completes May 27	My Council Programme: My Highland 5 – Council Tax Online – Public Engagement for 2027/2028 Bill Run	Not Started

Fig 1 – My Council Programme Road Map



The programme's success was driven by strong engagement from key stakeholders, including Elected Members and operational services.

Senior leadership provided clear direction and assurance, while Strategic Leads ensured that changes were implemented effectively across services.

The inclusion of Elected Members on the Programme Board, alongside input from the Redesign Board throughout the programme lifecycle, was a critical success factor. This ensured that customer needs and service quality remained central to all key decisions and outputs.

Stakeholder engagement was broad and effective throughout, supporting delivery and reinforcing organisational alignment. Ownership of programme outputs and future benefits is now embedded within operational teams as described in section 9, ensuring continuity beyond programme closure.

3. Delivery Performance

The programme agreed six core outcomes as outlined below to support the council's strategic objectives for improved customer satisfaction when interacting with the council and efficiencies from the services offered.

Ref	Description
1	Customers will have multiple ways to contact us, and they all will receive the same customer experience
2	Customers will be kept informed of any progress and the timescales we are working to
3	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
4	We focus on getting it right for customers the first time, wherever this is possible
5	Customers can view performance against meeting our published timescales
6	Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations

With transfer of the work under Project 2 - Data Led & Customer informed, to the Data Foundations (DF) Project, the outcome stating that "Customers will be kept informed of any progress and timescales we are working to" was Identified as now being dependant on the DF Project. As such, in accordance with good governance this outcome was removed from scope.

The programme has successfully delivered the majority of its planned outcomes with transformation but all but one of the projects completed and only My Highland continuing. Key achievements include improved customer access, increased digital capability, and stronger service resilience.

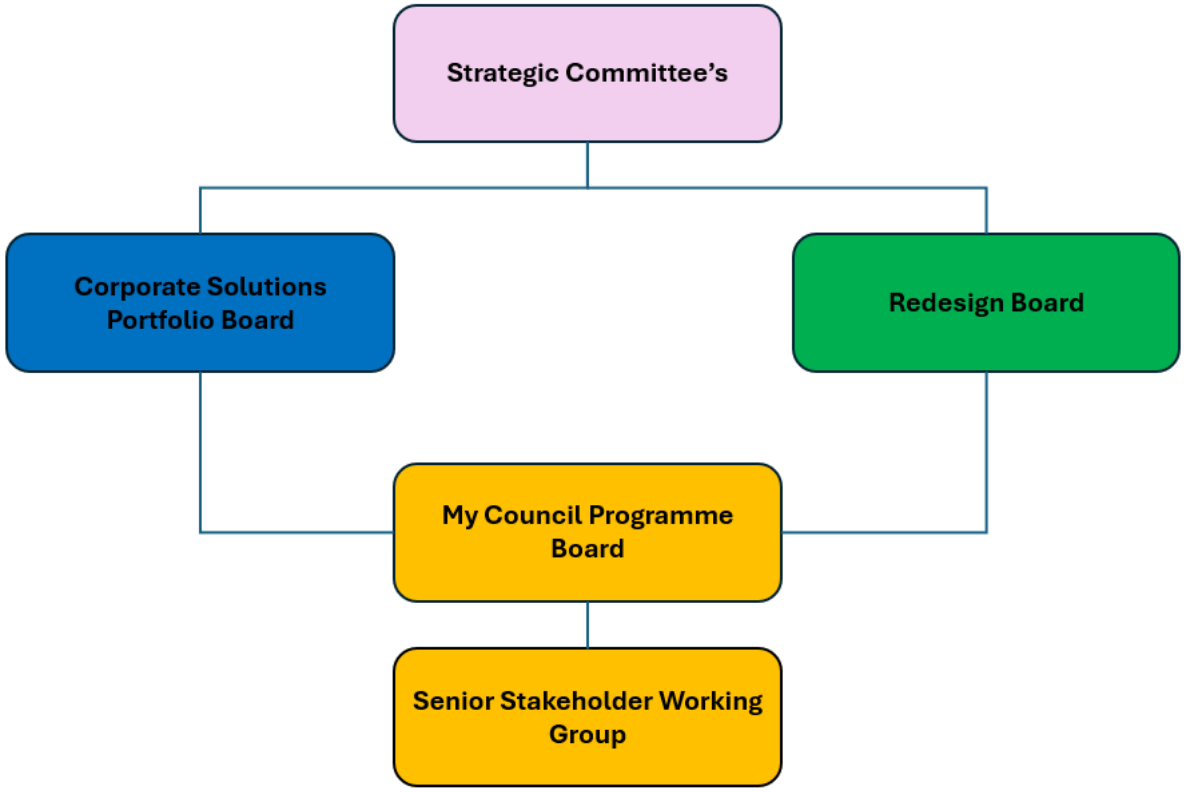
Project	Output	Outcome	Status	Benefit
Customer Contact Strategy	Customer Charter	1. Customers will have multiple ways to contact us, and they all will receive the same customer experience. 2. Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations.	**Achieved**	**Create** a standardised and consistent approach to service design and delivery which supports and an improved customer experience and is the foundation for the Customer Experience Strategy. This is an enabling programme outcome that defined the core principles and expectations for customer engagement through the Customer Charter, in turn, creating the framework that underpinned the development of the Customer Experience Strategy.
Customer Contact Strategy	Customer Experience Strategy	1. 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. 2. We focus on getting it right for customers the first time, wherever this is possible. 3. Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations.	**Achieved**	Alongside the customer charter this is an enabling programme outcome which **creates** a consistent, customer-centred approach to service delivery, improving the customer experience through the adoption of new ways of working. The Strategy is already being delivered through the approach to the design and delivery of the new website, the creation and ongoing adoption of the Target Operating Model for Web content and ownership as well as the development of the My Highland Customer Account. Benefits will continue to be realised post programme closure as set out under the carry forward actions.
My Highland Project	New Online Customer Account	1. 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. 2. We focus on getting it right for customers the first time, wherever this is possible. 3. Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations.	**In Progress**	**Create** a unified customer account to improve the customer experience and provide a more seamless experience across multiple services by combining access to services such as Council Tax, Bin Calendars and reporting tools through a single account. The design and delivery of the customer account is driven by the new Customer Experience Strategy. Benefits will continue to be realised post programme closure as outlined in the carry forward actions.

Customer Contact Methods	New Organisational Telephony System	1. We focus on getting it right for customers the first time, wherever this is possible. 2. Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations.	**Achieved**	**Reduce** supervisory resource in the customer contact centre time by up to 25 hours per week, enabling greater focus on value-added activities and improving service centre resilience. Success has been evidenced through a review by Customer Services with a report to identify the reduced administrative effort and time savings.
Customer Contact Methods	Highland Council Website – Target Operating Model	1. We focus on getting it right for customers the first time, wherever this is possible. 2. Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations.	**In Progress**	Because of the Customer Experience Strategy, this is an enabling outcome which **creates** a new way of working to standardise the approach to web content and promote a web-first approach to communication. This provides the foundation for improved staff efficiency, greater accountability for content management and an enhanced customer experience. These benefits will be realised progressively as the Target Operating Model becomes embedded within operations following programme closure, with any remaining actions set out in the carry-forward actions section.
Customer Contact Methods	Redesigned Website	1. We focus on getting it right for customers the first time, wherever this is possible. 2. Customers can view performance against meeting our published timescales. 3. Services are designed with customer's needs and contact expectations.	**Achieved**	The Target Operating Model supports the Council's customer-driven, web-first approach by embedding the RASCAL principles, ensuring information and services remain: • Relevant • Accurate • Searchable • Clear • Accessible • Legal This makes it easier for customers to find information and complete services online. As a result of RASCAL, the new website has introduced enhanced functionality, improved

				navigation and clearer, more accessible content to improve the customer experience. The customer's experience is measured through a feedback module available on every webpage, providing a consistent method for capturing user feedback. Performance will be measured using Customer Satisfaction (CSAT) scores. The baseline is 43%, recorded through a comparable survey of the previous website in 2023. The target is to increase the satisfaction rating to 70% or above within 12 months of launch. Performance will be reviewed annually through business-as-usual governance arrangements to support the ongoing delivery of this benefit.

4. Governance and Assurance

Fig 2 – My Council Programme Governance Structure



The programme maintained a comprehensive governance structure, with clear separation between strategic oversight, delivery management, and assurance functions.

Governance boards operated effectively to provide direction, monitor progress, and manage risks, supported by defined leadership roles and structured reporting. The Portfolio Management Office as part of the Strategic Improvement and Performance team ensured consistency in controls, assurance, and programme management disciplines.

Governance arrangements were robust throughout and played a critical role in enabling effective decision-making, risk management, and delivery assurance

The programme comprised several key roles:

Role	Responsibility
Council Members	Key responsibility for ensuring the programme was aligned with community needs, council priorities and providing value for public money.
Programme Sponsor	Key responsibility for strategic direction of the programme
Senior Responsible Officer	Key responsibility for decisions and alignment to corporate outcomes
Responsible Officer	Key responsibility for programme, controls, assurance and programme management disciplines.
Programme Manager	Key responsibility for the successful day-to-day leadership of the programme.
Project Managers	Key responsibility for the successfully delivery of the project's within the programme.

The governance structured agreed the following key decisions that were influential in how the programme moved in a strategic direction and supported other council initiatives.

Description	Impact
Customer Experience Strategy to be embedded into the new operational requirements process	The decision was made to ensure that the organisation was adopting the new way of working from the beginning of any new change request. This supported the mitigation of a key risk “Scope and Scale of Organisational Change”
My Council Programme board agreed to define and own a key risk for Content Ownership within the Web Redesign Project	The project agreed to prioritise an early assessment of content and enable organisational adoption to a new way of working, where service took ownership of their content by ensuring it was RASCAL for their customers: • Relevant • Accurate • Searchable • Clear • Accessible
The My Council Programme board agreed the approach for persona's looking at gathering data based on demographics, behavioural data, feedback and qualitative input. Then look at segmenting our audience based on demographic, behavioural and geographical to create personas which are data driven.	This decision underpinned the fundamentals for the Customer Experience Strategy which aims to put the customers at the heart of what the council does and was influential in shaping how the new website would be designed.

Progress was monitored through regular reporting, including highlight reports and risk and issue logs. Formal change control processes ensured that variations in scope, cost, and timeline were appropriately managed.

Assurance was provided through periodic reviews and internal checks, which confirmed that the programme remained on track and aligned with its objectives. Overall, governance arrangements were effective and supported successful delivery.

5. Risks and Issues

As would be expected, the programme encountered a range of strategic and operational risks during delivery including governance maturity, resource capacity, and alignment across projects which are summarised in the table below. The risks which were identified and managed in line with good programme and project management principles supporting effective delivery of the required outcomes., resulting in the programme closing with no outstanding risks.

Risk/ Issue	Description	Mitigating Action	Outcome
Gaps in Programme Management Role	Early in delivery, a gap in dedicated programme management capacity was identified, impacting strategic oversight and delivery pace. This was proactively addressed through the appointment of a dedicated Programme Manager, alongside strengthened programme controls and work planning. As a result, governance and delivery improved significantly, enabling more effective coordination and progress across projects.	Recruitment and assignment of a dedicated Programme Manager. Introduced clear work breakdown structures and applied a structured delivery methodology.	Improved governance and delivery pace following appointment of dedicated Programme Manager.
Uncontrolled Scope Creep	As delivery progressed, there was potential for scope expansion as objectives evolved. This was effectively managed through strong governance, clear scope control, and regular alignment between programme and project teams, ensuring delivery remained focused on agreed outcomes	Regular oversight by the programme manager to good programme principles. Strong communication between programme and project managers for consistent alignment to the programme objectives.	Scope effectively controlled through governance, ensuring delivery remained aligned to objectives.
Fragmented governance and inconsistent reporting	A risk was identified relating to inconsistent processes and governance arrangements, with the potential to delay programme delivery. This was addressed through clearly defined roles and standardised working practices, resulting in improved governance, reporting, accountability, and supporting more effective programme delivery.	Agreed and defined roles and responsibilities established to ensure accountability. Standardised tools, meeting structures and work planning to improve efficiency and provide clear reporting mechanisms.	Standardised governance implemented, leading to improved reporting and accountability.
Insufficient internal communications	A risk was identified relating to unclear communication, with the potential to delay programme delivery. This was addressed through the introduction of a clear communication plan and agreed reporting mechanisms with senior stakeholders, resulting in improved stakeholder engagement and increased awareness of programme objectives.	Using project discipline, a clear and easy to understand communication plan was created. Regular checkpoint meetings with critical services to improve two-way communication on the programme delivery.	Improved stakeholder engagement and increased awareness across services
Insufficient Resource Capacity	A risk was identified relating to competition for resources alongside operational demands, with the potential to impact timelines and delivery outputs. This was managed through prioritisation of programme activity, supported by clear resource planning and business case justification for additional capacity where required, resulting in sustained progress and delivery of key programme outcomes.	A business case was required to secure additional resource dedicated to the programme. Resource mapping and workload prioritisation to support programme objectives.	Prioritisation and business case approach ensured critical delivery was maintained

6. Financial Summary

The My Council programme was delivered within an approved budget of £500k, the programme is 17k under budget as noted in the outline below. This reflects strong financial control and effective prioritisation throughout the programme lifecycle.

Programme Expenditure

Budget - Earmarked Reserves (EMR)	£0.500m
24/25 Actual Spend	£0.226m
25/26 Actual Spend	£0.257m
Balance Forecast FY26-27	£0.000m
EMR Underspend	**£0.017m**

Total Cost Breakdown

Staff Total Spend - Actual	£0.345m
Supplier Total Spend - Actual	£0.138m
TOTAL	**£0.500m**

The Programme Manager was responsible for reporting on the programme's budget position to the Programme Board. Reporting was undertaken on a quarterly basis in line with the Board's schedule, with exceptions made where urgent financial matters required earlier escalation.

The Programme Board retained overall decision-making authority for the programme budget. Through established governance arrangements, the programme demonstrated strong compliance with the Council's financial procedures and maintained a positive financial position throughout its lifecycle. The financial control and management were well supported by the Business Solutions Finance Team and is a positive example of effective budget management.

7. Lessons Learned

Overall, the programme represents a significant achievement, delivering meaningful change in a challenging delivery context. The evidence shows that risks were consistently identified and managed, even where complexities such as evolving scope, stakeholder expectations and capacity constraints arose. Importantly, the programme has created a rich set of lessons which, if embedded into future delivery, will further strengthen control, accelerate decision-making and improve outcomes. This reflects a mature and learning-focused approach to programme management.

Lesson	**Description** (What Happened to us)	**Recommendation** (So We recommend)
Early clarity on resource requirements is critical to successful programme delivery.	The programme experienced challenges with resource capacity, with multiple risks raised during delivery. For example, key project resources were required to support operational pressures, which impacted delivery timelines.	Future programmes should establish clear resource plans at initiation, align resources to delivery tranches, and ensure dedicated programme capacity is protected from operational pressures.
Strong governance and clear scope control must be established at the outset.	The programme experienced inconsistencies in governance and reporting. For example, roles and decision-making responsibilities were not clearly defined at early stages, leading to delays in decision-making.	Future programmes should define governance structures, approval routes, and scope tolerances at initiation to support faster decision-making and control.
Programme delivery must prioritise business outcomes over technology solutions.	Elements of delivery were at risk of being technology-led without fully defined processes. For example, the telephony system implementation progressed ahead of established operational procedures, limiting early effectiveness.	Future programmes should focus delivery on business outcomes and benefits, not technology. The organisation should ensure a strong business case and options appraisal discipline.
Customer needs must be embedded from the outset of programme design.	Early stages of delivery lacked sufficient direct customer input, which impacted service design and alignment. For example, the web redesign progressed with a focus on the core website, rather than the full end-to-end customer journey, including interaction with online forms, limiting early effectiveness.	Whilst this was addressed during the programme, future programmes should include early and ongoing user engagement in service design, testing, and change control processes.
Clear decision-making structures and escalation routes are essential to maintaining delivery pace.	Decision-making was at times unclear, with limited visibility of ownership and resolution points. For example, decisions were sometimes not clearly captured as such, reducing accountability and clarity of ownership.	Future programmes should establish clear decision-making frameworks, defined responsibilities, and tracked decision logs to support timely resolution.

8. Transition to Business as Usual (BAU)

The My Council Programme successfully delivered strategic value, operational efficiencies, new frameworks and a better understanding of customer first. Below outlines the projects within the programme which led to this success, their current position and the follow-up work that will occur after the programme has closed. Benefits are often realised after the closure of projects and programmes; the ownership and delivery of the carry forward actions are critical to ensuring that ensures that the outcomes delivered through the programme will continue to be developed and benefits realised.

Project	Carry forward actions	Owner	Commence By	Target Date
Programme	Undertake a post-implementation review to evaluate the success of the programme outcomes and the extent to which new capability is being adopted and benefits realised. The review will draw upon performance measures, customer feedback and evidence of service alignment to provide an informed assessment of programmes success.	Alison Clark – Chief Officer – Housing & Communities	6 Months after programme closure	9 Months after programme closure
Customer Experience Strategy	Promote the Customer Experience Strategy training module through internal communication channels, including newsletters, Viva Engage and team meetings, to encourage staff participation. Completion rates will be monitored and reported after six months against agreed uptake targets, with recommendations made to address any gaps in engagement.	Jane Ross – Service Lead for Housing, Policy and Communities.	Immediately	6 Months after programme closure
Customer Contact Methods	Monitor and report on supervisory time savings and administrative workload reductions to assess whether the expected efficiency benefits are being realised. Performance will be reviewed after 6 months to evaluate the impact on service resilience and the effective redeployment of supervisory capacity.	Jane Ross – Service Lead for Housing, Policy and Communities.	Immediately	6 Months after programme closure
My Highland	Utilise various communication methods to promote the Council Tax Online account. User registration numbers will be monitored and reported annually against agreed targets starting at 3% for year one as outline in the project benefits. The report will be used to assess progress	Gillian MacRae - Service Delivery Manager for Revenues and Commercialisation	Launch of the new account	1 year after the launch of Council Tax Online.

	and inform future promotional activity.			
Web Redesign	Implement the Highland Council Website Target Operating Model through the delivery of training and standardised processes to services. Adoption and effectiveness will be reviewed through business-as-usual governance arrangements to ensure the new ways of working are consistently applied across the web estate.	Ian Donald – Information Communication & Technology (ICT) Manager	Immediately	6 Months after programme closure
Web Redesign	Migrate all remaining Galaxies from the legacy server environment with a Customer First approach as outlined in the Customer Experience Strategy and the Highland Council Website Target Operating Model. Progress will be reviewed through business-as-usual governance processes, with completion measured against the successful transition of all remaining sites to the approved platform.	Ian Donald – Information Communication & Technology (ICT) Manager	Immediately	November 2026
Web Redesign	Develop a customer satisfaction report to measure website customer experience and website performance, providing data-driven insights into user satisfaction and opportunities for improvement. Results to be assessed and shared through business-as-usual governance processes to identify improvement activity assigned to respective owners across Services as required and track progress over time.	Ian Donald – Information Communication & Technology (ICT) Manager	Immediately	6 Months after programme closure

9. Formal Closure Statement

The My Council Programme was established to deliver a coordinated set of interrelated projects aimed at improving customer experience, modernising service delivery, and embedding a customer-centred approach across The Highland Council.

The programme has successfully delivered the majority of its intended outcomes, including the establishment of a Customer Experience Strategy, the redesign of the Council's website, enhancements to telephony services, and the implementation of data-led approaches to service improvement. These outputs have strengthened customer access, improved service consistency, and enabled more efficient and responsive delivery across the organisation.

Programme benefits and outputs have now been embedded within operational teams, ensuring that value will continue to be realised beyond programme closure. Governance arrangements have supported effective delivery throughout, and the programme has demonstrated strong financial management, delivering within its approved budget.

The remaining My Highland project continues to progress and will transition into a standalone project under an appropriate project governance structure, with ongoing reporting through established corporate channels.

With the vast majority of the programme activity now complete, benefits transferred into business-as-usual operations, and no remaining programme funding available to initiate further projects, the programme has reached a natural and appropriate point for closure. Continued programme-level governance is no longer required to support delivery.

It is therefore recommended that the My Council Programme is formally closed, with assurance that ongoing delivery and benefits realisation will continue through operational teams and the continued progression of the My Highland project.

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Approved By My Council Programme Board

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