

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	7
Report No	HC/26/25

Committee: The Highland Council

Date: 18th September 2025

Report Title: Annual Corporate Performance Report 2024/25

Report By: Chief Executive

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 Highland Council continues to show strong performance, with significant progress against almost all indicators and consistent momentum from the previous year. We are exceeding targets in key areas which progress our Delivery Plan, such as building new homes, supporting people into work, and improving transport

These achievements are resourced and sustainable due to the decisions made by Members in the 2023/24 budget, and updated in February 2024/25, to invest in transformation and drive innovation. The April 2025 and August 2025 Best Value reports by Audit Scotland corroborate that the Council is improving its finances, services, and leadership.

This report provides performance information against the commitments set out in the Council's Performance Plan. The Our Future Highland Programme is a statement of what the Council is committed to achieve and why. The Council's Performance Plan is a statement of what the Council expects to improve, as such, the Performance Plan provides the framework to monitor progress of the Council's Programme.

The Operational Delivery Plan is a key mechanism for how we plan to deliver on the Programme, improve the outcomes for people and communities of the Highland area and achieve financial sustainability. Members were provided with an update on the Operational Delivery Plan at the meeting of the Highland Council on May 18th, 2025

This is the third reporting year against the Programme and covers the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025. The Annual Performance Report is one of several mechanisms to monitor and report on Council performance, including quarterly performance reporting to the respective Strategic Committees and external scrutiny by Audit Scotland, the Council's external auditors who, as highlighted above, recently completed a Best Value review about Transformation which assessed how the Councils is redesigning and delivering more efficient services to achieve planned outcomes.

The subsequent [report](#), considered by the Audit Committee on 20 August 2025, presented a very positive picture of the Council's approach to transformation including acknowledging the clear purpose of the Operational Delivery Plan and its links with other strategic plans, the good governance arrangements for the review and reporting of progress at all levels across the Council, and identifying clear success measures for projects with a systematic approach to monitoring and reporting these.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- I. Scrutinise and note the report at Appendix 2 which outlines the performance for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.
- II. Note that any data not yet available, including the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) will be reported to Council at a later date once published.
- III. Note the reference table at Appendix 1 - Delivery Plan Projects and Programmes that link to Performance Plan Commitments

3. Implications

3.1 Resource

There are no new financial implications due to this report. However, progress outlined should be noted in the context of the current financial climate.

3.2 Legal

Implications relate to meeting statutory requirements for public performance reporting (PPR).

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)

The report identifies several relevant outcomes as the Performance Plan recognises resilient communities as one of the Programmes strategic outcomes, with 'Place' as one of the strategic pillars. There are a number of actions within the Performance Plan to address poverty and inequality including:

- tackling child poverty including promoting access to welfare support (outcome 1.2); and
- working with partners to develop a community wealth building strategy (outcome 2.11).

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

Climate Change is recognised through one of the strategic outcomes in the Performance Plan which has several actions to address this (see Theme 4). Quarterly progress reports are provided to the Climate Change Committee for scrutiny and oversight.

3.5 Risk

Reporting progress on the delivery of the Performance Plan is an important strategic assessment of the Council's performance and an important element of external audit's assessment of the Council under Best Value. Any inability of the Council to demonstrate Best Value represents a high-level reputational risk, with Best Value assessed annually by Audit Scotland, the Council's external auditor.

3.6 **Health and Safety** (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)
There are no direct implications from this report.

3.7 **Gaelic**

The Performance Plan contains a commitment to promote and support Gaelic language and culture with a number of supporting actions (outcomes 1.11 and 1.12). Progress on delivery of the Gaelic Language Plan (GLP4) is reported quarterly to the Gaelic Committee.

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 an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. **Introduction**

5.1 This report provides performance information on the delivery of the Council's Performance Plan. It is a key annual report forming part of the Council's overall performance management framework and meets the Council's statutory duty on Public Performance Reporting.

5.2 The annual report covering Corporate Performance is prepared each autumn as this allows time required for the relevant information to become available. It covers performance for the previous financial year and analyses the most recent data available to provide a progress report on the delivery of the Council's Performance Plan. The Performance Plan covers the priorities set in the Council's Programme, along with the strategic, operational and improvement priorities of the Council including the Council's budget strategy.

5.3 Public performance reporting (PPR) means connecting with the public by measuring our performance, reporting on it publicly and listening to communities, to ensure the Council is delivering services that provide Best Value for Council taxpayers and demonstrate the Council's ambition. This report is therefore a key element of the Council's PPR. This report will also be scrutinised by Audit Scotland and informs the ongoing assessment of the Council under Best Value.

5.4 Where national data is reported, there can be a significant time lag before this is available. This has been identified as such in the comments box within the data presented at Appendix 2. For several of the indicators, the Local Government Benchmarking Framework data is used to measure progress, and this is not available until later in the year. These may be actual figures for the reporting period or the Council's ranked position using the LGBF data.

6. Progress on the 2024/25 Performance Plan

- 6.1 The Annual Corporate Performance Report 2024/25 is provided in full at Appendix 2. The format follows that of the Performance Plan and is numbered accordingly. Note that any numbering gaps in Appendix 2 relate to measures and actions for future years, or where these were completed in the previous year.
- 6.2 The report analyses the performance indicators and actions set out in the Performance Plan against the targets set by the Council and their related performance thresholds. A summary of the information is provided in Table 1 below.

Regarding the table below, it should be noted that there are some performance indicators that:

- Do not have a target and/or RAG Status and only actual figures are reported. Where this is the case, a reason is provided in the accompanying commentary in Appendix 2.
- Report previous years data – There are some performance indicators (e.g. those that report by Academic Year) that due to the timing of this annual performance report, will always report figures for the previous year. Where this is the case, this is highlighted in the accompanying commentary in Appendix 2, including when the 24/25 data is expected.

Table 1.

Performance against target		No of PIs	No of Actions	Totals
C	Action has been completed or PI not continuing.	1	19	20
G	Performance is "On Target"	26	15	41
A	Performance is "Some Slippage"	13	14	27
R	Performance is "No Significant Progress"	5	0	5
Total	All Indicators with available RAG data	45	48	93
n/a	data awaited/no data available	14	0	14

At the time of writing the report the number of Indicators and Actions showing no significant progress accounts for 5% (5/93) of all Indicators with available RAG data. In comparison the number of actions completed and indicators/ actions where performance is on target/ completed is 66% (61/93). Out of the 13 Amber PI's 8 were better than 95% to target, with 4 of those 8 being over 99% to target.

A comparison showing the respective status of Performance Indicators and Actions for 2023/24 and 2024/25 is set out in Table 2 below. The performance across the two years shows slight improvement with the percentage of on target / completed 1% more than last year with the percentage of no significant progress at 3% less.

Table 2

PI or Action Status	2023/24		2024/25	
Completed	16	15%	20	22%
Green	53	50%	41	44%
Amber	28	26%	27	29%
Red	9	8%	5	5%
Total	106	100%	93	100%

6.3 The Council is committed to continuous improvement as evidenced in this report where positive performance is reported across the following areas:

- The combined literacy attainment for P1/4/7 Pupils Achieving in Literacy improved by 4% on the previous session resulting in Highland now reaching the green on target status for this measure for the first time. Updated figures for 24/25 will be available via the Local Government Benchmarking Framework in December 2025.
- Combined numeracy attainment for P1/4/7 Pupils Achieving in Numeracy improved by 2% on the previous session and is now sitting at the top of the amber rating. Updated figures for 24/25 will be available via the Local Government Benchmarking Framework in December 2025.
- Processing times for housing benefit and council tax reduction continue to show strong performance. Highland Council is 1st equal in Scotland for Change in Circumstances processing, exceeding a target of 2 days, achieving 1.5 days. Prompt processing of benefit claims provides valuable financial assistance to those struggling during the current cost of living crisis.
- The number of newly enrolled and upskilled staff through modern apprentices has exceeded the target of 60 for 24/25, including 23 new start Modern Apprentices, and 58 staff upskilled through Modern Apprenticeship framework. This aligns with the Delivery Plan portfolio, My Highland Future.
- As part of encouraging a diverse range of traditional and emerging sporting activities and active lifestyles, the % of the Highland population with a High Life Highland card remains on target for 24/25.
- The average number of children and young people accommodated out with Highland continues to remain on target for 24/25. The Programme has demonstrated that better outcomes are achieved where we manage to keep our children and young people in Highland and the majority of our services are significantly less expensive than Out of Area provisions. This also aligns with the Home in Highland project within the Person-Centered Solutions portfolio of the Delivery Plan.
- As part of continuing to promote Gaelic language and cultural development the percentage of Gaelic Learner Secondary School Pupils saw a 1% rise for 24/25 from the last academic year indicating growth in the pupil numbers engaging in the S1 – S6 GLE curriculum.
- The number of community transport projects supported exceeded the target of 26 for 24/25 with 29 projects being supported. Income from the hire of council buses also exceeded target for 24/25, all as part of developing affordable and reliable public transport.

- The Street Cleanliness Score has achieved its target for 24/25 of remaining in the first quartile (1-8 of Scottish Local Authorities), ranking 6th.
- The number of Council houses built/purchased per year continues to exceed target (130) with 189 being built/purchased in 24/25 and as part of supporting the development of quality affordable housing in response to need, the number of affordable houses also built by others in 24/25 reached 175, exceeding the target of 170.
- Actions relating to the development of area-based plans across several of the Our Future Highland Programme Themes are on showing as on target
- The time to complete medical adaptations is 27 days versus a target of 50.
- Key enabling strategies such as ICT & Digital that underpin the Councils ability to transform continue to progress well and a new corporate financial system has been successfully implemented, supporting the Councils ability achieve financial sustainability.

6.4 In addition to this annual report, quarterly performance reports are presented to the Strategic Committees. These reports include progress on Corporate Indicators and those where the Service either leads or contributes to the Performance Plan.

6.5 The Council is required to report on its Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) within 12 months of the end of the financial year they refer to. These SPIs include both LGBF indicators and locally defined performance indicators (LPIs). The Council has submitted its data returns to the Improvement Service for 2024/25 which will enable LGBF performance indicators to be calculated, and data is being collected for the Council's LPIs. A report for 2024/25 will be presented to a full Council meeting no later than March 2025.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 28 August 2025

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Background Papers:

[Programme of The Highland Council 2022-27 - English](#)

[Performance Plan 2022-27](#)

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Reference table - Delivery Plan Projects and Programmes linked to Council Programme and Performance Plan Commitments.

Appendix 2 – Annual Corporate Performance Report 2024/25

Appendix 1

Appendix 1 – Delivery Plan Projects and Programmes linked to Council Programme and Performance Plan Commitments.

Portfolio	Contributing Projects	Commitment	Section
Corporate Solutions	Integrated Impact Assessments	Improve outcomes for all children and young people	1.1
		Tackle child poverty	1.2
	Hybrid Working	Grow and retain our own talent within the Council	5.1
	One Council Financials		
	My Council Programme	Improve our response times in replying to enquiries/service requests from the public	5.3
	One Council HRP&P		
	Data Foundations	Actively redesign service delivery in response to constrained budgets	5.4
	Digital Foundations		
	Future Operating Model		
	Efficiencies from Procurement		
	One Council Financials		
	1% Efficiency Target		
	One Council HRP&P		
	Service Improvement Solutions	Accelerate the delivery of our Asset Management approach	5.8
	Future Operating Model		
	Efficiencies from Procurement	Broaden the Council's income base through taxation and delivering more commercial services	5.1
Food in Schools: Delivering Sustainability	Broaden the Council's income base through taxation and delivering more commercial services	5.1	

Portfolio	Contributing Projects	Commitment	Section
Income Generation	Annual Review of Fees and Charges	Broaden the Council's income base through taxation and delivering more commercial services	5.1
	Campervans/Motorhomes		
	Council Tax - 2nd homes/long term empty properties		
	Fair Charging and Commercialisation Strategy		
	Unique Highland Visitor Experiences		
	Cruise Ship Passenger Levy	Implement the tourism levy as an enabler to a vibrant attractive visitor experience	5.11
Visitor Levy			
My Highland Future	Digital School	Improve outcomes for all children and young people	1.1
	School Curriculum & Business Links		
	School Based Interventions		
	Council Future Workforce	Secure positive destinations including Modern Apprenticeships	1.3
	CLD & Employability Support		
	Employer Engagement and Job Opportunities		
	Foundation & Modern Apprenticeships		
	Accelerated Degree Pathways	Encourage private/public sector economic development partners	2.1
	Entrepreneur Development		
	One Council HRP&P	Grow and retain our own talent within the Council	5.1
Council Future Workforce			
One Council Financials			

Portfolio	Contributing Projects	Commitment	Section
	One Council HRP&P		
	Council Future Workforce	Work with public/ private sector partners to coordinate employment opportunities	5.2
	CLD & Employability Support		
	Employer Engagement and Job Opportunities		
	School Curriculum & Business Links		
	Foundation & Modern Apprenticeships		
	Entrepreneur Development	Promote and support business development opportunities through Business Gateway and Highland Opportunity Investment Limited.	5.9
Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation	Energy Efficient Homes Programme	Provide warm and energy efficient homes	3.2
	EV Infrastructure	Promote greener transport	4.2
	Hydrogen Production - Longman		
	Energy Efficient Council Programme	Achieve our Net Zero targets	4.7
	EV Infrastructure		
	Net Zero Programme		
	Battery Storage System - former Torvean Quarry	Invest in commercial renewable energy opportunities to generate new income streams	4.8
	Energy Efficient Council Programme		
	Investment Pipeline		
	Energy Efficient Council Programme	Identify and commit to renewable energy investments	4.9
	Solar PV Commercial Estate		
	Solar PV Council Estate Programme		

Portfolio	Contributing Projects	Commitment	Section
	Utility Scale Solar PV - Longman Array	Capitalise on our natural capital to deliver alternative energy solutions	4.1
	Battery Storage System - former Torvean Quarry		
	Solar PV Commercial Estate		
	Solar PV Council Estate Programme		
	Utility Scale Solar PV - Longman Array	Actively redesign service delivery in response to constrained budgets	5.4
	Heat Networks	Work together with communities and partners to produce local plans	5.5
Person Centred Solutions	Developing the Workforce	Develop whole family support approach	1.8
	Home in Highland		
	Kinship and Foster Carers		
	Community Led Service Delivery	Support communities to help each other live well and independently	2.5
	Efficiencies from Social Work Procurement		
	Improving Transition Outcomes		
	Shifting the Balance of Care & Accommodation Solutions		
	Early Learning & Childcare [ELC] / Childcare	Work with public/ private sector partners to coordinate employment opportunities	5.2
	Digital Options	Actively redesign service delivery in response to constrained budgets	5.4
	eRecords		

Portfolio	Contributing Projects	Commitment	Section
	Replacement Case Management System		
	Early Learning & Childcare [ELC] / Childcare	Develop place-based partnership strategies to coordinate investment and rural repopulation	5.6
Reconfiguring our Asset Base	In-house Bus Service	Develop affordable and reliable public transport	2.1
	Roads and Infrastructure Improvements Programme	Continue to work with partners to develop and promote Road and Water Safety	2.2
		Programme for improving road condition and maintenance	2.3
		Work with SG on the delivery of improved transport infrastructure	2.9
	Strategic Asset Management	Encourage private/public sector economic development partners	2.10
	Affordable Housing Programme	Build quality, affordable, accessible homes	3.1
		Provide warm and energy efficient homes	3.2
	Housing Void-Plus Policy		
	Affordable Housing Programme	Support the development of quality affordable housing	3.3
	Roads and Infrastructure Improvements Programme	Promote active travel infrastructure across Highland	4.1
	In-house Bus Service	Promote greener transport	4.2
	Develop a Learning Estate Strategy	Accelerate the delivery of our Asset Management approach	5.8
Improve Asset Condition/ Reduce Risk for General Fund Assets			

Portfolio	Contributing Projects	Commitment	Section
	Migration of Property Assets and Property Resources		
	New Trades Framework		
	Single Public Estate - New Area Community Pods		
	Strategic Asset Management		
	Terra Tracker		
	In-house Bus Service	Broaden the Council's income base through taxation and delivering more commercial services	5.1
	Terra Tracker	Broaden the Council's income base through taxation and delivering more commercial services	5.1

Performance Plan

Annual Corporate Performance Report 2024/25

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Theme 1: Fair and Caring Highland

Work together to improve quality of life and opportunities for Highland people.

People

- 1.1 Improve outcomes including attainment, achievement, positive destinations for all children and young people with a particular focus on literacy, numeracy, and our most vulnerable learners.

Performance Indicator	AY 22/23	AY 23/24			Comments
	Actual	Target	Actual	RAG	
P1/4/7 Pupils Achieving in Literacy (CHN13a)	64.8%	67.0%	68.7%	G	<p>Noting the baseline year for SQF being 2019, all subsequent years had adjustments made due to the impact of Covid which inflated results across Scotland. 2023/24 was the first year since 2019 that pupils went back to full assessment across the whole curriculum.</p> <p>AY 23/24 - P1/4/7 Literacy - The combined literacy attainment improved by 4% on the previous session resulting in Highland now reaching the green on target status for this measure for the first time.</p> <p>AY 24/25 data is not yet available. Updates are expected in December 2025.</p>

R = Red (No significant progress) **A** = Amber (Some slippage) **G** = Green (On Target) **C** = Purple (Completed)

Year CY=Calendar

Year FY= Financial

Year AY=Academic Year

Performance Indicator	AY 22/23 Actual	AY 23/24			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
P1/4/7 Pupils Achieving in Numeracy (CHN13b)	72.2%	75.0%	74.40%	A	AY 23/24 - P1/4/7 Numeracy - Combined numeracy attainment improved by 2% on the previous session and just missed the stretch target by 1% hence the Amber rating. AY 24/25 data is not yet available. Updates expected in December 2025.
SCQF Level 5 attainment by all children (CHN04)	64.0%	64%	63.5%	A	The 2023/24 SCQF level 5 attainment for leavers was at 64% which is in line with the attainment of the LGBF Family Group. The attainment of the group is the same as the 2022/23 leavers cohort. Going forward senior leaders will work with headteachers to further develop the curricular offer to maximise the learning experiences and attainment opportunities for young people. AY 24/25 data is not yet available. Updates expected in December 2025.

R = Red (No significant progress) A = Amber (Some slippage) G = Green (On Target) C = Purple (Completed)

Year CY=Calendar

Year FY= Financial

Year AY=Academic Year

Performance Indicator	AY 22/23 Actual	AY 23/24			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
SCQF Level 6 attainment by all children (CHN05)	31.0%	36%	32.0%	A	The 2023/24 SCQF level 6 attainment for leavers was at 32% which is 4% behind the attainment of the Family Group. The attainment profile of each secondary school has been reviewed with Headteachers and action plans developed through the raising attainment board for those schools requiring additional support with their attainment improvement plan. AY 24/25 data is not yet available. Further updates expected in December 2025, although initial analysis in August 25 is showing improvements.
School Leavers - Highest attaining 20% - Complementary Tariff Score	1,251	1,239	1,238	A	The leavers average complementary tariff points measurement allows secondary schools to compare pupil attainment by taking a pupil's 5 "best" National Qualification subject attainment levels (combining the tariff points for subject Levels and Grades) and compare this with other pupils in different schools out with the Local Authority. In the highest 20%, Highland's average tariff score has decreased by 13 points from 2023, while National has decreased by 17 points. There is no significant difference for this measure between Highland and National. The performance to target for this year was 99.9%. AY 24/25 data is not yet available. Further updates expected in December 2025.

R = Red (No significant progress) A = Amber (Some slippage) G = Green (On Target) C = Purple (Completed)

Year CY=Calendar

Year FY= Financial

Year AY=Academic Year

Performance Indicator	AY 22/23 Actual	AY 23/24			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
School Leavers - Lowest attaining 20% - Complementary Tariff Score	121	113	110	A	<p>As above, the leavers average complementary tariff points measurement allows secondary schools to compare pupil attainment by taking a pupil's 5 "best" National Qualification subject attainment levels (combining the tariff points for subject Levels and Grades) and compare this with other pupils in different schools out with the Local Authority. In the lowest 20%, Highland's average tariff score has decreased by 10 points from 2023, while National has decreased by 2 points. There is no significant difference for this measure between Highland and National. Secondary Headteachers have continued this session to review their senior phase curriculum so there are suitable pathway opportunities available for all learners.</p> <p>AY 24/25 data is not yet available. Updates expected in December 2025. Initial analysis of the 2025 SQA data is showing improvement in this measure.</p>

R = Red (No significant progress) A = Amber (Some slippage) G = Green (On Target) C = Purple (Completed)

Year CY=Calendar

Year FY= Financial

Year AY=Academic Year

Performance Indicator	AY 22/23 Actual	AY 23/24			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
School Leavers - Middle attaining 60% - Complementary Tariff Score	575	577	565	A	<p>As above, the leavers average complementary tariff points measurement allows secondary schools to compare pupil attainment by taking a pupil's 5 "best" National Qualification subject attainment levels (combining the tariff points for subject Levels and Grades) and compare this with other pupils in different schools out with the Local Authority. In the middle 60% Highland's average tariff score has decreased by 11 points from 2023, while National has decreased by 9 points. There is no significant difference for this measure between Highland and National.</p> <p>AY 24/25 data is not yet available. Further updates are expected in December 2025.</p>

R = Red (No significant progress) A = Amber (Some slippage) G = Green (On Target) C = Purple (Completed)

Year CY=Calendar

Year FY= Financial

Year AY=Academic Year

Performance Indicator	AY 22/23 Actual	AY 23/24			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
School attendance rates (CHN19a)	89.8%	90.3%	89.6%	A	Highland's attendance figures have declined slightly in the period 23/24 but were still just over 99% to target. The service has undertaken focused work on understanding why young people are not attending school. Procedures and support to schools around attendance monitoring have been developed. There has been a pilot project working alongside Education Scotland to support improving school attendance. AY 24/25 data is not yet available. Updates expected in December 2025.
School attendance rates (Care Experienced) (CHN19b)	83.3%	n/a	n/a	n/a	The target for this measure is based on the Scottish average and will be produced along with the 23/24 data. AY 24/25 data is not yet available. Updates are expected in December 2025.

R = Red (No significant progress) A = Amber (Some slippage) G = Green (On Target) C = Purple (Completed)

Year CY=Calendar

Year FY= Financial

Year AY=Academic Year

1.2 Tackle child poverty including promoting access to welfare support.

Performance Indicator	AY 22/23	AY 23/24			Comments
	Actual	Target	Actual	RAG	
SCQF Level 5 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds (CHN06)	42%	42%	40%	A	<p>Attainment of young people who may face socio-economic disadvantage have attained slightly lower than the family group in 2023/24. There is no trend in the attainment of this leaver group over the past five years. Senior leaders will work with school staff to review their use of PEF funding to appropriately support the learning of those young people most affected by poverty and those facing additional challenges.</p> <p>AY 24/25 data not yet available. Updates expected February 2026. Initial analysis of 2025 SQA data is showing an increase in this measure.</p>
SCQF Level 6 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds (CHN07)	13%	13%	12%	A	<p>Attainment of leavers in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 1 and 2 has been below the family group for the last two years. Senior leaders will develop approaches to more carefully track the progress and evidence of impact of interventions to support in the senior phase to attainment of learners impacted by poverty related attainment gaps are closing for young people in line with national expectations. AY 24/25 data not yet available. Updates expected February 2026.</p>

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Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Average days to process Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reductions - New Claims	10	10	10.6	R	The time to process Housing Benefits and Council Tax Reduction claims for 24/25 moved slightly from 10 days to 10.6 days. The stretching target is an ambitious 10 days. Highland Council is first equal in Scotland for administering changes in circumstances. The team continue to deliver an excellent service and continually review processes to identify efficiencies and value for money in service delivery. Given the 10 days is a stretch target, assessment of performance to target should be reviewed to determine if a Red rating is reflective of actual performance.
Average days to process Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reductions - Changes of Circumstance	1.6	2	1.5	G	In terms of volume, change in circumstances account for the majority of work pertaining to the processing Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reductions changes and new claims. Highland Council is 1st equal in Scotland for change in circumstances processing.

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1.3 Secure positive destinations including Modern Apprenticeships.

Performance Indicator	AY 22/23	AY 23/24			Comments
	Actual	Target	Actual	RAG	
Pupils entering positive destinations (CHN11)	95.3%	95.7%	96.5%	G	<p>The 2023/24 National Initial Leaver Destination Report shows that 96.5% of the 2692 Highland young people who finished school in the last academic year have progressed in their studies or careers within three months of the academic year end. This is the highest leaver destination figure for Highland in the last 5 years and ahead of the national average.</p> <p>24/25 data not yet available. Updates expected from the LGBF in Spring 2026.</p>

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24	FY 24/25			Comments
	Actual	Target	Actual	RAG	
No. newly enrolled and upskilled via THC Modern Apprenticeships per year	100	60	81	G	We exceeded our annual goal, and had 23 new start Modern Apprentices, and 58 staff upskilled through Modern Apprenticeship frameworks.

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1.4 Work with partners on suicide prevention.

Performance Indicator	CY 2022 Actual	CY 2023			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Reduce Highland Suicide rate - 5 Year Average	21.5	21.5	20.5	G	In October 2023 the Creating Hope in Highland Together Action Plan was launched. This plan set out the objectives for the 3-year period. Progress is reported to the Highland Community Planning Partnership. 2024 data not yet available at the time of writing this report – updates are expected in August 25.

1.5 Encourage a diverse range of traditional and emerging sporting activities and active lifestyles.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Highland population with HLH Card	29 %	29 %	29%	G	High Life Highland reports to the Education Committee on service performance twice per year as required in the contract between THC and HLH. This indicator was reported in detail, along with other performance measures, at the Education Committee meeting held on 4 June 2025 and can be seen at this link: https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/85113/13_high_life_highland_progress_report

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Place

1.6 Promote fair access through co-located services across the Highlands.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Deliver Portree Public Sector Co-location Project	A	The target date was originally March 2025, however this was based on the funding set, the scope of the project thereafter increased. Tender award in July 2025 and completion date now set to be June 2026.

1.7 Work with partners to improve the levels of mental health and wellbeing experienced by people in our communities.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
No. HC workforce trained in supporting people with mental health and wellbeing concerns	390	n/a	370	n/a	Introduction to Mental Health and Wellbeing – 2 courses run, attendance: 16 Suicide Intervention and Prevention Programme (SIPP) – 19 courses run, attendance: 194 Scotland’s Mental Health First Aid – 6 courses run, attendance: 63 Highland Council Internal Training: Managing Mental Health in the workplace – 19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Representative – 21 Supporting a colleague with anxiety – 15 Decider life skills – 35 Wellbeing Workshop – 7 This indicator is for information only - Training is mainly provided externally and is difficult to predict availability and uptake.

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1.8 Develop whole family support approach to ensure families stay together and thrive in their local communities.

Performance Indicator	AY 22/23	AY 23/24			Comments
	Actual	Target	Actual	RAG	
Percentage of Children and Young People in care in the community (CHN09)	87.5%	87.2%	86.8%	G	Target is ranking of 16 th on the LGBF. This PI had previously been reported as Red, however, given performance to target is at 99.5%, a green rating is more reflective of actual for 23/24. 24/25 data is not yet available. Updates expected from the LGBF in Spring 2026.
Performance Indicator	FY 23/24	FY 24/25			Comments
	Actual	Target	Actual	RAG	
Percentage of Children and Young People in formal kinship care	19.2%	23.0%	19.2%	A	In order to achieve an updated target of a 30% increase in kinship care Family First monies have been used to develop a kinship team. It is anticipated that this will become operational in September/October 2025. The number of children on Residence Orders continues to rise and we are seeing a small increase in the number of Looked After children currently in Kinship placements. Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) continues to work with families to find family solutions to concerns around children’s safety and well-being and is being rolled out across the whole of Highland.
No. of H&SC staff trained in Solihull Approach	25	90	101	G	The training is offered to a mix of designations at each session, and it has been opened up to

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					education staff/3rd sector this last year too.
The average number per annum of children and young people accommodated out with Highland	13	17	16.67	G	There was a slight increase from the previous year with the average number of OOA placements being 17 but still meeting the target of 17 in 2024/25. Several bespoke residential and education packages in Highland are a fixed recurring cost for this budget. This, in addition to the recurring cost for contracted residential homes in Highland is substantially reducing the budget available for spot purchased placements. The demand for residential placements remains very high until such time as the Family First community support services are bedded-in and start to have an impact on this demand. The Programme has demonstrated that better outcomes are achieved where we manage to keep our children and young people in Highland and the majority of our services are significantly less expensive than OOA provisions. The Programme has avoided costs of over £21M since 2018.
The number of foster carer approvals - annual	10	10	2	R	The Fostering Service continues to struggle to recruit foster carers to be able to meet its Home in Highland objectives. Foster care recruitment and retention is a national challenge, with the rest of Scotland seeing a similar decline in foster care numbers. In response to this, the Scottish Government launched a national fostering recruitment campaign. Highland Council did not

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				<p>receive any enquiries about this and initial feedback suggests other Local Authorities are reporting a similar low or no response rate.</p> <p>On a more positive note, the service is currently completing 2 fostering assessments which will go for approval in October 2025. It is anticipated that a 3rd carer will have their approval increased to include an additional child at the October Panel. The Service has introduced a tracking system to monitor the progress of assessments to identify any delays and try to ensure assessments are completed on time. The Service is also looking at expanding its relief bank of social work staff, who can also work on foster care assessments.</p> <p>Activity is underway to review the services own recruitment processes and options for local recruitment campaigns. The strategy will take a more personal and local approach to recruitment, where a small number of foster carers will be approached to help with promoting fostering in their own localities. The Service will be arranging daytime and evening events, promoted in a variety of different ways where the public can come and hear directly from foster carers and social workers what foster care entails, what the assessment process is and the support provided.</p>
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					It should be noted that considerable efforts have taken place over recent years to recruit foster carers, including radio appeals and press releases. The Service will undertake a review of its presence on the Highland Council website to see if it is accessible enough for anyone accessing the website to learn about fostering in Highland. The service continues to seek support from outside agencies to help with their recruitment efforts.
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1.9 Work with partners to develop early intervention for drug and alcohol.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Establish 4-yr pilot project re Non-Fatal Overdoses in Inverness	Completed	We were unable to successfully recruit a SW and decided to leave the funding for NHS to recruit an additional Support Worker under their Terms and Conditions.

Economy

1.10 Facilitate strategic sports and cultural planning across the Highlands.

Actions	FY 23/24	Comments
HLH contract review completed	Completed	Report submitted to the Education Committee November 2024.

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1.11 Continue to promote Gaelic language and cultural development.

Performance Indicator	AY 23/24	AY 24/25			Comments
	Actual	Target	Actual	RAG	
Gaelic Learner Secondary Pupils	15.18%	n/a	16.14%	n/a	1 % rise in percentage from last AY indicates a trend towards growth in pupil numbers engaging in the S1-S6 GLE curriculum. There is no target, this is a monitoring indicator only.
Gaidhlig Secondary Pupils	3.17%	n/a	3.60%	n/a	0.4% rise from 3.2 in last AY indicates an increase in pupil numbers in GME secondary, influenced partly by increasing numbers transitioning from primary to secondary in the standalone primary schools associated school groups. There is no target, this is a monitoring indicator only.
GM Nursery Pupils	9.25%	n/a	9.89%	n/a	The highest percentage enrolled in GME Highland ELC to date, an increase of 0.6% from last AY. The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) 2018-2023 had a target of 10% pupils in GME Primary. During the GLP 2018-23 consultation, 6.27% were enrolled in GME ELC. There is no target, this is a monitoring indicator only.
GM Primary Pupils	6.71%	n/a	6.82%	n/a	Very small increase of 0.1% in total primary from last AY, continuing upward trend of enrolment in GME P1 due to increased GME ELC numbers. There is no target, this is a monitoring indicator only.

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1.12 Promote and enhance the Highland's rich heritage and culture.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
No. Gaelic culture reports promoted through press releases and social media	73	n/a	41	n/a	While the figures have dropped from 73 the previous year, there has been a net increase in full news releases from 33 to 41. The decision was taken not to include social media posts in the overall figure for 24/25. The target for this measure is a 3-year rolling average, therefore a target will be applicable as of 25/26 reporting.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Culture and heritage events promoted through press and social media	G	This action was on target for 2024-25. The work is undertaken by Highlife Highland.

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Theme 2: Resilient and Sustainable Communities

Help our communities to be prosperous, sustainable and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of people.

People

2.1 Develop affordable and reliable public transport.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
No. of community transport projects supported	28	26	29	G	The target was 26 by July 2023, this was achieved and has now been exceeded.
Income from hire of council buses	£54,000	£54,000	£60,047	G	Private hire income continues to increase - 11% increase from the previous financial year.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Implement new bus contract management software tool	A	<p>As part of ongoing efforts to modernise and streamline school transport operations, the Pax transport management software was successfully launched at the end of July. The system now manages passenger data (school pupils), transport routes, and operator information. Staff training has been completed, and Pax continues to provide regular support to the school transport team to address queries and ensure smooth operation.</p> <p>The next phase of implementation—financial invoice reconciliation and contract management—is currently underway and will be completed over the coming weeks. The system is on track to be</p>

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		<p>fully operational for the start of the next school term in October.</p> <p>In parallel, the QRoutes route optimisation software has been integrated with Pax. This tool is available to support the analysis and refining of routes for cost-effectiveness during replanning.</p>
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2.2 Continue to work with partners to develop and promote Road and Water Safety.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Early Adoption of 20mph speed limits	125	114	127	G	The target was to achieve 114 by August 2023. This was achieved by Temporary Traffic Restriction Order in 2023 and then the Final TRO completed 2025.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Ensure annual delivery of SG Safer Routes to School programme	Completed	Business as usual through School Grant funding programme.
Deliver Permanent Road Traffic Regulation Orders for 20 mph speed limits	Completed	This was presented and approved at Committee in May 2025. The Traffic Restriction Order is now Live.

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Place

2.3 Continue our expanded programme for improving road condition and maintenance.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24	FY 24/25			Comments
	Actual	Target	Actual	RAG	
Road network to be considered for maintenance	38.6%	37.3%	39.1	A	<p>Highland's ranking remains at 28th place among Scottish local authorities, despite a slight increase in the result. The Scottish average increased by 0.6%.</p> <p>The Highland Council has committed additional capital investment through a multi-year programme to reduce the infrastructure works backlog. This funding supports resurfacing, surface dressing and renewal of all road related assets, not just carriageways. While the "steady state" investment level for carriageways is not currently being met, the Council is working within budget constraints shaped by inflation and the scale of the road network relative to population. Roads do not deteriorate at a uniform rate and fluctuations in condition results are expected year-on-year. These factors, combined with the size and complexity of the network, make it difficult to provide a definitive timeline for when measurable improvement will be seen.</p>

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2.4 Develop place-based plans that focus on quality neighborhoods and direct local funding opportunities toward local priorities.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Involved Communities: Area Place Plans for each Council area	G	Due to complete Q3 25/26. This action also supports 3.7, 4.3, and 5.6.

2.5 Support communities to help each other live well and independently.

Performance Indicator	FY 22/23 Actual	FY 23/24			Comments
	Target	Actual	RAG		
Direct payments spend on 18+ adults (SW02)	7.3%	9.1%	9.1%	G	<p>Target is based on ranking on the LGBF framework. Updates for 2024/25 are expected from the LGBF in December 2025.</p> <p>Costing Care and identifying budgets was identified as a key component of the agreed Self-Directed Support Strategy and it was the aim of NHS Highland in partnership with key stakeholders to describe a fair, equitable and sustainable framework for the calculation of individual budgets. This significant cost investment by NHS Highland was required to ensure the sustainability of our current Option 1 packages which are still the most cost-effective and efficient delivery models which have significantly grown primarily due to the absence of any other traditional delivery and more expensive care models.</p>
People aged 65+ with long-term care needs receiving personal	64.3%	62.8%	55.4%	R	<p>Target is based on ranking on the LGBF framework. Updates for 2024/25 are expected from the LGBF in December 2025.</p> <p>SW03a: NHS Highland is still reporting increasing levels of unmet</p>

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care at home (SW03a)					<p>need in terms of care at home. The percentage of people supported is increasing but the target has not been met.</p> <p>Our priority in 2024-25 is to sustain existing levels of service in a multi-faceted complex area with recruitment, workforce and accommodation issues facing both NHS Highland and our partner providers. A new payment tariff was implemented, including increasing carer mileage in Oct 24. Co-production of actions with our independent sector partners remain a priority to support stabilisation of the sector with the focus on Improving Access and Processes and Valuing Staff.</p>
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Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Homelessness - case duration [weeks] for all applications	35	48	35	G	Case duration remains at 35 weeks for 2024/25. The target of 48 weeks is based on National Benchmarking.

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2.6 Work with Partners to promote visitor management.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Delivery of 22 Tier 1 priority projects in Highland Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan	A	Scot Gov paused the fund during 24/25 so no new projects during that period. Scot Gov reinstated the fund in 25/26 and 3 projects are currently being taken forward by THC.

2.7 Work with communities and partners to keep public spaces clean and safe.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Street Cleanliness Score (ENV3c)	96.4%	95.0%	95.91	G	The target is for Highland Council to remain in the first quartile (1-8 of Scottish Local Authorities). In 2024/25, we achieved rank number 6.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Work with partners to support campaigns to keep public spaces clean and safe	Completed	This work is being undertaken by HLH.

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Economy

2.8 Support Scottish and UK Govt initiatives to ensure maximum digital connectivity across the area.

Performance Indicator	FY 22/23 Actual	FY 23/24			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband (ECON08)	86%	87%	87%	G	Target is to increase by 1% each year reaching 90% by 2027. FY 24/25 data not yet available. Updates expected December 2025.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Delivery of City/Region deal digital project - start reporting Q1 24/25	Completed	Highlands and Islands Enterprise made the considered decision to step back from its role as the contracting authority for the IHCRD Digital project. All premises within the proposed project area would now be included in the Scottish Government’s national gigabit rollout plans. The associated digital funding has been reallocated in line with City-Region Deal governance processes, with oversight and agreement from both the UK and Scottish Governments.

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2.9 Work with the Scottish Government on the delivery of improved transport infrastructure throughout the Highlands.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Progression of Inverness Railway Station Master Plan to detailed design	A	<p>Project remains in slippage. Network Rail are progressing and in control of the timetable. The Council and Hitrans are working in conjunction with Network Rail and partners to identify short, medium and long-term options for improving the station and its role as a gateway to Highland and the decarbonisation of transport in Inverness City and beyond.</p> <p>A meeting to be held at the end of the month with Network rail. NR to provide update to other partners including the Highland Council re progress on Masterplan. In parallel Hitrans on behalf on the wider partners are leading an Inverness Interchange Study - draft report being reviewed by partners.</p>
Deliver Uig Ferry Terminal Project	Completed	The Ferry Terminal Building was completed in June 2025.

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- 2.10 Encourage private sector and public sector economic development partners in ensuring that Highland remains a top destination for inward investment.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
No. visits to Invest Highland website	N/A	N/A	764	N/A	The Website received 764 new users during the past 12 months - officially launched in Jan 2025. 2024/25 will provide baseline data and a target will be considered thereafter.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Complete Inverness Levelling-Up Fund project	G	Two of the three projects are being handed over with the third being handed over in August 2025..
Ensure percentage of wind production remains within the region as a local investment	Completed	Included in the Council's Social Values Charter for Renewables Investment adopted by the council on June 2024 at Full Council meeting. https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/83522/item_10_social_values_charter_for_renewables_investment
Refresh Investment Highland website and establish baseline for "Number of enquiries through refreshed website p.a."	Completed	The Highland Council launched the InvestHighland website in January 2025 to promote the region's economic strengths and attract investment, timed to coincide with Scottish Cities Week in London. The platform highlights key sectors such as the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, renewable energy, life sciences, and creative industries, while showcasing the

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		<p>Highlands' infrastructure, skilled workforce, and exceptional quality of life.</p> <p>Since its launch, the site has attracted 768 active users and over 2,600 page views, reflecting strong early interest. The accompanying LinkedIn account has also gained traction, with 130+ followers, 2,100+ impressions, and 15 posts to date. Together, these digital efforts are helping to position the Highlands as a compelling destination for business and innovation.</p>
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2.11 Work with partners to develop a community wealth building strategy.

Performance Indicator	FY 22/23 Actual	FY 23/24			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
% of procurement spend on local enterprises (ECON04)	49.1%	33.3%	51.8%	G	Target is based on ranking on the LGBF framework. The Annual Procurement Report will be presented to the Corporate Resources Committee on 28 August 2025. Updates for 2024/25 are expected from the LGBF in December 2025.
Actions		FY 24/25		Comments	
Develop a strategy to map funding opportunities aimed at community energy projects		Completed		This was completed in Q4 24/25 when the sub-group met to agree the approach.	
Develop a community wealth building strategy		Completed		The draft strategy was approved by Council on 14/03/24. This was completed in Q2 24/25.	

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Theme 3: Accessible and Sustainable Highland Homes

Build houses to support communities and economic growth.

People

3.1 Build quality, affordable, accessible homes.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
No. council houses built/ purchased per year 2022-27	192	130	189	G	There is a total of 189 properties progressing to completion, 177 new builds plus 12 purchases. Of the 189, final handover of 33 properties took place in Q1 2025/26.

3.2 Provide warm and energy efficient homes.

Performance Indicator	FY 22/23 Actual	FY 23/24			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Council dwellings that are energy efficient (HSN5)	77.30%	n/a	n/a	n/a	The suspension of data collection for the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) measures within the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) was implemented for the 2022/23 and is still in place. The Scottish Housing Regulator confirmed that indicators C10 (percentage of homes meeting ESSH) and C11 (anticipated exemptions from ESSH) would not be collected during this

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					period. This is due to the ongoing review of the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH2) by the Scottish Government, which is expected to be replaced by a new Social Housing Net Zero Standard (SHNZS). The consultation on SHNZS closed in March 2024, but the final guidance has not yet been published.
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Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
% Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme grant funding utilised	95.0%	80.0%	100%	G	The work associated with achieving this indicator is being overseen in the Delivery Plan
Average time taken to re-let properties in last year [days]	38.68	55.6	53.95	G	Highland continues to experience delays with utility companies in terms of clearing meter debt and installing new gas and electric meters. These issues have been discussed at a national level by the Scottish Government and utility companies. There have also been significant challenges in terms of contractor capacity to carry out major refurbishment works at the void stage. There is regular discussion with contractors and agencies to address these capacity issues.

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3.3 Support the development of quality affordable housing in response to need.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
No. affordable houses built by others per year 2022-27	226	170	175	G	There has been a decrease in the number of affordable houses built by others from 2023/24 to 2024/25. The target of 170 has been achieved.

3.4 Support the needs of veterans through the Armed Forces Covenant.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
No. serving and ex-armed forces personnel applying for housing	147	n/a	110	n/a	There is no target, this is a monitoring indicator only.
No. serving and ex-armed forces personnel allocated housing	12	n/a	14	n/a	There is no target, this is a monitoring indicator only.

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Place

3.5 Develop housing options that help vulnerable and elderly adults to be cared for close to home and community.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Average days to complete medical adaptation applications	38.1	50.0	27.1	G	Target revised from 60.9 to 50. Performance has improved in 2024/25 compared to previous years.

3.7 Work to ensure a balance of residential, recreational and commercial use of properties to sustain vibrant local communities.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Average time [wks] per planning application - Other Consents	11.8	n/a	n/a	n/a	24/25 annual data not yet available – Updates are expected to be received from Scottish Government in October 25.
Average time [wks] per planning application - all Local Developments	14.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	24/25 annual data not yet available – Updates are expected to be received from Scottish Government in October 25.
Average time [wks] per planning application - all Majors	38.6	n/a	n/a	n/a	24/25 annual data not yet available – Updates are expected to be received from Scottish Government in October 25.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Involved Communities: Area Place Plans for each Council area	G	Target Date Q3 2025/26. This action is also in 2.4, 4.3, and 5.6.

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Economy

- 3.8 Work with partners to develop key worker housing opportunities so that sustainable public services and economic growth are not constrained by a lack of housing supply.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24	FY 24/25			Comments
	Actual	Target	Actual	RAG	
No. key worker homes made available avg p.a. 2022-27	10	10	10	G	The Target is an average of 10 per annum. This has been achieved in 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

- 3.9 Future housing developments are integrated into the public transport networks for access to work.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Bus Service Improvement Project submitted to Economy and Infrastructure Committee	A	<p>The Bus Partnership funding was paused by Scottish Government. However, funding for 2025/26 has now been confirmed, so the Bus Service Improvement Project can now be finalised and presented at E&I Committee.</p> <p>The Bus Infrastructure Fund (BIF) 25/26 (replaces the Bus Partnership Fund & the Community Bus Fund) has now been confirmed by Scottish government and is provided on a two-tier basis by Transport Scotland. Tier 1 is a grant award and Tier 2 has been applied for on a competitive basis and includes 7 projects, we await the formal award confirmation. Subject to a</p>

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		<p>successful award of Tier 2 all projects need to be delivered this financial year. In summary both funds are a mix of infrastructure, construction, design and feasibility projects.</p> <p>The Bus Service Improvement Partnership has commenced its statutory process again and we will be looking to take this to committee by February 2026 subject to approval of the new project timeline.</p>
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Theme 4: A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy

Accelerate our response to the climate and ecological emergency. Make the most of the financial and environmental opportunities arising from the huge renewable energy potential in the Highlands.

People

4.1 Promote active travel infrastructure across Highland.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Deliver Active Travel Infrastructure project: Culbokie	A	Funding has now been confirmed and Contractor set up is due August 2025
Deliver Active Travel Infrastructure project: Academy Street	Completed	Project not proceeding, agreed at Full Council September 2024.
Deliver Active Travel Infrastructure project: Wick	A	Funding has now been confirmed. The project is out to tender. Tenders due back 25 August 2025. Programme to be agreed but construction will be completed by 31 March 2026.
Deliver Inverness Active Travel Network schemes	Completed	Riverside way completed June 2025. Raigmore Interchange now with Transport Scotland to delivery. The change of funding landscape impacted delivery dates.

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4.2 Promote greener transport including low carbon public transport and the development of hydrogen hubs throughout the area.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Green Hydrogen: Joint venture opportunities	A	This work is being carried out as part of the Hydrogen Production Project in the Delivery Plan Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation Portfolio. The status of this work as of Q4 24/25 was Amber due to the developers unsuccessful HAR 2 Funding round bid. We are awaiting confirmation of the HAR 3 timeline – work is ongoing in preparation for development and even with HAR 3 it is still directly aligned to the remediation works required to be undertaken by the Council on site. Remediation work is currently on track to complete December 2026.

Place

4.3 Work with communities to find local solutions and level funding.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Involved Communities: Area Place Plans for each Council area	G	Target Date Q3 2025/26. This action is also in 2.4, 3.6, and 5.6.

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<p>Progress live sustainability software to allow measuring of engagement</p>	<p>A</p>	<p>This work is being carried out as part the Delivery Plan Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation Portfolio. This was ragged Amber as of Q4 24/25, due to the slippage from the original target date of March 2024. A number of systems have been evaluated and found unsuitable to handle the diverse nature of Council operations. This is a relatively new market and generally software have been designed around specific industries resulting in no single evaluation tool being capable of covering the complexities of the Council. Working in conjunction with other public sector bodies and some of the leading toolkit suppliers to develop tools specifically for public sector these should go into evaluation 1st and 2nd quarters of 25/26. Following evaluation, an estimated completion date can be set.</p>
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Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
	Target	Actual	RAG		
No. Funding Opportunities aimed at Community Energy Projects	19	n/a	6	n/a	The number of projects is lower than the previous year due to only one fund being opened in 2024/25. The focus was on closing off projects from previous years. There is no target, this is a monitoring indicator only.

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4.4 Value and protect Highland’s natural environment.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
% of Nature Restoration Fund Allocated Annually	93%	90%	0%	N/A	The Nature Restoration Fund was not available in 2024/25 due to Scottish Government ceasing some grant schemes.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Consideration of the Flow Country as a UNESCO world heritage site	Completed	Now completed with the UNESCO award announced in July 2024.

4.5 Encourage greater use of land and seas being well managed for nature and adaptation including blue economy, carbon sequestration and peatland restoration.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Deliver Ecological Strategy	Completed	This was agreed at Infrastructure & Environment Committee in November 2024. Marked as completed Q3 24/25.
Map council land available for biodiversity enhancement	Completed	This work is being carried out as part of the Net Zero Programme under the thematic group Planning, Land Use & Environment and is included within Address Ecological Emergency Project. Progress is reported through the Climate Change Committee. The status of this work as of Q4 24/25

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		was Green - initial first phase GIS map complete which covers this action. Next stage is to prioritize sites to meet requirements of Scottish Biodiversity Strategy/greenspace management strategy
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4.6 Reduce residual waste and increase re-use, repair, recycling and upcycling.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Household waste recycled (ENV6a)	36.0%	n/a	42.5%	n/a	The 2024/25 figure for Highland is provisional and yet to be verified. Target is the LGBF Family Group average which is not available until September 2025.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Continue partnership with Intermediate Labour Market Highland	G	Recycling Improvement Fund small grants funding was secured on behalf of ILM Highland to further enhance re-use and repair opportunity: an additional collection service to rural communities & improvements within recycling centres is being achieved through the external funding.

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4.7 Achieve our Net Zero targets.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Street lighting energy consumption (million kWh)	8,375,106	8,075,000	7,975,464	G	There has been a 4.77% reduction from 2023/24 to 2024/25.
Council carbon emissions tonnes CO2e	33,229	46,177	n/a	n/a	Target is a 3% annual reduction on previous year's target. 2024/25 data will be available November 2025
Number of HC and public charger sites	144	186	144	R	There is a target of 286 sites by March 2027. There have been no further sites between 2023/24 and 2024/25 due to a transition in funding allocation. The Council EV network relies on external funding for development, however during this period there has been significant funding obtained to allow us to reinforce existing infrastructure. There are now additional 150 sites scheduled over the next two years which when delivered will mean the target is achieved.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Net Zero Strategy & Fully Costed Action Plan: Report Progress	G	This work is being carried out as part the Delivery Plan Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation Portfolio. The status of this work as of Q4 24/25 was Green as we are on target to achieve the annual reduction of Carbon emissions (7.5%) Actions are reported quarterly to the climate change committee with updates and action approvals being agreed at the Net Zero, Energy, Investment & Innovation Board.

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Economy

4.8 Invest in commercial renewable energy opportunities to generate new income streams for the Council.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Identify income opportunities from renewable technologies	G	This work is being carried out as part of the Investment Pipeline and Battery Storage Projects in the Delivery Plan Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation Portfolio. The status of this work as of Q4 24/25 was Green due to, Programme Manager and project team appointed at the end of quarter 3 24/25. Existing identified projects are all progressing quickly with the battery storage expected to go to tender Quarter 2 -25/26 and the commercial solar expected to go to planning in the same time frame. New projects have already been identified in quarter 4 and will be developed for consideration during Quarter 1/2 of 25/26.

4.9 Identify and commit to renewable energy investments to reduce the overall energy costs for the Council.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Undertake detailed options appraisal of all sites to establish options for energy saving interventions and consumption reduction	G	This work is being carried out as part of a milestone within the Energy Efficient Council Programme in the Delivery Plan Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation Portfolio. As of Q4 24/25 this was on track with 98 Net Zero surveys carried out and 23 reports issued as of March 2025.

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<p>Introduce sustainability software which will provide live data on carbon emissions</p>	<p>A</p>	<p>This work is being carried out as part the Delivery Plan Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation Portfolio. This is currently ragged as amber as it has slipped beyond the target date of May 2025. A number of systems have been evaluated and found unsuitable to handle the diverse nature of Council operations. This is a relatively new market and generally software have been designed around specific industries resulting in no single evaluation tool being capable of covering the complexities of the Council. Working in conjunction with other public sector bodies and some of the leading toolkit suppliers to develop tools specifically for public sector these should go into evaluation 1st and 2nd quarters of 25/26</p>
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4.10 Capitalise on our natural capital to deliver alternative energy solutions

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
<p>Develop solar panel installations performance data</p>	<p>A</p>	<p>Work undertaken as part of estate wide inspection programme to expand coverage. Business case submitted for review and approval in Q1 2025/26.</p>
<p>Projects assisting in reducing energy purchased</p>	<p>A</p>	<p>This work is being carried out as part of the Energy Efficient Council Programme in the Delivery Plan Net Zero, Energy Investment & Innovation Portfolio. The status of this work as of Q4 24/25 was Amber due to the primary focus being on getting our existing assets operational the installation of new assets has not achieved the</p>

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		targeted 1MW with new installations totalling 265kWp Plans are in place for 25/26 to accelerate new installations and upgrade some of older sites to increase generation. A number of projects are at the construction development stage, progress will also be determined by our ability to connect to the grid.
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4.11 Promote a "Just Transition" by moving to a more environmentally sustainable economy in a way that's fair to everyone.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Increase areas identified for food growing and ecological benefit	Completed	Completed in Q1 24/25

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Theme 5: A Resilient and Sustainable Council

Work with partners to address service delivery challenges with a positive approach to change.

People

5.1 Grow and retain our own talent within the Council.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Sickness Days Lost per Employee	11.4	12.5	13.2	A	<p>The continued rise in absence is partly attributed to improved reporting accuracy following the implementation of additional training for managers and teachers digitally reporting absence in 2023/24. As a result, we are now seeing a more realistic and consistent reflection of days lost due to absence.</p> <p>A notable trend this year has been the rise in short-term absences linked to viral illnesses. This appears to correlate with changing seasonal patterns, potentially contributing to the spread of infections throughout the year.</p> <p>Mental health remains one of the top three reasons for long-term absence. It is important to recognise that recovery from mental health conditions often requires multiple treatments and sustained support and waiting lists for NHS mental health services can be lengthy, which can extend</p>

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					<p>the duration of absence. The majority of this is non-work related. To focus on supporting these staff, the occupational health, safety and wellbeing team have recruited an additional 21 mental health representatives, bringing the total in the Council to 91 reps, as well as the mental health helpline and Viva Engage channel. The team has seen some notable successes in supporting individuals, but it is difficult to quantify how this impacts sickness absence statistics.</p>
<p>Indicators in OHS (Occupational Health & Safety) Strategy with green rating</p>	60%	90%	80%	A	<p>There are fluctuations in compliance, however there has been a general improvement trend from 60% in FY 23/24 to 80% in FY24/25. Achieving the target as stated is contingent on staff capacity, and currently the team is operating with vacancies.</p> <p>The occupational health, safety and wellbeing team are also reviewing their existing wellbeing strategy and taking this opportunity to focus more on prevention. Trade union colleagues will be consulted as part of this review. In addition to supporting those already experiencing sickness absence, we are exploring providing proactive free health checks, health and fitness advice, and an increase in the number of counselling sessions available for staff who might benefit.</p> <p>This had previously been reported as Red to</p>

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					Corporate Resources on June 5 th but on reflection, given the performance has increased to 80% this year compared to 605 last year, an Amber rating has been given
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Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Finance element of new HR system [OneCouncil] implemented	Completed	The new corporate financial system went live in April 2024 as per the programme plan.
Identify and agree Corporate Training priorities: achieve compliance with training	G	There has been a positive increase in 24/25 for most mandatory modules. This continues to be a major focus for the organisation. The target has been extended through to March 2026.
Identify and agree Corporate Training priorities: improve ERD recording	A	Amber Status was recorded at end of 2024/25 as we did not achieve 90% compliance rate for employees reporting they had received an ERD. A significant increase from 35% to 71% across services was reported. To improve reporting an electronic ERD form using MS forms has designed and piloted and work is underway with ICT and the new form to be available by 30 October 2025. This is an interim automated process until the new HR&P system is implemented.

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5.2 Work with public and private sector partners to coordinate employment opportunities.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
No. new Modern Apprenticeships/Paid Placements and Youth Traineeships	177	125	146	G	As the Employability Service is a client focused service, the number of Youth Traineeships and paid placements are determined by the support needs of the clients which are registered with the Service and the budget allocation for this activity.
Performance Indicator	FY 22/23 Actual	FY 23/24			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Percentage of Unemployed People Assisted into work (ECON01)	9.7%	12.1%	5.20%	R	Target is the Scottish Average. The number of unemployed increased slightly and the number of people assisted into work reduced slightly between FY22/23 to FY23/24, resulting in a drop in the percentage. Although lower than the Scottish average percentage of unemployed people were assisted into work. Highland Council assisted the highest percentage of those engaging with the service into work when compared to all other councils. This achievement is not recognised by this indicator. 24/25 data is not yet available - Updates for 2024/25 are expected from the LGBF in December 2025.

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Actions	FY 23/24	Comments
Carry out full review of Employability Services offered by the Council	Completed	Completed in Q1 of 24/25.

5.3 Improve our response times in replying to enquiries and service requests from the public.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
The 'My Council' project will continue to work towards developing a Highland Council Customer Contact Vision	G	This action was on target at the end of 24/25 but as of 25/26, this will be marked as 'complete' and delivered under the Delivery Plan – Corporate Solutions Portfolio as part of the My Council Programme.

5.4 Actively redesign service delivery in response to constrained budgets to ensure the sustainability of the Council.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
	Target	Actual	RAG		
Key Improvement/ Transformation Projects support budget savings and help deliver cashable benefits	96%	80%	N/A	Completed	It was reported at Corporate Resources Committee in December 2024 that reporting on this indicator would cease. Instead, all key projects in the Delivery Plan are reported in detail individually to relevant Committees.

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Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Digital Strategy implemented	G	Delivery of the Digital Strategy - Digital foundations is a project within the Operational delivery Plan. Key deliverables implemented to date include the creation of the Digital Business Partner team, provision of online digital training, creation of a digital hub including peer-support networking, broad and well received engagement with Services, formalisation of processes to guide Services through digital projects, guidance on use of AI and support for AI pathfinder projects.
ICT Strategy implemented	G	Activity continues at pace to reduce the dependence on the data centre, increasing resilience and flexibility. Options for network refresh and future DC operating model are well advanced. Work also continues to move applications either to the Azure cloud or to vendor hosted arrangements. Support arrangements by the in-house team are also evolving to meet future requirements.

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Place

5.5 Work together with communities and partners to produce local plans which meet communities' needs.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Supporting and engaging with Community Councils	G	A review of the scheme is underway and due to be completed by September 2025. There was no target set as support and engagement is ongoing.

5.6 Develop place-based partnership strategies to coordinate investment and rural repopulation.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Involved Communities: Area Place Plans for each Council area	G	Due to complete Q3 25/26. This action is also in 2.4, 3.6 and 4.3.

5.7 Continue the Council's success in attracting rural tourism infrastructure funding to provide improvements to local infrastructure.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Delivery of 22 Tier 1 priority projects in Highland Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan	A	Scot Gov paused the fund during 24/25 so no new projects during that period. Scot Gov reinstated the fund in 25/26 and 3 projects are currently being taken forward by THC.

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5.8 Accelerate the delivery of our Asset Management approach to increase efficiency and reduce overheads and carbon impact.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Asset Management - % Suitability (CAST1)	76.8%	n/a	77.9%	n/a	Target for this indicator is the LGBF Family Group Average but this will not be available until December 25.
Asset Management - Condition (CAST2)	85.9%	n/a	82.4%	n/a	The overall condition of the estate has declined from 85.9% to 82.4%. This decrease has been identified by the ongoing refresh of survey information for the operational estate as part of the condition survey program. Target for this indicator is the LGBF Family Group average but this will not be available until December 25.

Actions	FY 24/25	Comments
Deliver £1.2M savings target from asset rationalisation	Superseded	This work and associated saving was superseded through the development of the Reconfiguring our Asset Base Portfolio with different savings allocated to a range of projects within that Portfolio. Governance is provided by the Portfolio Board and the reporting to committee as part of the Delivery Plan Reporting schedule. For clarity, this action has not been included in the overall calculation numbers for Green or Completed.

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Economy

- 5.9 Promote and support business development opportunities through Business Gateway and Highland Opportunity Investment Limited (HOIL).

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Number of businesses supported by Council ED and BG	3,496	2,815	n/a	n/a	24/25 data is not expected until October 2025. The target is an average of the previous 3 years.
No. Business Gateway start-ups per 10000 popn (ECON05)	15.15	n/a	n/a	n/a	24/25 data is not expected until October 2025. The target is the LGBF Scottish Average.

- 5.10 Broaden the Council's income base through taxation and delivering more commercial Value for Money services.

Performance Indicator	FY 23/24 Actual	FY 24/25			Comments
		Target	Actual	RAG	
Council Tax Annual % received (CORP07)	95.89%	n/a	95.65%	n/a	Target is LGBF Scottish Average, 24/25 target data is not yet available and expected December 25.
Gross rent arrears as % of rent due (HSN1b)	7.16%	6.90%	6.42%	G	The target is for Highland Council to rank in the 1 st Quartile of Scottish Local Authorities (Rank 1-8) Performance for 2024/25 is 6.42%, however the rank position is not yet confirmed in line with the Scottish Average.

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