

Agenda Item	4
Report No	RDB-01-24

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Redesign Board

Date: 28 March 2024

Report Title: Redesign of Highland Council – Work Programme Update

Report By: Interim Depute Chief Executive

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report highlights the ongoing importance of the work of the Redesign Board with the Council's priorities, in particular as set out in the approved report to 2 March 2023 Council ['Our Future Highland- Budget Strategy 2023/24'](#).

The report updates the Redesign Board on the current Work Programme, comprising major projects and a programme of Lean/Rapid Reviews.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

i) **Note** the Work Programme Update;

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource:** There are no direct resource implications arising from this report. Project Sponsors manage the resource commitments required for the successful delivery of their projects from a corporate perspective, ensuring targeted deployment of resource for the effective redesign of Council services in line with the Council's priorities.

3.2 **Legal:** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. Project Sponsors seek legal advice and take appropriate action as required in respect of their projects.

3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural):** Impact assessments, informed by engagement with key stakeholders including partners and communities, are undertaken to evaluate proposals and decisions.

3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever:** There are no direct Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications arising from this report. All Redesign projects proactively make linkages to the Council's Net Zero Strategy.

- 3.5 **Risk:** All Redesign projects comply with Corporate and Transformation PMO standards in respect of proactive risk management as a key discipline in the controlled and managed delivery of the work. Importantly, the Redesign Board work programme and activity of the Board directly contributes to the risk response to of the Corporate Risk in respect of Financial Sustainability (CR1).
- 3.6 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people):** There are no direct Health and Safety implications arising from this report. Project Sponsors will consider any specific relevant Health and Safety implications as part of the management and delivery of their projects.
- 3.7 **Gaelic:** There are no specific Gaelic implications arising from this report. All projects will ensure the Council's bilingual policy is appropriately applied.

4. Programme Delivery – Council Delivery Plan

- 4.1 Members will be aware from the report taken to the March meeting of The Highland Council that a single Council Delivery Plan is being developed to ensure a joined-up approach to delivering Council priorities and the budget plan. The Delivery Plan will be managed using robust programme and project management techniques and will be supported by the Strategic Improvement Team. A presentation providing an update on the Delivery Plan is on the agenda for this meeting.
- 4.2 It is recognised that the core projects that are reported to the Redesign Board all contribute significantly to the Council priorities and are therefore included in the Delivery Plan. They will continue to be reported through the Redesign Board.
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5 Redesign Projects Update

- 5.1 The Redesign Projects that currently come under the remit of the Redesign Board are as follows:-
- Asset Management (see section 6)
 - Roads (see section 7)
 - In-House Bus Operation (see section 8)
 - My Council (see section 9)
 - Trades Framework Redesign (see section 10)
 - Employability Review (see section 11)

6 Asset Management

- 6.1 A separate report is provided as a standalone agenda item.

7 Roads

- 7.1 The Project Brief was approved at the [18 February 2022 Redesign Board](#), and from this, the summary purpose and objectives of the Project are as follows:-

Purpose: The Project's purpose is to redesign the service to modernise it and ensure efficient processes are in place. This is to identify improvements for the effective and

sustainable delivery of all Engineering and Roads Operations. It is fundamental to the delivery of professional, quality services that continue to deliver value for money and meet the needs of all of those who use them. With the priority Customer Applications process reviews concluded, the team is continuing working on delivering the proposed changes within the LEAN reviews (Permits, Temporary and Permanent Traffic Orders as well as Compensation Claims).

- 7.2 Redesign Board Members assigned to this Project are Cllrs Raymond Bremner, Russell Jones and Trish Robertson.
- 7.3 Due to adverse weather conditions in January, the first Budget Distribution Workshop on Revenue was rescheduled for 27th March 2024. The second workshop, focusing on Capital, is scheduled for 17th April 2024.
- 7.4 Work on the Road Construction Consent project, exploring the feasibility of an added value service has begun. Policy reviews will also continue, with updates expected to go to the next E&I committee in May.
- 7.5 As the project continues, below are the expected next phases:
- Finalisation of preparation for the Capital Budget Distribution Workshop.
 - Continuation of delivery of improvement actions identified within the LEAN reviews.
 - Continuation of the road construction consent process improvement project focusing on an added value service.
 - Continuation of policy updates, including committee approval.

8 In-House Bus Operation

- 8.1 This is being progressed through two separate projects with the following purpose:
- To pilot an in-house bus operation to deliver passenger and school transport services at a lower cost to that offered by commercial contractors; and
 - To develop the recommendations made by the TAS Partnership in a review of school transport arrangements, including the procurement of a specialist transport management software system.
- 8.2 The Redesign Board Members assigned to this Project are Cllrs Bill Lobban, Alasdair Christie and Michael Green.
- 8.3 **In-House Bus Operations**
- **Expansion of fleet** – Coach purchase has now been approved by the Procurement Approval Group and a suitable vehicle procured.
 - **External interest** – Service team leaders were asked by ATCO Scotland to give a presentation on the HC In-house bus operations pilot project, the Scottish Governments Transport Minister was also in attendance. HC were asked to present again to Transport Scotland's policy team to help advise SG policy.
 - **Scottish Borders Council** – On 16th February we welcomed a visit by Scottish Borders Council to our operating depot, where we showed them around and

explained how we set the pilot project up and shared our challenges and successes from our first year of operations.

Budget/Costings – In the first year of operations the project is showing significant cost avoidance compared to the commercial tender equivalent. There has been a delay in the HC Financial service providing the necessary coding to enable the internal financial reporting to clearly show the costs. Service and Finance are activity working on resolving this to enable full end of year to be accessible.

8.4 **TAS Recommendations Implementation**

Software for transport management system - Meetings continue between service and ICT, the method of procurement and preferred supplier are agreed. Preferred supplier has provided workshop for operational staff. Feedback for workshop has informed the work on consolidation of specification for system. Anticipated purchase in early to mid-spring.

Project management - There were no applicants to the internal recruitment to replace the Project Officer and three staff are covering aspects of the work between them, but this creates significant risks for the progress of the project, notably:

- Use of under-22 free travel scheme for home to school travel
- Personal Travel Budgets and shared parental arrangements
- Independent Travel training
- Review of road safety entitlement and case for mitigation works
- Assessment of routes where provision of bikes could be an alternative to transport
- Environmental sustainability objectives

9 **My Council**

9.1 The Programme Brief was approved at the 28 November 2022 Redesign Board, and from this, the summary purpose and objectives of the Programme are as follows:-

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

9.2 The aim of the My Council Project is to review and create a joined-up customer contact experience at the Highland Council, including the opportunities to further utilise digital approaches to support improved outcomes for our citizens, our staff, and the Council. By developing self-service digital options for those who can use it, resources are released to better support customers who need it the most. The focus of the project is putting the citizen at the centre of customer engagement at the Highland Council, to improve our process and approach for all contact methods (digital, telephony, face to face) and to provide a seamless customer experience. The outcomes of this data-driven and customer focused project will drive cost-saving efficiencies (financial benefits); reduce failure demand (greater efficiency); and increase internal/external customer satisfaction (improvement).

The programme is being managed through 4 core projects:

- **Project 1** - Customer Contact Strategy
- **Project 2** - Data-led and Customer-informed Business Intelligence
- **Project 3** - End-to-end Customer Journey
- **Project 4** - Customer Contact Methods

9.3 The Redesign Board Members assigned to this Project are Cllrs Maxine Smith, Jackie Hendry and Bill Boyd.

9.4 Progress across several key areas has been made during this reporting period and the programme has moved from amber to green:

Project 1: Customer Contact Strategy

- The Board have considered and agreed – subject to minor amendments – a Customer Relationship Policy which sets out how to support positive engagement but also how staff will respond to, and be supported to manage, challenging customer behaviour.
- The Board have agreed an implementation timetable for the Customer Contact Strategy. This includes direct work with services to raise awareness and support adoption, development of service standards across the organisation and that the draft Strategy will be considered first at the Redesign Board and subsequently at Council in September 2024.
- All work under project 1 is on track to meet project milestones and deliverables.

Project 3: End to End Customer Journey

- Work has progressed well on the lean review of housing repairs, with key actions taken to amend processes and communication. Evidence suggests that these initial changes are already having a significant impact on improving service efficiencies but also the service experienced by customers.
- Next steps include identifying the next service areas to focus on along with moving into looking at customer journey process automation linked to our forms and CRM system.
- All work under project 3 is on track to meet project milestones and deliverables.

Project 4: Customer Contact Methods

- The web development team are now in place and work on the web content audit is underway.
- The Board considered an options appraisal for progressing the web upgrade and agreed a way forward that supports delivery of a flexible bespoke approach to developing our new website. This will provide us with a new platform to realise the ambitions of improving our digital offering.
- The roll-out of the new telephony platform Ringcentral progressed as planned during the last reporting period. The roll-out to the corporate network and service centre are now complete and work is underway to deliver this for the school estate over the next few months.
- All work under project 4 is on track to meet project milestones and deliverables.

9.5 In addition to the areas outlined above, the Board agreed to realign project 2, data led and customer informed business intelligence, into the Data Foundations project which is a core part of the Council's delivery plan and will bring together similar approaches to improve our business intelligence as an organisation.

10 Trades Framework Redesign

10.1 Purpose

The introduction of a new approach to Trades spend will close an internal audit action, aligning spend on external trades suppliers with current procurement requirements. It will also ensure that work is passed to fully competent suppliers while an award of work mechanism will promote more work towards suppliers who demonstrate ongoing good value for money.

10.2 Following the recommendation at the last Redesign Board 5 December 2023, the Redesign Board Members appointed to this Project are Cllrs Russel Jones and Trish Robertson.

10.3 The aim to achieve a substantial saving of 300k over 3 years emerged as part of the budget setting process. To ensure the efficacy of the current approach, a comprehensive evaluation is underway with key internal stakeholders to take account of this recent development.

The project is one of the Case Studies for the upcoming Integrated Impact Assessment (IIAP) Process, set to launch in July 2024. By actively engaging with IIAP in the early stages the project can pinpoint both positive and negative impacts of the planned approach, should there be any. IIAP encompasses assessment such as Island and Mainland Rural Communities Impact Assessment, Equalities, Poverty, and Human Rights Impact Assessment, Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment, Climate Change Impact Assessment and Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA). The results of a comprehensive screening process will determine whether a Full Impact Assessment (FIA) is necessary in any of these areas, guiding the development of appropriate mitigating strategies and solutions.

10.4 During this reporting period, connecting with stakeholders has been a top priority. Drawing insights from previous lessons, the project has focused on developing an approach to understand the experiences and expectations of both current contractors and potential future contractors. The project is committed to crafting a solution grounded in evidence, ensuring a well-informed and effective approach to the project and design of solutions.

10.5 In the next reporting period, the project intendeds to refresh the Project Brief to take account of the new saving expectations and a suitable delivery plan in line with any mitigating strategies identified as part of the Integrated Impact Assessment process.

11 Employability Review

11.1 A report was taken to 30 March 2023 Redesign Board detailing plans for a corporate review of employability services across the Council and partners. This is a focused review of Council services that support employability outcomes. This is primarily an internal (Council) review but set in context of the inter-agency approach to employability – as led by the Highland Employability Partnership.

11.2 The appointed consultants, Rocket Science Ltd., have provided a final draft report and this draft is currently being considered by senior management. This work will also usefully inform and tie into the Council's Delivery Plan work priorities.

7 Redesign Board Workshops

7.1 Redesign Board Workshops present the opportunity for Member input and consideration of particular areas of service delivery, business opportunities and problems. Workshop outputs will inform actions to be taken to deliver the desired outcomes and benefits, such as the initiation of feasibility and business case work, and the initiation of projects.

7.1.1 **Roads**

Two workshops are planned. The first workshop covering budget distribution, originally scheduled for 17th January 2024, had to be cancelled due to adverse weather conditions. This has been re-scheduled for 27th March 2024, with the second, focusing on capital, scheduled for 17th April 2024.

7.1.2 **Asset Management**

As agreed at the 28 November 2022 Redesign Board, this Workshop will consider options for the delivery of the functions of the property service such as maintenance. The scope and timescale for this workshop is still under review with the Property and Housing Service.

Designation: Interim Depute Chief Executive

Date: 8 March 2024

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