

Agenda Item	4
Report No	RDB-04-24

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Redesign Board

**Date:** 29 May 2024

**Report Title:** Redesign of Highland Council – Work Programme Update

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

### 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 has been agreed 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.
- 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. As part of the development of the Delivery Plan, consideration will be made regarding which other projects might benefit from Redesign Board input.

#### **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, and a separate item to today's agenda)
  - 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, and a separate item to today's agenda)

#### **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 Following the Budget Distribution Workshop on Revenue on the 27th March 2024, the second Workshop on Capital was held on the 17th April 2024. Both workshops provided an invaluable platform for Councillors to engage with Officers, ask questions, offer suggestions, and discuss pertinent issues. The interactive nature of the sessions facilitated constructive dialogue and fostered a deeper understanding of the budget allocation process. Currently, the actions arising from these workshops are being compiled and organized. These actions will be presented to the Project Board for review and discussion. This collaborative approach ensures that all tasks, actions, and investigations stemming from the workshops are carefully considered, and appropriate strategies are devised to move forward effectively.
- 7.4 Work on the Road Construction Consent project, exploring the feasibility of an added value service has been completed, the team is working on a report for the Board with the outcome. Three policies were approved at the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024 E&I Committee. These were the Flood Risk Management Policy, Abnormal Load Policy and management of Sub-standard Structures Policy. Policy reviews will continue, with more expected to go to the E&I committee in August 2024.
- 7.5 As the project continues, below are the expected next phases:
- Taking forward Workshop tasks, actions and investigations.
  - Continuation of delivery of improvement actions identified within the LEAN reviews.
  - Continuation of the road construction activities 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 services/fleet** – In January 2024, an additional route was taken in-house, providing school transport in Strathdearn for both primary and secondary pupils, and a

public service between Tomatin and Inverness. Compared to the previous contract, this is saving £173,313 per annum.

A 53-seater coach has been purchased to enable greater capacity for school hires. From 20 May this vehicle will also be used on two home to school journeys in the Nairn area, replacing a Stagecoach contract with a cost reduction of £333,715.

Stagecoach have recently stated that they could provide the off-peak Foyers-Inverness service commercially and have offered an extremely competitive price of £52,740 for the peak hour journeys (which include school transport). This will be implemented from 20 May 2024.

The Foyers bus will be redeployed on a Resolis Primary School route, along with the off-peak public service between Cromarty and Dingwall, replacing an existing Stagecoach contract. This gives a more modest cost reduction of £24,052.

From 1 April an interim service has been in place between the Culbokie area and Tore, connecting with Stagecoach buses, while Ferintosh Community Council work on setting up a new community transport organisation in their area.

Other opportunities are being identified where they benefit the Council or other public or community organisations. For example, a bus is being provided for a South Planning Committee members' site visit, at a lower cost than an external hire.

**External interest** – UK Department for Levelling Up requested to meet with managers to obtain advice for use UK wide.

**Future Development** – The implications of moving from a fully in-house operation to an Arm's Length External Organisation in the medium term are being examined, and a report will be brought to E&I Committee when this has been fully analysed.

#### 8.4 **TAS Recommendations Implementation**

**Software for transport management system** - on 24 April 2024 the Bus Transformation Project Board approved the procurement from the preferred supplier. Choice of specification options are being finalised for approval by the Procurement Board.

**Project management** - as noted at the previous meeting, the Project Officer post has not been filled, which 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 3 core projects. A further project, project 2 - Data-led and Customer-informed Business Intelligence, is being progressed through the Data Foundations strand of the Delivery Plan.

- **Project 1** - Customer Contact Strategy
- **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 The programme overall continues to operate at green.

#### Project 1: Customer Contact Strategy

- The Board have agreed an implementation timetable for the Customer Contact Strategy. Work continues to work towards implementation including:
  - Completion of public facing focus groups and survey to inform the development of the strategy and charter
  - Developing service standards for different functional areas of Council business;
  - Work on creation of a learning and training approach for staff to support embedding the strategy
  - Work on the strategy is nearing completion with the draft strategy due to be considered by the My Council Board in June, the Redesign Board in August 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 on the housing repairs lean review is nearing completion, with key learning and outcomes due to report in June. This will inform the next service area reviews and customer journey process automation linked to our forms and CRM system.

#### Project 4: Customer Contact Methods

- The web development team are now in place and work on the web content audit is underway. Work is ongoing on creating a vision for the new website. It is proposed a Redesign workshop on the development of the new website will be held following recess.
- The roll-out of the new telephony platform Ringcentral is progressing as planned with work underway to deliver this for the school estate by the end of August 2024.
- Additional modules for the Service Centre to support quality assurance and workforce planning are due to be deployed by end of July. A separate report on the approach and changes made to telephony in the Service Centre will be presented to the next Redesign Board.
- All work under project 4 is on track to meet project milestones and deliverables.

## **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 No further update is available for this meeting due to the project manager moving to a new role and the focus on developing the Council Delivery Plan.

## **11 Employability Review**

- 11.1 A separate report is on the agenda for this meeting.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate

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