Agenda Item	5
Report No	RBD-10-24

The Highland Council

Committee: **Redesign Board**

Date: **20 November 2024**

Report Title: **My Council Programme - Update**

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

1   Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1   The Delivery Plan 2024-27 consists of 64 projects/programmes, managed through 6 Portfolio Boards. Each project is reported to a relevant committee for consideration and scrutiny in terms of the Portfolio Reporting Cycle agreed at Council on 9 May 2024. The My Council Programme is a Redesign Project and whilst within the DElivery Plan, will continue to report to the Redesign Board and be progressed through the Redesign process.

1.2   This report provides an update on My Council Programme:
1. Customer Experience Strategy Project
2. MyHighland Project – Formally known as End-to-End Customer Journey
3. Customer Contact Methods Project

2   Recommendations

2.1   Members are asked to:
- **Note** the updates provided for all the My Council Programme projects within the Delivery Plan
- **Consider and provide views** on the design ideas for the Website, seen in Appendix 1.

3   Implications

3.1   **Resource** – There are no additional resource implications beyond those set out in the report.

3.2   **Legal** - This report contributes to the Council's statutory duties to report performance and secure best value in terms of; Section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, and Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, respectively.

3.4   **Risk** - There are no risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. Project/Programme risks are identified via the council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards and are reported by exception only in the project/programme updates provided in this report.

3.5   **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** - There are no Health and safety implications arising as a direct result of this report.

3.6   **Gaelic** - The Website Redesign Project has had significant involvement from the Gaelic team, along with discussions with the Bòrd na Gàidhlig. A Gaelic version of the Customer Charter is currently in production.

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   The impact assessment process for all My Council Programme Projects are as follows:

Project	Status
Customer Experience Strategy	Complete
MyHighland	Screening in Progress
Customer Contact Methods	Screening in Progress

The screening for both the MyHighland and Customer Contact Methods projects are iterative and being updated as both projects progress.

5.   My Council Programme

5.1   **Overall Programme RAG**
The My Council Programme comprises the following projects:
- Customer Experience Strategy, which includes the development of the Strategy, revised customer relationship policy and Customer Charter. In order to implement the Strategy, actions include training, briefing sessions and published Customer Standards.
- The MyHighland project is set to deliver a new customer account to empower the customer to self-serve council services and monitor their requests.
- Customer Contact Methods, which includes a Strategic Review of customer contact, new telephony roll out (Corporate and Service Centre) and the Highland Council Website Redesign.

The 3 projects overall are ragged as green and the rationale for the rag status is as per the narrative extracted from the PRMS system below: -

Reason for Project RAG Rating and Corrective Action:

	M8 24/25

All My Council projects on track- some slippage with CRM assessment milestone ,but still on track for target date

5.2 Key Milestones & Requests for Change

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Jun 24	My Council Programme: Customer Charter implemented with staff	M3 24/25 Completed
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Sept 24	My Council Programme: Customer contact strategy agreed	M7 24/25 Completed
Starts Apr24 / Completes Mar25	My Council Programme: Customer Service Standards published	M8 24/25 On Target
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Dec 24	My Council Programme: Assessment of CRM	M8 24/25 On Target
Due to complete Q2 24/25	Roll out new corporate telephony to support new ways of working	Q1 24/25 Completed
Starts Apr 24 / Completes Sept 25	My Council Programme: New redesigned website in place	M8 24/25 On Target

*The milestones for MyHighland project will be updated for the next report.

6. My Council Programme Updates

6.1 Agreed Customer Experience Strategy by September 2024.
The Customer Experience Strategy was approved by Redesign Board 2nd October 2024 and subsequently at Council on 31 October 2024. The Strategy included associated documents of a new Customer Relationship Policy and Customer Charter.

To 'launch' the Strategy, the following has been produced and will be rolled out for staff:
- Learning & Development module on the Strategy
- Toolbox talks
- Learning & Development Customer care training
- Staff Briefing sessions
- Communications

6.2 Customer Service Standards published by March 2025
Work has been ongoing on collating Customer Standards to support delivery of the Customer Experience Strategy and Charter by clearly articulating response times and managing customer expectations:

Work is taking place through service workshops to support the development and identification of service standards. This is because not all functional areas have specific service standards/timescales attached to them. To support this, a request for change to the original timescale was approved by Corporate Solutions Portfolio Board (8th Oct 2024) from Sept 24 to March 25.

6.3   **Assessment of CRM by December 2024**
An assessment of the Customer Relationship Management system is being conducted to look at the application and understand potential resolutions to problems users are facing.

A new CRM Assessment survey was created with key stakeholders. The survey looks to outline: what is going well, what is not going well and what would we like a customer relationship management system to be able to do. The survey was distributed at the end of October. At the time of writing, just under 100 responses have been received from a variety of service users.

6.4   **Roll out new corporate telephony to support new ways of working by September 2024**
The new corporate telephony solution is now in place. This was delivered within the planned timeframe.

In addition, enhanced technology and functionality in the Service Centre has been delivered to support operational efficiencies. This specifically includes a new workforce management system in the Service Centre, which has proven to be beneficial for the customer services team for workforce forecasting, along with a Quality Management Module.

6.5   **New redesigned website in place by September 2025**
The Web Redesign project is progressing with a design phase with the supplier which has produced three initial design ideas (attached in Appendix 1). This is an iterative process where consideration of customer needs, demand and input is critical. Elected Members are asked to provide their views on the design ideas at the Redesign Board.

The design of the new website must meet accessibility legislation (The Public Sector Bodies Website and Mobile Applications No.2., 2018,) and all designs ideas presented have gone through accessibility checks.

In addition, due to 65% of users accessing the website on a mobile, the project has adopted a mobile first approach.

The design ideas were developed and produced using data obtained on usability and functionality of the site, along with the following contributors to the Design Phase:
1. Member Redesign Board workshop, on the vision for the new website
2. An Online public survey on the Highland Council Website (2023, 1166 participants)

3. Key Cross-Service representatives were involved in the Design workshops with the supplier
4. Stakeholder Engagement, including key customer representatives

A high-level summary of the feedback from each of these sessions can be found in appendix 2.

6.5.1   Design Phase – Stakeholder Engagement Output
As a result of the user feedback gathered so far on the designs received from both internal and external stakeholders, the project has learned a lot about the intended design.

Key quotes which represent the emerging themes from the focus groups include:
- "Photographs behind text make reading the text difficult"
- "Know your audience – don't make it difficult to find things"
- "Don't let aesthetics get in the way of actual function".

In general, feedback was generally positive on the design ideas themselves, with mixed views when it came to preferences on specific parts of the design. Feedback has included preferences on the colours, as well as structural, format and layout changes.

The consensus seems to be that the 'Resident, Business and Visitor' categorisation makes sense, however the terms require work along with making it more obvious that this functionality is personalising the experience on the website.

Typical of a project of this size and scale, feedback has also produced conflicting requirements depending on the specific needs of customers. For example, this includes the use of photographs, whether a more formal or informal styling is preferred, along with the ordering of content.

Given that the feedback was generally positive on the designs but with mixed views on specific preference areas, the designs will be reviewed further. This is a critical stage in the process and the project team have learned a substantial amount in the phase, particularly around the complexity of meeting differing (and at times conflicting) user needs.

Further engagement is being planned with businesses and visitors to further understand needs to shape functionality that would suit.

As noted at 6.5, Members are asked to provide their thoughts at the Redesign Board.

6.5.2   Up to Date Website Content
In addition to the Website Design phase to develop the new website, Services have been completing the first review of the content held on the current website. This is to ensure that only up to date, essential and customer-focus content is migrated onto the new designed website.

The first review of the content is on track for the first phase of review to complete by mid December 2024.
Then next phase after the first review by Services has completed will be to refine and redesign the content.

6.6   **MyHighland project customer account**
The MyHighland project (formally end to end customer journey) customer account is currently in the planning phase. Key milestones will be confirmed once the planning is complete. The planning phase is currently gathering business and customer requirements for each product. That is then assessed to evaluate the time, cost and resources required for delivery.

The project critical products have been agreed at the last MyCouncil Programme board on the 12 September 2024. The products chosen are initial service areas to create the platform. Once developed, other service areas will be investigated to expand the offering to the customer.

The products have been broken down below as:
1. Customer Account – the ability for a customer to securely sign in and have a personalised profile.
2. Council Tax Online – displaying individual Council tax bills digitally which would reduce the requirement to post the bill annually.
3. Customer Hub
   a. Viewing Requests Online
   b. Report a street or environmental concern
   c. Finding local services near you
   d. Know your councillor
   e. Bin Calendars
   f. Highland Council X (Formally Twitter) Feed
   g. Home and Family – Offering citizens links to existing council services which are personalised to them e.g. schools/school meals if there are children in the household.

A detailed assessment was conducted to determine what options the council must provide to deliver a council tax online solution. The assessment looked at key criterions of usability, responsiveness, resource, costs and timescales. The assessment is being reviewed for a decision on how best to proceed which looks at the functionality for the user and how we integrate the solution with the rest of the online journey.

The intended outcome is a seamless customer journey.

7.   **Financial Summary**

i)   Cost approved by MCP board

Staffing resource

- Project Manager costs – approved in post
- Web Development costs – approved in post
- Web resource audit costs – approved to be recruited exp in post Jan 25
  Total cost = **£ 381,577.94**

Web development
- Jadu development costs = **£126,775** - approved

ii)   Total costs approved = **£ 508,352.94**

iii)   My Council Programme financial outlook

Actual spend October 24 (Period 07) FY24-25	= £141,584
Forecast spend FY24-25	= £254,991
Balance FY25-26	= £245,009
Forecast spend FY25-26 Q1/Q2	= £229,317
Forecast Balance End Q2 FY25-26	= £15,962

*Note staffing cost for Project manager and Web development commenced FY23/24 Q1and will run to the end of the web project. Resource for web audit likely to commence Jan 25 and will run to the end of the project (Initially approved for 12-month period)

iv)   The programme is reviewing and reporting the current financial outlook quarterly, including the web content resource to be recruited, and note that over the span of the project, the £500k allocated to My Council will be fully utilised.

v)   At present the options for delivery of the MyHighland Project are being scoped. This includes delivery in-house within existing resources but also additional resource to deliver earlier. This will be

5.4   **Key Risks**

Key risks to the programme are:

Risk	Vulnerability	Residual Score
1	There is a risk that Programme resources and affordability are not sufficient to achieve all outcomes.	6
2	There is a risk that the competing tensions between operational staff managing their day job and supporting the change initiatives/project work	6
3	The scope and scale of organisational culture change required to implement and achieve the outcomes expressed in the Customer Experience Strategy is a risk	9

5.5 Forward Plan

The key activities for the next Quarter (Q4) are as follows:

1. **Customer Experience Strategy Project** –
   a. Internal communications to be issued
   b. Traineasy e-learning introduction module available
   c. Toolbox Talks packs available
   d. Customer Care courses delivered by People and Development
   e. Work is underway with service points of contacts to collate, review and update published customer standards
   f. Quartey reporting on the Measures of Success to commence in 2025/2026

2. **MyHighland Project** –
   a. A decision for the Council Tax solution at the My Council Board
   b. Detailed solution assessment for the customer account
   c. High level project planning to establish
      i. Timelines
      ii. Resources
      iii. Costs
   d. Analyse the survey results for the CRM Assessment
   e. Workshops with key services to gather further insights
   f. Compose CRM assessment report
   g. Housing Repairs LEAN report available to the service

3. **Customer Contact Methods** –
   a. **Telephony**
      i. Further developments including Corporate Mobile App, along with integration with Microsoft Teams App live.
      ii. All RingCentral handsets deployed
      iii. Project Closure

   b. **Strategic Review**
      i. Insights of customer contact across the organisation, including volumes of repeated handling of data, self-serve online and a high-level overview of "I am a customer with a problem, and I need to contact the Highland Council"

   c. **Web Redesign**
      i. Design engagement continues
      ii. Design iterations based on feedback
      iii. Personas development
      iv. Content Review first review completed
      v. Content writers recruited

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Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Gàidhlig   Accessibility   My Account   Search   Menu

Resident   Business   Visitor

Resident   Business   Visitor

Pay your Council Tax by Direct Debit

Make a payment online

Make a planning application

School term dates

When is my bin collected?

Report a missed bin

Register a marriage, birth or death

Your Community

Your Council

Housing

Rubbish and recycling

Education and Learning

Planning and building

Community life and leisure

Social care and health

Business and trade

Transport and streets

Show more

Working with us

Have a fulfilling career where your work makes a difference. We are disability confident.

Colour in Highland Campaign

Highland Council is preparing for the district to be transformed with colour.

Crown Primary School creates a mood boosting art installation

The creative flair of Gail MacLeod, a Pupil Support Assistant at Crown Primary School was put to good use over the summer holidays...

Promoting care and support in the local community

This event provides the opportunity for those interested in becoming a PA to chat with organisations face-to-face...

Supporting Santa this Christmas in Highland

The Council is supporting the mission to ensure children in our local community wake up to a gift from Santa this Christmas.

Latest News

Notice of Election published for The Highland Council By-Election

Following the resignation of Councillor Angus MacDonald (Scottish Liberal Democrats), a vacancy has arisen for the...

Apprentice Store Are On The Move

Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited (HOIL) has recently provided The Apprentice Store Ltd with funding towards their...

Proposed BID Fort William

A postal ballot is to be held on the arrangements to propose a Business Improvement District (BID) for Fort William for a period...

Getting married in Highlands

Choose between a Belief, Civil or Religious Ceremony - one which fits your values and beliefs as a couple.

Chatbot

Concept 2

The Highland Council
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Search   Menu

Resident   Business   Visitor

- **Pay your Council Tax by Direct Debit**
- **Make a payment online**
- **Make a planning application**
- **When is my bin collected?**

- **Report a missed bin**
- **Register a marriage, birth or death**
- **Your Community**
- **Your Council**

Photo: Highlands, Inverness

Housing

Rubbish and recycling

Education and Learning

Planning and building

Community life and leisure

Social care and health

Business and trade

Transport and streets

Show more ⌄

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Chatbot

Concept 3

Resident | Business | Visitor

Resident | Business | Visitor

Pay your Council Tax by Direct Debit

School term dates

Register a marriage, birth or death

Make a payment online

When is my bin collected?

Your Community

Make a planning application

Report a missed bin

Your Council

Housing

Rubbish and recycling

Education and Learning

Planning and building

Community life and leisure

Social care and health

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Appendix 2 – Website Design Phase – Engagement Feedback

Design Phase - Member Web Visioning Workshop Output (Redesign Board 4th Sept 24)
The output of the Member's workshop included key themes such as:
- Simple and easy to use
- Easy to navigate
- Easy to search
- Colour coded and visual

Design Phase - Online Public Survey Output (2023)
This was similar to the key results of the Online public survey where the preferences for a good website were described as:
- Easy to contact
- Information
- Simplicity
- Search improvement

This survey included key learning for the project, for example;
- 79% of the 1166 survey participants were over the age of 45
- 57% of respondents would prefer to use the website rather than other ways to contact for completing general tasks. This is compared with only 20% for emergency or complex tasks where telephone is the preferred method (46%)
- 43% of customers surveyed on our website achieved what they wanted to online, however 45% did not achieve what they wanted to online.
- Of customers who report being dissatisfied with our website and did not achieve what they wanted online; 22% were looking for a way to contact
- the Highland Council. In addition, a further 10% explained their online experience was not user friendly

The survey has led to the creation of 'personas'. These 'personas' (found in **Appendix** 2) are fictional customer bios that represent different user types and are useful when planning the journey through the new website. This is aligned to the Customer Experience Strategy (approved 31st Oct 24) of using the Scottish Approach to Service design principles when redesigning any service. The personas require further development, along with further representation of all key user groups.

Design Phase – Service Workshops Output
Several cross-service workshops have been held and facilitated by the supplier. This included staff with a variety of different roles and experience across the organisation.

One of the outputs of the workshops was the use of the top-level categories of 'Resident, Business and Visitor' that can be seen in the design ideas. The idea for using top-level categories was taken from best practice of other Council websites, along with inspiration from commercial companies that enable their customers to access the information that they are looking for using several different top-level categories.

Design Phase – Stakeholder Engagement

To test the design ideas received from the supplier, the Web Redesign project has been actively engaging with a wide range of participants from different demographics in feedback sessions to gather thoughts and views.

This has included:
- Service Point service users
- Victorian Market (residents / businesses)
- In person focus groups with community groups, including those focusing on digital skills.
- Two online focus groups (to ensure Highland wide participation), which included representatives from; Access Panels, Mhor Collective, Inclusion community groups, and Tenant Participation.
- Staff poll
- Young people – design ideas have been shared (specific engagement to follow)

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Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Exemplar / Sample Personas for Website Redesign Project

Nov 2024

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Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Thank you   Mòran taing

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