

**Update to Agents and Developers  
May 2022**

**Update on caseloads and fee regulations**

The Scottish Government has introduced [The Town and Country Planning \(Fees for applications\) \(Scotland\) \(regulations\) 2022](#). The regulations introduce revised fees for most types of applications which came into force on the 1 April 2022. Schedule 1 of the regulations sets out the new fees. A more user-friendly fee table is also available on our website [Planning application fees - Aberdeenshire Council](#). Please note we have noted that a small number of the fees calculated via the Scottish Governments Fee Calculator are not correct and we have fed this back to the administrators of the portal.

Notwithstanding the change to fees we saw a significant rise in application numbers during March (446 applications) which was significantly higher than the number of applications submitted when compared with January or February and the previous year.

We are progressing with recruitment for vacant posts, having appointed people to most of our vacant positions, but those new staff have yet to start and this may take several months before this has a significant effect within Development Management. Whilst we aim to meet our service standards we would remind customers that in some circumstances things may take longer than expected. This will have an impact on workloads for Planning Staff over the coming months and whilst we will aim to progress applications as quickly as possible, inevitably there may be some delays in progressing your application.

Our average times for determining planning applications for Householder and Local Applications for Quarter 3 are set out below and given an indication of how long, on average, such applications are taking to determine.

Householder Applications	7.9 Weeks
Other Local Applications	16.4 Weeks

In line with our commitment to Customer Service Excellence we continue to reiterate the importance of ensuring that staff communicate any delays to you and respond to any correspondence within our published timescales. We would remind applicants and agents that it is unlikely that there will be significant updates with your application within the first four weeks unless we contact you first with a query or to request more information. We would also continue to encourage agents to sign up to the planning register which can be used to check responses from consultees and third parties.

### **Extensions of Time and Processing Agreements**

We are encouraging staff to limit the use of processing agreements as part of the application process to cases which are complex or are larger scale applications including major applications which require a proper project management approach. Therefore, you may see less use of these agreements.

Where there is a reasonable need for extending the time required to deal with an application, either party may seek mutual agreement on an extension of time in order to deal with any matters arising. If agreed, we will send you a letter confirming the new target date. This will hopefully reduce some of the administration around PPAs to ensure a more appropriate mechanism for agreeing time periods by written agreement whilst having the effect of preserving your appeal rights against non-determination of that application to within three months following the agreed date.

### **Local Government Elections**

Due to the impact of the Local Government Elections that were held on the 5 May 2022 and the need for Committees to become established and Members to be trained there will only be a single Committee cycle before the summer recess. For applications that require to be determined by Committee this may therefore impact on timescales for certain applications.

### **Scheme of Governance – Planning Delegations**

Aberdeenshire Council approved changes to the Planning Delegations at its recent meeting and this means that there will be some changes to how decisions are taken by Aberdeenshire Council. The changes will result in a slightly increased use of delegated powers for determining certain types of application such as Matters Specified in Conditions Application which will be delegated to officers in more cases. In addition, further changes to the operation of the Local Member Notification process and Committee referral process may affect whether certain applications are determined by Committee. Subject to Scottish Government Approval the new scheme will come into effect from the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2022. This will affect any application that is determined from that date forward and will replace our existing Planning Delegations.

### **Proposed Local Development Plan update**

We are awaiting the report of examination on the Proposed Local Development Plan. The most up to date position from the DPEA is that the Examination Report can be expected at some point in June 2022. The Service will continue to update via the [LDP Newsletter](#).

## **Feedback**

### **Validation Guidance**

We will be reviewing our Validation Guidance over the next few months. If you have specific feedback on the Validation Guidance or wish to participate in a small working group please get in touch by contacting [planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:planning@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) and referencing Validation Working Group.

### **Annual Survey**

Our annual survey will be sent out in June and this will focus on general satisfaction levels. Agents are reminded that we also have post decision surveys which can be used to feedback on specific applications. A link to that survey is provided within the email containing your decision notice.

Paul Macari  
Head of Service, Planning and Economy  
13 May 2022