

Ministear airson Ionmhas Poblach, Dealbhachadh
agus Beartas Còimhearsnachd
Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community
Wealth
Tom Arthur MSP



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Jim Savege
Chief Executive
Aberdeenshire Council

22 December 2022

Dear Jim Savege

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's eleventh Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, for the period April 2021 to March 2022.

The reporting period which these reports cover has continued to present challenges for people working within planning, in the development sector and across Scotland's communities.

Ensuring the system is appropriately resourced is key to improving the performance of planning, which is why in April I implemented the biggest change to planning fees in 8 years, with fees for most types of development increasing by between 25% and 50%. At the time I said I would expect to see this additional money invested in delivering improvements in Planning Services. It is too early to know whether that has occurred, however, I have heard positive feedback from some authorities who have managed to recruit or retain staff as a result of the additional income. I also committed to working with Heads of Planning and COSLA to identify how we could move planning fees closer to covering the full cost of their determination. That work is ongoing and I expect to receive some conclusions/recommendations early in the new year.

I am also encouraged to see the fees for applications made under the Electricity Act also increasing on 13th December and the voluntary contribution of 50% of the fee, for certain types of application, being passed to planning authorities being maintained.

However, I recognise that resourcing is about more than just money and having a pipeline of knowledgeable and skilled planners is essential to delivering on our ambitions set out in NPF4. This is why I supported the RTP1 and Heads of Planning Scotland's Future Planners Project which looked at proposals to help increase the numbers of people entering the planning profession. We recognise the importance of delivering on this vision and the resourcing and skills challenges for planning authorities, which we are taking steps to address.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Silver



Work is also progressing on

- the introduction of mandatory training for elected members in the planning system;
- the implementation of statutory annual reports by planning authorities; and
- the appointment of a Planning Improvement Coordinator for Scotland.

Turning to the 2021-22 PPF reporting year, although, as expected, there have been some minor changes overall in the markings awarded, the figures indicate that performance has remained relatively stable. This is a testament to the hard work and flexibility of authorities during challenging times and I believe that overall, good progress continues to be made by Scotland's planning authorities.

If you would like to discuss any of the markings awarded below, please email chief.planner@gov.scot and a member of the team will be happy to discuss these with you.



TOM ARTHUR

CC: Paul Macari, Head of Planning and Environment

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE[™]
We invest in people Silver



PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2021-22

Name of planning authority: **Aberdeenshire Council**

The High Level Group on Performance agreed a set of performance markers. We have assessed your report against those markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action. The high level group will monitor and evaluate how the key markers have been reported and the value which they have added.

The Red, Amber, Green ratings are based on the evidence provided within the PPF reports. Where no information or insufficient evidence has been provided, a 'red' marking has been allocated.

No.	Performance Marker	RAG rating	Comments
1	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Amber	<p>Major Applications Your timescales of 49.4 weeks are slower than the previous year and slower than the Scottish average of 44.6 weeks. RAG = Red</p> <p>Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your timescales of 12.9 weeks are slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 13.5 weeks. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Householder Applications Your timescales of 7.8 weeks are the same as the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 8.7 weeks and the statutory timescales. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
2	<p>Processing agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and availability publicised on website 	Green	<p>Processing agreements are offered as a matter of course, including 100% of major applications RAG = Green</p> <p>Processing agreements are advertised on your website however they are being reviewed with alternative tools such as formally agreed Extension of Time letters. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
3	<p>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information 	Green	<p>You provide a pre-application advice service to all prospective applicants. This has been used in 245 instances. RAG = Green</p> <p>You are continuing your improvement work to review pre-application process, which is outlined in Case Study 18 with a focus on revising the Major application enquiry process. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Amber	Your average timescales for determining applications with legal agreements are slower than last year and slower than the Scottish average. This is partially due to an increase in the number of application with legal agreements, especially with a large timescale for one major application.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



5	Enforcement charter updated / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Your charter was reviewed in June 2021.
6	Continuous improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	Green	Part 3 of the PPF report sets how previous commitments have been delivered and identifies service improvement actions for the year ahead, with these broken down by LDP, DM, Enforcement and Environment/Specialist teams.
7	Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption	Red	LDP is more than 5 years old – 5 years 1 month. We note a timetable is in place for the new LDP to be adopted by the end of 2022.
8	Development plan scheme – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> next LDP project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	Green	LDP is slightly behind schedule however it is due to be adopted by the end of 2022 and you have outlined the reasons for the delay which fell during the examination stage and were out with the Council's control. The plan was submitted for examination in March 2021. Case study 13 outlines how emerging LDP has been subject to further information requests during examination which have helped progress the LDP to be adopted by the end of 2022.
9 & 10	LDP Engagement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government are engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation. 	Green	As noted above, LDP is currently undergoing examination. There is evidence provided within the PPF that external stakeholders have been consulted on regarding various pieces of guidance relating to the production of the new LDP including reiew of the planning advice provided and historic environment guidance note.
11	Policy Advice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of relevant and up to date policy advice 	Green	Cases studies provide good examples of your approach to providing policy to applicants, as well as how this has been reviewed and improved. You have detailed how you have provided a guidance note on peatland restoration and historic environment to ensure peatland applications being submitted were provided due consideration to the historic environment.
12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)	Green	The report identifies clear examples of cross-service working across the multiple case studies provided, including Nesting Swifts Case Study 6 example which showed early engagement with developers to highlight possible constraints utilising reports provided by North East Scotland Biological Record Centre.
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Green	Evidence of sharing good practice, skills and knowledge is set out in the PPF report, for example through the case study on winter storm damage, which following Storm Arwen, a cross-service response is now in place. This response process has helped mitigate the impact and subsequent shaped the response of future storms.
14	Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Amber	You have cleared 51 cases during the reporting year; 52 remain which is a slight increase since last year. Report acknowledges that 23 of the remaining 52 ,cases currently have a PPA in place and since 2015 there is a dedicated legacy case strategy.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



15	<p>Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions 	Green	<p>LDP sets out the requirements for contributions to necessary infrastructure and supplementary guidance provides the method of calculation. RAG = Green</p> <p>Case study indicates developer contributions part of the review of pre-application processes. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
----	---	-------	--

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot



ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL
Performance against Key Markers

Marker		13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22
1	Decision making timescales									
2	Processing agreements									
3	Early collaboration									
4	Legal agreements									
5	Enforcement charter									
6	Continuous improvement									
7	Local development plan									
8	Development plan scheme									
9 & 10	LDP Early Engagement		N/A	N/A	N/A				N/A	
11	Regular and proportionate advice to support applications									
12	Corporate working across services									
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge									
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases									
15	Developer contributions									

Overall Markings (total numbers for red, amber and green)

2013-14	0	5	10
2014-15	0	2	11
2015-16	0	3	10
2016-17	0	3	10
2017-18	0	3	12
2018-19	0	2	13
2019-20	0	1	14
2020-21	0	1	12
2021-22	1	3	10

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	2021-22 Scottish Average
Major Development	115.9	107.8	86.3	77.8	29.5	35.3	23.1	10.9	49.4	44.6
Local (Non-Householder) Development	18.9	15.8	14.1	9.9	9.1	9.2	9.3	10.0	12.9	13.5
Householder Development	7.4	7.3	6.8	6.7	6.8	7.1	7.3	7.8	7.8	8.7

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

