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Jim Savege
Chief Executive
Aberdeenshire Council

17 December 2020

Dear Jim,

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FEEDBACK 2019-20

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's ninth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, for the period April 2019 to March 2020.

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for enabling planning services to continue to operate during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been a difficult year for so many, and our planning system has a vital role to play in Scotland's green recovery. The impact which the pandemic has had, has demonstrated how valuable planning is from ensuring that businesses can operate flexibly to the contribution that it can make to the Places that are so important for our communities in terms of having access to the services they need, to greenspace and other areas where families can walk, wheel and cycle safely.

Turning to the 2019-20 PPF reporting year, I believe that good progress continues to be made by Scotland's planning authorities. Overall, there has been an increase in the number of green ratings awarded this year, with a subsequent reduction in red ratings, however, there remains some variation across some authorities and markers. I have been particularly pleased to see improvements in the speed of determination of major planning applications in some authorities.

When I wrote about performance reporting last year, I indicated that a consultation on Planning Performance and Fees was underway, including preparations for the new performance arrangements being introduced through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019; with our intention at that time being that the proposed changes would be implemented in Summer 2020. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has required a rethink about the timing and a wider reprioritisation of our work programme.

I would like to reassure you that, while we have paused the changes to the fees and performance legislation, I am committed to ensuring that planning authorities are properly resourced and that planning fee levels are proportionate. We will pick this up again when the timing is more appropriate.

Finally, although the Covid-19 pandemic will have impacted on the tail end of the 2019-20 reporting year, I appreciate the impacts on service delivery will show through more in the 2020-21 reporting year. The Planning statistics for the first 6 months of the reporting year are due to be published in January, which will provide the first indications of how the pandemic has affected the ability of authorities to determine applications. I would like to reassure you that I will consider, in liaison with the High Level Group on Planning Performance, how next year's reports will be assessed, so that authorities are not unfairly criticised due to circumstances outwith their control. It could also provide an opportunity to recognise the vital actions taken by planning authorities to maintain the planning system and its contribution to recovery.

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.

Yours sincerely



KEVIN STEWART

CC: Paul Macari

PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2019-20

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]	Green	<p>Major Applications Your timescales of 23.1 weeks are faster than the previous year and are faster than the Scottish average of 33.5 weeks. RAG = Green</p> <p>Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your timescales of 9.3 weeks are slower than the previous year but are faster than the Scottish average of 10.9 weeks. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Householder Applications Your timescales of 7.3 weeks are slower than the previous year which is the same as the Scottish average, however this is faster than the statutory timescales of 8 weeks. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</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 to prospective applicants for major and many local developments. RAG = Green</p> <p>Processing agreements are advertised on your website. 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. The NHIs show that there has been an increase in applications which were subject to pre-application discussions. RAG = Green</p> <p>You are continuing your improvement work on the pre-application process. You provide good examples of clear and proportionate requests for supporting information leading to successful outcomes. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission	Green	Your average timescales for determining major and local applications with legal agreements are faster than last year and the Scottish average.

	reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)		You have an agreed policy of delegating decisions to officers where no progress has been made on a legal agreement with the time set as 4 months for local developments and 6 months for major developments.
5	Enforcement charter updated / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Your charter was reviewed in June 2019.
6	Continuous improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	Green	Your LDP and enforcement charter are up-to-date with clear timescales for the replacement of the next LDP. While you still have a reasonably high number of legacy cases, major and non-householder decision making timescales, with and without legal agreements, are faster than the national average. RAG = Green You have completed 23 out of 24 your service commitments. The coming year identifies a continuation of some improvements and a number of new commitments. RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green
7	Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption	Green	Your LDP was 2 year and 11 months old at the end of the reporting period.
8	Development plan scheme – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and • project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	Green	The 2021 Local Development Plan is in Pre-MIR stage and on course for adoption within 5 years of the current plan's adoption. RAG = Green There will be a delay in submitting your proposed plan for examination however, you are on track for adopting the plan within the required timescales. RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>	Green	Following consultation on your MIR elected members were presented with issues and options papers to guide the content of the Proposed Plan.
10	Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i> <i>*including industry, agencies and Scottish Government</i>	Green	Your case study on your draft proposed plan demonstrates how you have been engaging with a wide range of stakeholders on the preparation of your LDP.
11	Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on information required to support applications.	Green	Cases studies provide good examples of your approach to providing policy advice through your design guidance and the public engagement on Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans.

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 which provide a clear demonstration of how council is committed to being open for business and collaborates with other departments.
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Green	Evidence of sharing good practice, skills and knowledge, for example with regards to your work with Environmental Health, heritage colleagues and o the development of your design guidance.
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 34 cases during the reporting year, with 39 cases still awaiting conclusion which is an increase since last year.
15	Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions 	Green	<p>Policy RD2 sets out the requirements for contributions to necessary infrastructure and supplementary guidance provides the method of calculation to show how exact levels are worked out. RAG = Green</p> <p>You have set out in one of your case studies how setting out the required developer contributions early in the process led to early conclusion. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL
Performance against Key Markers

Marker		12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20
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	Elected members engaged early			N/A	N/A	N/A			
10	Stakeholders engaged early (pre-MIR)			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)

2012-13	3	3	9
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

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)

	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	2019-20 Scottish Average
Major Development	132.9	115.9	107.8	86.3	77.8	29.5	35.3	23.1	33.5
Local (Non-Householder) Development	22.5	18.9	15.8	14.1	9.9	9.1	9.2	9.3	10.9
Householder Development	8.1	7.4	7.3	6.8	6.7	6.8	7.1	7.3	7.3