



Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



TROUP HEAD



MORMOND HILL (NEAR FRASERBURGH)

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 6 2016/2017

CONTENTS

6	I	FOREWORD
7	I	INTRODUCTION
13	■	PART 1. DEFINING AND MEASURING A HIGH QUALITY PLANNING SERVICE
14	■	1. QUALITY OF OUTCOMES
14	■	1A. HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND
24	■	2. QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT
24	■	2A. OPEN FOR BUSINESS
39	■	2B. CERTAINTY
58	■	2C. COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
71	■	3. GOVERNANCE
71	■	3A. EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING
81	■	3B. EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES
84	■	3C. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE
86	■	4. CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
89	■	PART 2. SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
90	■	PART 3A. SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS 2017-18
92	■	PART 3B. DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN 2016-17
95	■	PART 4. NATIONAL HEADLINE INDICATORS
98	■	PART 5. OFFICIAL STATISTICS
100	■	PART 6. WORKFORCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION
102	■	APPENDIX 1. ORGANOGRAM

CASE STUDIES

14	CHAPTER 1	QUALITY OF OUTCOMES
14	1A.	HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND
14	CASE STUDY 1	EVIDENCE OF QUALITY OUTCOMES FROM THE LDP PROCESS
16	CASE STUDY 2	QUALITY OF OUTCOME: BRIDGE STREET AND DEVERONSIDE REGENERATION OPTIONS APPRAISAL
23	CASE STUDY 3	HIGH QUALITY DESIGN: RIVERSFIELD, ELLON
23	CASE STUDY 4	DESIGN REVIEW PANEL
24	CHAPTER 2	QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT
24	2A.	OPEN FOR BUSINESS
25	CASE STUDY 5	DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT USING THE PLAN
30	CASE STUDY 6	KIRKTON, FRASERBURGH
32	CASE STUDY 7	MAJOR APPLICATION COLLABORATIVE WORKING
33	CASE STUDY 8	QUALITY & ENGAGEMENT, OPEN FOR BUSINESS
33	CASE STUDY 8A	CROMLEYBANK, ELLON
34	CASE STUDY 8B	BALMEDIE
37	CASE STUDY 9	FRASERBURGH SPORTS PITCH
38	CASE STUDY 10	LOCAL PRE-APPLICATION - QUALITY OUTCOMES THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND DISCUSSION
38	CASE STUDY 11	PLANNING & REGENERATION: DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS EXEMPTION
39	2B.	CERTAINTY
44	CASE STUDY 12	PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS REVIEW
51	CASE STUDY 13A	MODEL CONDITION REVIEW
52	CASE STUDY 13B	PRIOR NOTIFICATION PROCESS
52	CASE STUDY 13C	STOP THE CLOCK REVIEW WORKING GROUP
52	CASE STUDY 13D	BEST PRACTICE MANUAL
57	ENFORCEMENT CASE STUDY 1 - EVIDENCING SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING	
57	ENFORCEMENT CASE STUDY 2 - EVIDENCING SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES THROUGH FORMAL ENFORCEMENT ACTION	
58	2C.	COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
60	CASE STUDY 14	RESPONDING TO CUSTOMER COMMENTS/CONCERNS
61	CASE STUDY 15	LAURENCEKIRK CHARRETTE - ENGAGING AND PROMOTING COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS
62	CASE STUDY 16	POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT - GOOD OUTCOMES - SATISFIED CUSTOMERS
64	CASE STUDY 17	CONGLASS, INVERURIE - SITE RECALIBRATION

CASE STUDIES

65	■ CASE STUDY 18	JOINT ROADS/AGENT/DEVELOPER ENGAGEMENT: AGENTS' FORUM MEETINGS.
67	■ CASE STUDY 19	COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM
68	■ CASE STUDY 20	RESIDENTIAL AFTERMATH OF FLOODING EVENT - ENGAGEMENT AND NEGOTIATION TOWARD A PRAGMATIC 'NON-STANDARD' DESIGN OUTCOME- OSPREY COTTAGE, BALLATER
69	■ CASE STUDY 21	THE FLOODING PRO FORMA SYSTEM OUTCOMES
69	■ CASE STUDY 21A	INCHLEY, DEE STREET, BALLATER
70	■ CASE STUDY 21B	HELPING RURAL BUSINESSES TO BE UP AND RUNNING: FISHING HUT, TASSACHD, CAMBUS O'MEY
71	■ CHAPTER 3	GOVERNANCE
71	■ 3A.	EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING
72	■ CASE STUDY 22A	AN EXAMPLE OF LEGACY PREVENTION
72	■ CASE STUDY 22B	NON-PAYMENT OF FEES CAUSING LEGACY CASES
74	■ CASE STUDY 23A	REPORT TEMPLATE REVIEW
75	■ CASE STUDY 23B	NEW SCHEME OF GOVERNANCE - ENGAGEMENT, AWARENESS AND TRAINING
75	■ CASE STUDY 23C	GOVERNANCE CHAMPIONS
76	■ CASE STUDY 24	ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL - IMPROVING OUTCOMES - LOCAL REVIEW BODY
77	■ CASE STUDY 25	PLANNING/ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH/WASTE/FLOOD PREVENTION ENGAGEMENT
77	■ CASE STUDY 25A	PLANNING - ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: REVIEW OF PROTOCOL
78	■ CASE STUDY 25B	PLANNING- ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLAINTS PROTOCOL
78	■ CASE STUDY 25C	PLANNING - WASTE & FLOOD PREVENTION LIAISON & PROTOCOL
80	■ CASE STUDY 26	BEING FLEXIBLE FOR PERFORMANCE
81	■ 3B.	EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES
81	■ CASE STUDY 27	RECRUITMENT IN ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL
82	■ CASE STUDY 28	SHARING PRACTICES - PROVIDING A SERVICE
84	■ 3C.	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & LOCAL GOVERNANCE
85	■ CASE STUDY 29	IMPROVED FINANCIAL AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENT CARS/TH PROJECTS
86	■ CHAPTER 4	CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
87	■ CASE STUDY 30	SECONDMENT OPPORTUNITY WITHIN THE PLANNING SERVICE: AOIFE MURPHY - DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT TO DELIVERY TEAM
88	■ CASE STUDY 31	DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING DAY

Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – the very best of Scotland

The best area

Helping to create and sustain the best quality of life for all through . . .

- happy, healthy and confident people
- safe, friendly and lively communities
- an enterprising and adaptable economy
- our special environment and diverse culture

The best council

Aiming to provide excellent services for all by . . .

- involving, responding and enabling
- finding new and more efficient ways of doing things
- providing elected leadership for our area
- working with our partners in the North East and beyond
- always looking to the future

The Planning Service is a part of Infrastructure Services which overall has a key role in helping to create and sustain the quality of life for the people of Aberdeenshire and is committed to providing excellent services for all.

We will achieve this by:-

"Supporting Aberdeenshire Council's vision to be the best area and the best Council through the effective management of the Council's physical assets, by helping to create the conditions for economic growth within Aberdeenshire and the wider region and by providing high quality local services to residents, communities, business and visitors"

FOREWORD

Another year passes – plenty of challenge, some real achievement and a continuing positive role for the Planning Service in supporting the communities of Aberdeenshire. Against an evolving economy Planning has maintained a core position in steering, developing and where appropriate, intervening to add value to the Council's delivery of services.

The Planning Service has administered 3106 planning applications during 2016/17, with a value to the economy and Region of circa £350m. This is significant, particularly at a time of economic change and re-evaluation. Performance within the Planning Service has been positive and has continued to improve, responding to the changing requisites from developers and industry during the reducing economy. Housing development has slowed and the Planning Service has worked with developers on ways of bringing forward schemes with some potential amendments, to allow buildout to continue.

The Local Development Plan 2017 has been delivered having undertaken the full weight of consultation and engagement appropriate for such a fundamental suite of documents. It received a very strong voice of support from Aberdeenshire Full Council and subsequent full support from the Reporter's Office. Decisions can now be taken against a fully up-to-date and relevant set of planning documents. This feeds future thinking and how the various landscapes of Aberdeenshire should be managed and enhanced. The landscapes – *from mountain to sea* – remains some of the wildest, most dramatic and idyllic of any in the UK and indeed further afield. Alongside this are the great strengths in Aberdeenshire of industries from oil and gas, subsea, food, drink, agriculture and fishing – all making significant added value to the Scottish and UK economies. The [City Region Deal](#), signed off in 2016/17 reflects this and an initial value of £504m is to be invested in the Region in the coming years, with more private sector investment anticipated.

A key driver for Planning is therefore enhancing the approach to Economic Development and Regeneration. The applying of strong Planning influence,

targeting Aberdeenshire's four north coast Towns has brought considerable external funding, linked to a Council Regeneration Fund. The highlight is the Saltoun Square scheme in Fraserburgh part of the [Fraserburgh 2021](#) project where **Aberdeenshire Council** has been successful in its second round funding bid to the **Heritage Lottery Fund** for £5.7 million. Indeed associated to this input is the fact that house prices have risen more in Fraserburgh than any other town in Scotland. Appropriate resource through Planning has been targeted to ensuring ecology, archaeology and the voice of managing our flora and fauna is well represented and promoted across the Region and further afield. Building on the success of the Atlas of Birds in North East Scotland published in 2011, is the recent publication of the [Atlas on Mammals of North East Scotland](#), a publication strongly supported by the Planning Service and welcomed by the audiences of North East Scotland.

Design has remained an aspect of development that has been driven by the Planning Service. The Design Awards were delivered successfully in autumn 2016, with the keynote speech on being innovative and radical in approach given by acclaimed designer Wayne Hemingway. A new category of Student Design Award was successfully received along with a public vote on their favourite submission. Planning continue to push for innovative design, with the target audience being the bigger housing developers.

The culture within Planning Services has continued to be one of a solution focus – if investment and a development is proposed then conversation and engagement should be encouraged. A 'One Council' approach remains the aim, one voice engaging with prospective



STEPHEN ARCHER –
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

applicants and those looking for opportunity, to ensure that Aberdeenshire is regarded as being open for business. Quality decision making remains the driver whilst also creating an open and transparent discussion landscape.

The Council has adopted a [Carbon Budget](#) approach – one of the first Councils in the UK to do this. This will underpin much of the Council's decision making, with again the Planning Service strongly promoting proactive thinking around climate change, sustainable development and focus on the greener agenda. Impacts of development undertaken by the Council can be assigned a value based on potential carbon emission savings. The same approach is applied to developments as they are brought forward for consideration by the Council.

It has been a good year. The outputs and outcomes have been significant against a changing Aberdeenshire environment. Recruitment has been a challenge, delivery of schemes less smooth than previous years, but the appetite and aspiration for the Place remains strong with Planning Services at the heart of Aberdeenshire Council's desired value added service delivery for its communities. Continuation of performance and improvement remains firmly as the main focus. I am confident that the current make up and resilience of the Service will enable us to face the challenges ahead as well as the demands and aspirations of the present.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

INTRODUCTION



This Planning Performance Framework document continues to be read in conjunction with the suite of high level documents that embody Aberdeenshire Council.

These were specifically detailed in the [**PPF 2015-16 \(Planning Performance Framework 2015-2016 \(pdf 4.65 MB\)\)**](#)

These are listed as:

[**The Council Plan 2013-2017 \(pdf 2.2mb\)* \(Council's Strategic Priorities\)**](#)

The [**Community Plan**](#) which informs the Council Plan and Strategic Priorities and which sets out how we work with our main partners and Aberdeenshire's communities, and our overall [**vision**](#).

[**Infrastructure Service Plan 2015-2018 \(the Key Objectives within support the Council's Strategic Priorities\) Infrastructure Services 2015-2018 \(pdf 231 kb\)**](#)

Each of the six areas has produced a Local Community Plan for the next four years. These can be found on the [**Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership web site.**](#)

[**Economic Development Strategy for 2011-2016.**](#)

The [**Local Development Plan**](#) and [**Strategic Development Plan**](#) are similarly a major tool in delivering the **Service Objectives**.

*The Council Plan runs concurrently with the political term of the Council - the [**existing Plan**](#) ended in April 2017.

PROGRESS AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE PLANNING SERVICE IN 2016/17

SUMMARY OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING YEAR

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 (ALDP 2017) was subject to Examination until 20 December 2016. Aberdeenshire Council considered the Reporter's recommendations on 9 March 2017. All recommendations were accepted leading to the submission of the Plan to Ministers on 17 March 2017. The Plan was adopted on the 17 April 2017. The adopted Plan can be viewed at www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp

During the Examination a total of 22 Information Requests were received and responded to, and a single morning Hearing took place scrutinising issues relating to housing land supply.

Two elements of Supplementary Guidance (SG8 the Forestry and Woodlands Strategy, and SG9 Special Landscape Areas) were subject to public consultation during 2016-2017. Comments on both publications were analysed and presented to the Council's Infrastructure Services Committee for consideration.

Aberdeenshire Council agreed both of the above Supplementary Guidance documents along with 6 others that were developed during the preparation of the LDP 2017. All were adopted with the new Local Development Plan.

Additional work included the preparation of "Policy Information Notes" to support the implementation of ALDP 2017, and an exercise of "How was it for you" to inform preparation of future development plans through evaluation of the processes and efficiency of methods used since 2012.

All the actions set out in the 2016 Development Plan Scheme (DPS) were adhered to. A succinct DPS 2017 was approved in January 2017 to deal mainly with the completion of the Local Development Plan with the intention that a second DPS would be prepared later in the year to reflect the findings of the current "Places, People and Planning" consultation to set out the programme for a 2021 Local Development Plan.



COLDRACH, CRATHIE

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT YEAR

The Development Management year has been one of contrast, impacted upon by unique and unprecedented circumstances due to economic conditions. Application numbers reduced over the reporting period, but overall not as significant as expected in light of the economic downturn. Arguably more pressure has been put on Officers to determine applications in good time, not only in response to national targets but in response to customer need to react to the conditions in terms of flexibility, pragmatism and ensuring delivery where need and demand dictates.

Performance has once more improved and reflects the continuing focus on areas of most need of improvement e.g. Major Application timescales, Section 75 timescales and monitoring and reviewing the other areas of our work that require to be maintained, enhanced or altered to meet the changing needs of the customer and the economic environment.

SUMMARY OF ENFORCEMENT YEAR

2016 – 2017 continued to be a busy year with the Enforcement Team focusing on reducing the remaining backlog carried forward from the previous two periods, along with improving ways of working. A key milestone in the period was an audit of planning enforcement undertaken by Council auditors into the enforcement process.

The work has been diverse, ranging from minor infringements that were resolved through negotiation and sometimes warranting no further action, to significant breaches that required prompt enforcement action to prevent breaches from escalating and causing long term effects. In all but the most serious cases, breaches were resolved through compliance rather than formal enforcement action. This is reflected in the performance statistics which show that only a small percentage of enforcement complaints were resolved through formal enforcement action (Refer to Chapter 2b – Certainty Enforcement Performance – How Are We Doing?).

Fewer complaints were received in the reporting period about delays in planning enforcement cases compared to previous periods. While this is based on anecdotal evidence, there continues to be a frustration amongst complainers when enforcement action is not taken or not taken quickly enough. This is partly due to the public's misunderstanding of planning enforcement that it should be highly responsive and punitive action taken. Work undertaken alongside the audit recognised the need to better inform the public about planning enforcement and how decisions were taken and as a consequence the Planning Enforcement Charter has been updated to help address these issues. A review of performance over the reporting period shows that the majority of closed enforcement cases were resolved through the submission of a retrospective application, followed by no enforcement taken due to the breach being minor, or full compliance being achieved.

A continued theme from the previous period has been the conscious effort to record improvements in the enforcement function and to better understand and communicate the outcomes of planning enforcement intervention. Work has progressed over the period to record not only the number of cases received and closed but also the decisions taken and the outcomes achieved. This work will continue into the next period as improvements, in the way of new processes and procedures become embedded into day to day work practices, the results of which will become more evident in the next reporting period. The need for more transparency and certainty in decision making continues to be an ongoing improvement for the Enforcement Team.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENT YEAR

The Environment and Specialist Services Teams continue to make an important contribution to the quality of design, place making and wider environmental and biodiversity agendas through a variety of project work, and by providing specialist support to planners and other Council professionals, partners and stakeholders. Following the successful drawdown of external funding packages, major regeneration projects are underway and ongoing, with a focus on the north Aberdeenshire coast. Spend across the built and natural environment is better evidenced following the completion of data sets and prioritisation processes in relation to access and historic assets. The majority of work is now supported by completed strategies, with some further input remaining in this area, to ensure alignment with national and corporate priorities and that our activities make the best use of resources available.

Service Plan

Infrastructure Services has a key role in helping to create and sustain the quality of life for the peoples of Aberdeenshire and is committed to providing excellent services for all. We will achieve this by:-

“Supporting Aberdeenshire Council's vision to be the best area and the best Council through the effective management of the Council's physical assets, by helping to create the conditions for economic growth within Aberdeenshire and the wider region and by providing high quality local services to residents, communities, business and visitors”

The Service Plan 2015-2018

PERFORMANCE MARKERS

- PRIORITY FOCUS FROM 2015-2016 FEEDBACK

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FOR 2016-17

The priority focus comes from the Feedback of the previous PPF (2015/16) under the relevant Performance Markers. These are summarised/reported back with outcomes. These outcomes are further detailed throughout PPF.

PERFORMANCE MARKERS - PRIORITY OUTCOMES SUMMARY FOR 2016/17 FROM FEEDBACK 2015/16

PERFORMANCE MARKER	PRIORITY - AMBER	OUTCOMES	PRIORITY - GREEN	OUTCOMES
Driving Improved Performance				
Decision Making	Major Applications – improvement again but timescales remain above the national average. Non householder applications have improved at 14.1 average weeks but still slower than national average of 12.3 weeks.	Major Applications - Improvement recorded again in Major Application performance but likely remains above the national average.* Non householder- The average week performance in non-householder was considered to be consistent but further focus has been retained and further improvement has resulted. For non-householder for 2016-17 84.9% was recorded. . Notwithstanding focus remained on improving average weeks further and this has been achieved at 9.9 average weeks	Processing Agreements PPA)	Improvement in use of PPA's with overall 93.5 % meeting their timescales. Performance Review of major applications and Legal Agreement timescales will also look at the use of PPA's.

*Overall Scottish Government National Statistics for 2016-17 not available to carry out comparison with national averages.

PERFORMANCE MARKER	PRIORITY - AMBER	OUTCOMES	PRIORITY - GREEN	OUTCOMES
Legal Agreements	Timescales for Legal Agreements have reduced slightly. Still remain significantly above national averages.	Performance has improved overall however this cannot be a direct comparison as only in 2016-17 has Section 69 agreements been included which has significantly lowered the average. Improvement work continues on reducing timescales. Legal/Planning improvement project screened for implementation in 2017/18.		
Continuous Improvement	Majority of NHI improvement recorded. Some timescales remain above national average	Whilst overall improvement was recorded in the majority of NHI's it is recognised that again timescales for Major applications and NH applications fall short of national averages, although with improvement now recorded, particularly in .non-householders which may be more amenable to the national averages. Focus remains on retaining performance and specifically focusing on improving timescales for legal agreements.		
Delivering Development				
Stalled sites/ legacy/cases			Further reduction in legacy cases throughout the year. Continue to refine legacy strategy.	Legacy cases continue to fall. The focus on preventing legacies entering the system has proven successful although this still remains a priority focus.



PERFORMANCE MARKERS - PRIORITY FOCUS FOR 2016/17

PERFORMANCE MARKER	PRIORITY - AMBER	PRIORITY - GREEN
Decision Making	Reduction of average timescales for Major Development. Average timescales for non-householder developments, whilst not at a critical stage, the focus is to continue improvement to meet/better national standard	
Legal Agreements	Improvement Project commenced Continue focus on improving timescales for Section 75 conclusions	
Continuous Improvement	Continue consistent progress on further improving all decision making timescales	
Stalled Sites/Legacy cases		Ensure focus remains on Legacy prevention.

(Refer to Part 3A Service Improvements for 2017-18)

PART 1: DEFINING AND MEASURING A HIGH-QUALITY PLANNING SERVICE



BALDARROCH CHAPEL



MIDDLETON OF RORA DAIRY

CHAPTER 1 - QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

Aberdeenshire, from the mountains to the sea, is an exceptional place. This plan has an important role to play in making sure that this continues for generations to come.

(Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017)

The reporting period saw the bi annual Design Awards showcase the quality outcomes from sound policy, guidance and good collaboration and pre application and partnership working. Aberdeenshire Council's Regeneration Programme has continued, albeit in challenging economic times, demonstrating innovative and transformational methods of renewal, protection and enhancement of the Aberdeenshire built and cultural heritage.

CHAPTER 1A - HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING



CASE STUDY 1 – EVIDENCE OF QUALITY OUTCOMES FROM LDP PROCESS

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 (ALDP 2017) remains a key tool in achieving high quality development on the ground.

In terms of promoting and ensuring the highest quality of designs within Aberdeenshire the new LDP very much advocates the 6 qualities of successful place to lead and add value to achieving high quality on the ground.

We will only approve development designs that demonstrate the six qualities of successful places, which are to be:

(LDP 2017 – Shaping Places – Siting, layout and design of new development)

The aim is to promote a broad approach to design which will effectively provide a 'template' for the design process from which high quality design will emerge. The template will involve pre application engagement, public involvement where necessary and the established tools of design; statements and assessment methods. The outcomes should reflect positively within the Place-making agenda whilst securing the character and context of the unique Aberdeenshire character.

The Examination of the Plan demonstrated that the approach that was taken was based on a wide common understanding of the issues that required to be addressed with very few issues

being contentious. Discussions on housing land supply demonstrated the shared consensus between the Council and the development industry with limited argument on issues relating to the scale of development that should be encouraged. The recommendations of the Reporters on the proposed Local Development Plan 2015 reflected some differences of opinion over the interpretation of Scottish Planning Policy, particularly in relation to climate change and the value of maintaining a cap on the scale of development that should be allowed on sites, but was otherwise supported. The scale of disagreement did not fundamentally impact on the strategy being promoted.

REGENERATION IN ABERDEENSHIRE

SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDANCE: THE REGENERATION PRIORITY AREA

New Supplementary Guidance on the regeneration priority areas of Aberdeenshire has been produced and is referenced alongside the Local Development Plan. This along with specific regeneration policies, encouraging business start-ups, a refresh of the '4 Towns' strategy and continuation of regeneration projects strongly confirms the continuing focus and commitment to regeneration in Aberdeenshire.

This ties in with the Council's Economic Development Action Plan which sets out how Aberdeenshire Council will work to support the Regional Economic Strategy for North East Scotland.

This new Regional Economic Strategy (RES) has been developed to underpin the bid for a City Region Deal for the North East of Scotland. The Strategy titled **"A 20-year vision for the Well-being of the Place and Our People"** provides a long term plan for the economic development of the North East of Scotland to 2035. It will also act as the main strategy for the new regional private-sector economic partnership, **Opportunity North East (ONE)**.

A NEW REGENERATION STRATEGY FOR ABERDEENSHIRE - MARCH 2016

From Strategy to Action: Developing Excellence in our North Coast Communities

"Our Vision is for our 4 towns of Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Banff and Macduff to be strong, resilient communities, where businesses and people are enabled to flourish."

In March 2016, Aberdeenshire Council approved a new Regeneration Strategy **"From Strategy to Action: Developing Excellence in our North Coast Communities"** which focuses on our four northern towns of Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead.



BANFF DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

VISION AND ACTION PLAN: 2016 – 2021

2021 Vision

Banff is a connected, prosperous destination, where businesses are developed and its coastal location on the Moray Firth is maximised. Cultural and heritage assets are enriched, to create an attractive townscape and so people are inspired to become the best they can be.

CASE STUDY 2 - QUALITY OF OUTCOME: BRIDGE STREET AND DEVERONSIDE REGENERATION OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Local environmental improvements, regeneration and town centres activities and enhancements.

The Delivery Team has been working to continue the process of regeneration work in Banff on Bridge Street, Old Market Place and the Deveronside area by leading a project to assess redevelopment opportunities.

Flooding is a key issue in the area and this has hindered regeneration work. Options for redevelopment / viable alternative uses therefore require to be considered in accordance with SEPA requirements. Providing realistic options for redevelopment, as well as improvements to the streetscape, will aid in the development of schemes and the marketing of properties in this area of Banff. This will aid the redevelopment of the area to the benefit of businesses, residents and visitors to the town centre and assist in the delivery of an identified action within the '4 Towns' Report which recommended the regeneration of Bridge Street as a priority project.

External agents were appointed to undertake the appraisal for Aberdeenshire Council with the Delivery Team project managing the project. The vision behind the project was

"To regenerate Bridge Street, and bring life to the surrounding area by increasing connectivity, improving the public realm and introducing a new destination point within the lower Banff area".

In order to promote the vision, the appraisal looked at what could be completed by concentrating on 3 main development areas with associated themes. These are:

- **Old Market Place:** A new destination point as a catalyst for regeneration
- **The Street:** Address the physical problems associated with Bridge Street
- **Deveronside:** New Places to live and Work within the town

The proposals being put forward have focussed on the need to bring life back into the street by proposing a new



destination point at Old Market Place with opportunities for residential development where this will be acceptable in terms of flood risk, but also retail, food and drink establishments and commercial or leisure facilities within the lower Banff area. Along with these new development opportunities, the study has highlighted opportunities for reviving existing properties and improving the street scene of the area for the benefit of existing residents, businesses and visitors alike.

The Report is a positive document which identifies opportunities for development but is pragmatic in that it recognises the constraints in the area.

The final **Options Appraisal** was presented to Elected Members at Banff and Buchan Area Committee on 28 March 2017 where they welcomed the Report and endorsed the necessary

actions within. The Delivery Team are now working to progress the identified actions and to work with other services and landowners to facilitate redevelopment in the area.

Local Councillors unanimously welcomed the Report and its vision for regenerating the area with one commenting:

"I welcome the long-awaited Report into the Bridge Street and Deveronside regeneration options appraisal. This options appraisal is transformational."

The Report and associated appendices can be viewed here:

The Bridge Street and Deveronside options appraisal report and associated appendices [2b](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#)



Quality of life is also reflected in the need to make sure new developments are designed as effectively as possible and areas of natural and cultural heritage are protected, recognising that the 'green areas' on the doorstep are very important to how people view where they live; their 'place'.

(Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017)

ABERDEENSHIRE 2016 INNOVATION ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN AWARDS

Thursday 1 September 2016
Buchanans Bistro
Woodend Barn
Banchory



Aberdeenshire 
COUNCIL

ABERDEENSHIRE 2016 INNOVATION, ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN AWARDS.

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that good design is important to the public realm and in a wider context believes that development must be of benefit to the people. The aspirations of the Aberdeenshire Design Awards are to encourage the very best in environmental design, to stimulate and develop a deeper and broader interest in our traditional and recent architectural surroundings, and to improve the built environment within Aberdeenshire, thus raising the profile and benefit of good architectural design within our communities. The Aberdeenshire Design Awards is a bi-annual event. The Award ceremony took place in September 2016 in the Woodend Barn in Banchory.

Guest speaker was acclaimed designer **Wayne Hemingway** on the night. Mr Hemingway and former Provost Hamish Vernal then went on to present the awards, intended to recognise the area's best design projects.

There were a total of sixteen awards presented over eight categories.

These are highlighted in the accompanying brochure below:

**Aberdeenshire 2016 Innovation,
Architecture & Design Award**

BUILT HERITAGE AND REGENERATION INVESTMENT PROJECTS

Various strands of project work, together with **Townscape Heritage (TH)** / **Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)** contribute to high quality development on the ground, potentially attracting inward investment.

Completion of **Portsoy Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) (2011-2016)**. Funding of £700,000 was distributed to various projects, including 4 priority projects and numerous small grants. This Scheme won an award in the **Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2016** as part of the Partnership category. The judges commented that it:

“struck them as being a very charming project. One thing that made it special was the unique ‘informal’ approach to the partnership which was clearly driven by passion and commitment which was also blended with a strong community spirit and a commitment to reviving tradition. The renovation project outcome meant that it maximised the skills, and training, in the local area for young children. A thoroughly authentic piece of work.”



Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2016

<http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/environment/built-heritage/portsoy-video/>

Back Green/Sail Loft (B Listed): Recently opened this long time derelict former sail making factory has been restored for use as Bothy 5 star accommodation. The facility is providing year round sustainable income for Portsoy Community Enterprise for reinvestment in the town.



PORTSOY BACK GREEN BEFORE



PORTSOY BACK GREEN AFTER



PORTSOY BACK GREEN AFTER

(Tom Daly Photography)

CONTINUATION OF BANFF CARS (2014-2019)

Six small grants have been awarded for general fabric repair along with 3 grants towards consolidation work to the **'Smiddy'**, repairs to the Tolbooth and 1A Carmelite Street; all priority projects. The Smiddy restoration project is progressing well to create a **Silversmith Centre** which is to offer workshop space and training for graduate silversmiths, and link with the refurbished Museum of Banff; works have commenced on site.

These projects have also received Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Grant Funding. Progress towards negotiating the purchase of two priority project buildings is ongoing and feasibility studies are nearing completion. A member of the local community has been appointed to a **slating apprenticeship**.



Banff CARS: Shopfront Improvement at 38-40 Bridge Street, 'Ivy Blanchard'. Vacant property refurbished with the aid of a Banff CARS shopfront grant. Original timber fascia and signwriting were retained and enhanced with redecoration. The shop will re-open when internal renovations are complete and is expected to bring a much needed lift to Bridge Street.



FRASERBURGH 2021 TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE (TH) SCHEME AND CARS

Work to priority project at Saltoun Square has commenced on site. The development will restore the Council Chambers building and the adjoining derelict former Police Station. The refurbished building will include an 'Enterprise Hub' to support start-up business.

The former 'John Trail' building is close to being acquired on behalf of the Council and will be offered to interested restoring developers. Discussions with the owners of the other priority buildings are ongoing but appear to be mostly positive.



The Small Grants scheme is proving popular. Approximately 15 applications have been received already with the first looking to begin work soon. Discussions have taken place with the [Northeast Scotland College](#) (NESCOL) into the funding of training places for young people, local contractors and apprentice places.



HADDO COUNTRY PARK



A £1.8 million project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) delivered in partnership with Haddo Estate and the National Trust to promote a high quality built and landscaped environment at Haddo, and increase visitor numbers. Now in its fifth and final year, the project's focus is ongoing audience development

and building on the completed capital works. A particular partnership initiative this year was the launch of the **2017 Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology at Haddo House**. The HLF project team is currently considering the post project strategy for the future management of the Country Park.

OTHER BUILT HERITAGE PROJECTS

A variety of individual built heritage projects have been completed or are underway. These demonstrate the continued commitment to preserving and enhancing the built heritage of Aberdeenshire through collaborative means and proactive partnership work. Examples of work completed under the 'Historic Assets Management Project' (HAMP), (**Refer to PPF No.5 – Case Study 43**) include:

1. MARKET CROSS, INVERBERVIE

This Category B listed cross had been repaired in the past with cement on the shaft. The structure was made from local sandstone and as such the cement render had, over time, caused cracking of the stone and the render to fall off.



The Cross was restored by removing the cement render, consolidating the stone and repairing the cracks to the shaft and ball finial as well as rendering the entire shaft in a lime based render.

3. NEW PITSLIGO WAR MEMORIAL

The War Memorial on the main street in New Pitsligo was suffering from water ingress, due to missing pointing. The water ingress was further exacerbating stone and mortar deterioration. The entire Memorial and steps were cleaned and repointed in lime based mortar, allowing the stone to breathe and thus alleviate the dampness.

4. BIGGAR FOUNTAIN, BANFF

A Category B listed structure, the Biggar Fountain has undergone stone cleaning and repointing. The fountain was suffering from damp and algae growth as well as small areas of missing pointing and a broken finial. A new finial has been carved in new stone to match the existing as closely as possible.



2. DUFF HOUSE, FIFE GATES

The Fife Gates on the Duff House estate in Banff, constructed from wrought and cast iron, had deteriorated to such an extent that whole new sections of the gates had to be recast by a specialist forge in Midlothian. The gates were fully restored and repainted and hung on new fixings to allow proper open and closure. The gates are B listed structures and form an important feature in the Duff House landscape.

ONGOING PROJECTS INCLUDE:

KINCARDINE O'NEIL AULD KIRK

Work has commenced on the repointing of the entire structure. Previous repairs undertaken about 25 years ago in cement have accelerated stone deterioration. All cement pointing is to be raked out by hand and repointed in a lime based mortar, to ensure the Kirk's continued survival as one of Aberdeenshire's Scheduled Ancient Monuments.



MACDUFF CROSS

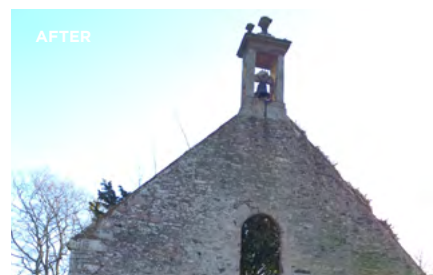
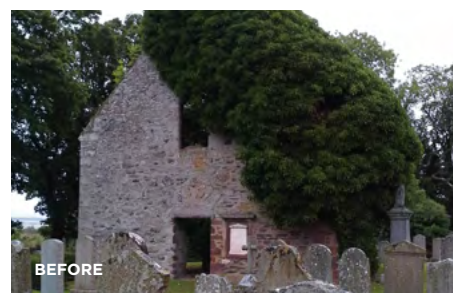
The Burgh Cross on Church Street, Macduff is a Category B listed structure. The viewing platform surrounding the base of the cross is showing signs of structural instability. Temporary stabilisation measures have been undertaken. The HAMP project is embarking on a scheme of removing large crenelated section of wall to alleviate the weight bearing down on the viewing platform and installing a new sensitively designed railing. A conservation architect has been appointed to design a replacement platform/railing.

INVERURIE OLD CHURCHYARD PICTISH STONES PROJECT

Working in partnership with the local Community Council and Church representatives, the Archaeology Service arranged for specialist conservation works on the four Pictish carved stones located in the churchyard. These Council owned assets form an important part of the community's identity, and once redisplayed with new interpretation they will become a key visitor attraction.

AUCHTERLESS - IVY REMOVAL PILOT

Four sites have been identified in Aberdeenshire (all gable end church ruins) where significant ivy growth is causing damage to both listed and scheduled structures. A pilot project at Auchterless Auld Kirk near Turriff is currently underway. Huge amounts of ivy have been removed from the gable end and two sections of aisle wall, revealing marble memorials and the bellcote, still containing the original 1644 bell.



Whilst the visual appearance of the structures has been improved and the additional weight of the ivy is no longer causing strain on the stonework, the bellcote is suffering from cracks caused by the rusting iron bars supporting the bell and from loose mortar joints. Further stabilisation and repair work is required as well as monument stabilisation and repair to the north aisle wall.

Specialist contractors were required to remove the ivy due to the height of the gable end. The ivy was removed by steeplejacks using ropes and was removed from both a top to bottom approach as well as severing the main base roots. Ivy can be extremely destructive if not managed. The small section of east aisle is beyond repair and restoration due to the remaining structure being riddled with ivy tendrils and foliage.

Following the lessons learned and information gathered from the pilot at Auchterless, Officers working on the Historic Assets Management Project hope to take a similar approach at other sites across Aberdeenshire.

CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS

The Council has a rolling programme of identifying, preserving and enhancing areas of outstanding built heritage and historic character across Aberdeenshire.

Conservation Areas reviews and designations completed in 2016/2017 include **Buchanhaven** and **Old Deer**. Reviews of Inverallochy & Cairnbulg, Broadsea and Kennethmont are ongoing.

Future reviews/designations for consideration in 2017/2018 include Crovie, Pennan, Gardenstown, Echt and Dunecht.

Management plans have been completed for **Auchenblae**, **Benholm** and **Kirktown of Fetteresso**.

QUALITY OUTCOMES THROUGH NEGOTIATION

CASE STUDY 3 - HIGH QUALITY DESIGN: RIVERSFIELD, ELLON

This is an example of where discussions with the Planning Service have resulted in a negotiated improvement to the scheme which, albeit subtle changes, added value to the overall scheme and demonstrated meaningful engagement with the applicant allowing them to obtain permission.

The site lies within the settlement of Ellon as defined by the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017, while the existing dwellinghouse is a 'B' Listed Building.

The proposal sought to demolish a 2 storey element of the dwelling and erect a single storey extension in its place. Owing to the sensitive nature of the site it was important to ensure that the extension respected the character of the Listed Building. Collaboration with the agent and the Built Heritage Team resulted in a high quality design.



CASE STUDY 4 - DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

The Design Review Panel has operated jointly between Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Council for a lengthy period of time. The Panel sat to offer constructive and objective advice at an early stage in the planning process with the aim to assist ensuring good quality output and a stronger working relationship between all those involved. The advice given drew on professional knowledge and experience within the relevant local context and offered the opportunity for comprehensive evaluation of development proposals.

In the past two years due to the structure of the Panel being questioned and frequency of meetings becoming less it was clear that a re think was required in going forward.

Joint discussions have taken place and it is acknowledged that there is a definite appetite for some form of Panel/meeting/forum but also an acknowledgement of the flaws and limitations of the existing format. Solutions range from revisiting the whole concept to trying to tie into the Major Application meetings with more of a critical analysis of design at that stage given the existing structured platform in place.

This project is currently ongoing and is added as a new commitment for the next reporting period 2017-18.

(Refer to Part 3a - Service Improvements for 2017-18)

CHAPTER 2 - QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

CHAPTER 2A - OPEN FOR BUSINESS

This Local Development Plan helps promote Aberdeenshire as an area where residents, business and social enterprises are encouraged to make their communities more self-sufficient. It provides a supportive environment for business investment.

(Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017)

The current economic climate and the impact of the oil and gas downturn in the north east, in particular, has naturally created difficult conditions for all aspects of business.

Thus supporting sustainable economic growth through the planning system has continued unabated but with a heightened awareness of creating or inputting to conditions to meet new and challenging sets of circumstances. This, by way of ensuring an up to date (new) Local Development Plan is in place and continuing to encourage and promote delivery of allocated sites, engagement, initiatives, flexibility and pragmatism. Pro-active work has taken place with the industry and relevant Council Services to advance and progress sites within the LDP through the Action Programme and the Housing and Employment Land Audit.

The major application process, although still being reviewed, continues to be promoted and collaborative working by the Strategic Delivery Team has seen progress and delivery of some major allocated sites.

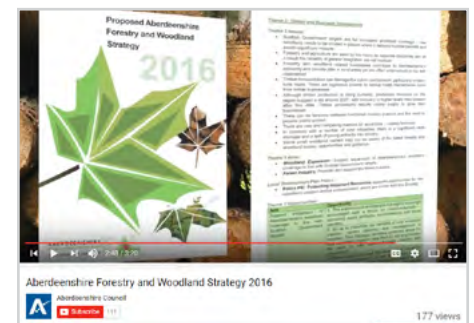
Focus on timely delivery of all applications has remained the focus throughout the reporting period and the performance reflects the efforts deployed again with considerably more pressure to enable applicants to seek recalibration of sites to reflect the changing and unpredictable market conditions.



DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The main message in terms of being 'Open for Business' is that during the reporting period work was in the main focussed on getting a new Plan adopted*. An up to date Local Plan that gives direction for the next 5 years is the main instigator for putting the 'Open for Business' message across.

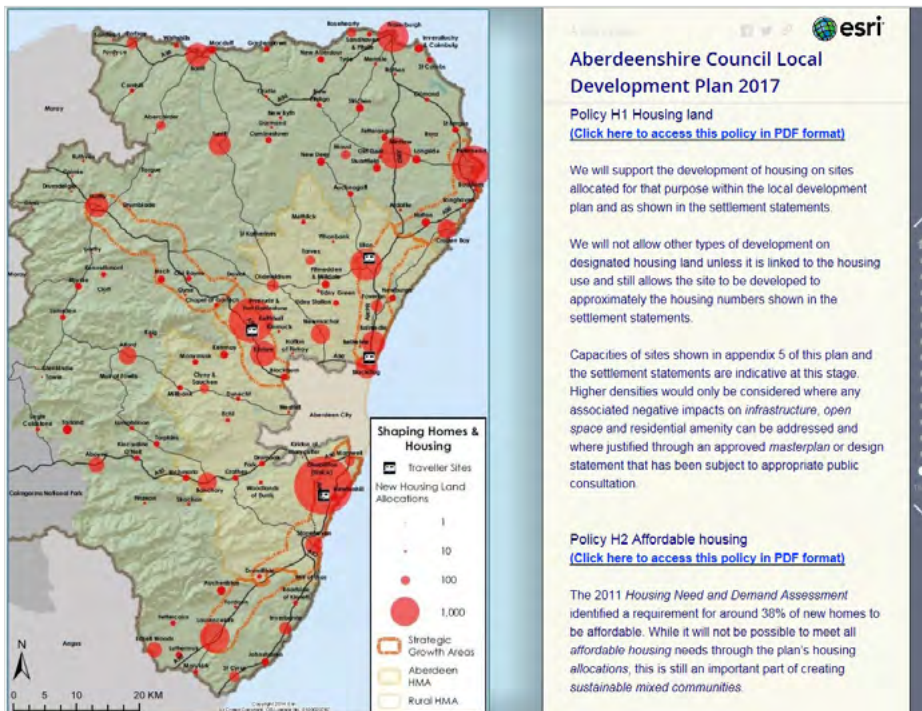
Quality of service in Development Planning is demonstrated by the reaction to the consultations on the Supplementary Guidance [SG8 Forestry and Woodland Strategy](#) and [SG9 Local Landscape Designations](#). Both of these documents attracted very little adverse reaction from the wider community.



Otherwise engagement has been limited due to both the uncertainty provided by the "Places, People and Planning" consultation on the form and content of the next Local Development Plan, and the lack of opportunity for the public to be involved in the Examination process.

Story Map Journal is replacing the Online Local Development Plan to present the adopted Local Development Plan in an accessible form.

STORY MAP JOURNAL



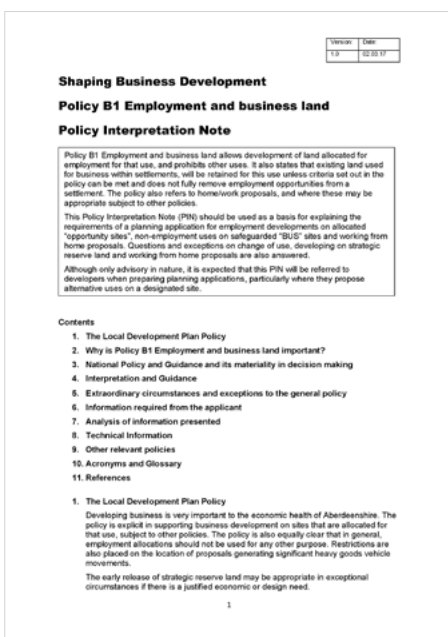
Use of the Place Standard is being promoted within communities to help inform the next Plan.

From the “How was it for you” evaluation exercise, a comprehensive multi-media approach, is being developed to promote engagement with stakeholders on the next Plan, including building on the success of using short online videos and internet advertising.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6xJ72UECjg&list=PLO9F6fCTToNND8UE4tQ2kUfEA4IbCfMmL&index=13>)

*The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan was formally adopted on 17 April 2017.

CASE STUDY 5 - DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT USING THE PLAN.



Policy Interpretation Notes (PINs) have been developed to promote consistency of policy application across six different Development Management offices and ensure that consistent messages are being given by Development Management staff to customers. The PINs have been developed from the need to produce brief and concise plans, without the explanatory text previously included in either the Policy or Supplementary Guidance.

A total of 27 elements of Guidance have been produced over the seven main themes of the Plan. Each piece of Guidance explores the boundaries of National Policy and when it might be more appropriate to include reference to Scottish Planning Policy when considering an application, what the high level objectives of the Policy are, what is meant by specific terms in the Policy, what information is required to achieve clarity of the terms in the Policy and under what terms departure from the Policy might be appropriate.

A further four PINs have been produced on higher level topics such as how to use the Plan, and how to use the Settlement Statements that are contained in Appendix 8 of the Plan.



These documents have not been written for an audience external to Aberdeenshire Council Development Management teams, but we anticipate that practitioners will share them with stakeholders on occasions.

The PINs demonstrate a recognition that clarity of information in the interpretation of Local Development Plan Policy remains key to the quality of service that we can provide.

QUALITY OF ENGAGEMENT – CONTINUATION OF ENGAGEMENT AT CHAPELTON

Evidence of success from Development Plan Action Programmes, pre-application processes, policy in practice...



The Chapelton development has featured in the last three reporting periods and respective Planning Performance Frameworks under 'Open for Business', 'Certainty in Delivery' and 'Quality of Service and Engagement'. Once complete, Chapelton will be Scotland's largest modern new town containing over 4000 new homes, up to 3 new schools, 11.5 hectares of employment land and associated infrastructure and is already well on its way to realising the aim of becoming an exemplar of high quality mixed use sustainable development.

Continued engagement with the project team and key stakeholders has contributed to the ongoing success of this project and this is reflected in the quality of development now on the ground. Construction of Phase 1 is now well underway with almost 100 homes occupied, a Park and Choose facility, village square, community woodland, children's nursery and café are complete on site.

Throughout the project, various procedures to address technical matters associated with the delivery of a new settlement have been used and continually improved for the benefit of future development at Chapelton and other sites in Aberdeenshire. One such example of this is the Road Construction Consent (RCC) procedure.

From the beginning of the project, the developer has been keen to produce an exemplar design along with the use of high quality materials to create a unique appearance to the town. Due to the size of the development, the RCC applications were required to be split into many smaller sections to allow the road layout to progress in a flexible way, reacting to market conditions and changing as appropriate. The smaller RCC applications posed challenges for the Council to consider within a wider context and, due to the different types of materials and construction styles, Non-Standard Details (NSD) were also required to be agreed.

Through discussion and consultation, it was agreed between the developer and the Council to use a phased approach to each RCC which allowed a larger area to be considered within each application. This resulted in benefits for all parties including less applications required to be submitted and considered, and more flexibility for the ongoing development as well as more efficient use of time.

The procedure for considering NSD's has also been streamlined and any NSD's proposed by the developer are discussed and agreed at the Council's Roads Standards Group and decisions are fed back through the monthly project meetings which are led by the Delivery

Team and the Kincardine and Mearns Area Manager.

Having these details and procedures widely discussed and agreed in the initial stages of development will expedite subsequent RCC applications and also maintain the high quality design throughout the settlement. This evolving process will be to the benefit not just of Chapelton but other developments in Aberdeenshire.



The monthly project meetings remain a valuable forum for the project team, the Council and relevant stakeholders to meet and progress the project and also to address and solve any issues at an early stage.

Within the last year, as the project has developed and the site progressed, the project meetings have been tailored to a 'roads only' meeting every second month in order to make the best use of resources. The fact that bi-monthly meetings are more than adequate to discuss any issues arising is a testament to the accomplishment of previous work and shows that the development is progressing successfully.

(Refer to Roads Liaison – Chapter 2a Open for Business – Pre application (& liaison) in Action – Negotiation and Discussion)

OPEN FOR BUSINESS THROUGH DELIVERY

Aberdeenshire Council's Delivery Team, now in its fourth year since formation, did in the latter half of 2016 merge with the Information and Research Team to form the **Planning Information and Delivery Team (PIDT)**. The Team's main aim is to facilitate cross-service working within Infrastructure Services, primarily tasked with working with industry/services to aid the progression and delivery of allocated sites identified within the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP).

The Team also compiles information regarding allocated sites contained within the LDP 2017 and are responsible for the publication of the **Action Programme** as well as the **Housing Land Audit** * and **Employment Land Audits** **. The merging of the two teams has meant that the Team can work more efficiently and there is less duplication of work with regards to both the Housing Land Audit and the Action Programme. This has allowed the Team to concentrate on collating more qualitative information on progression on, or lack of sites, within Aberdeenshire and work to bring these forward.

In this regard the Action Programme is used as a project management tool, with Officers actively working with stakeholders to advance the actions required to bring sites forward. It has an increasingly important role in identifying ineffective sites and influencing future land release to inform the LDP and assessing applications for development.

Moving forward, the Planning Review suggests an increased emphasis on delivery and increasing profile of the Action Programme as a tool for delivery. Work identified last year is still being undertaken but will ensure that necessary confidence testing will be incorporated into the Action Programme to help prioritise infrastructure requirements to bring development forward and being able to demonstrate a viable path to delivery of a site within the Plan period. This will ensure that Aberdeenshire is well placed to meet the challenges/requirements of any potential review of the Planning system and in particular changes to the format/requirements of the Action Programme.

As discussed above, the PIDT is a key contact for Council Services, external consultees and developers and is available to assist with a variety of issues. The Team take a pro-active approach in order to aid the development of allocated sites. In addition, the Team also take an active role in the regeneration work of the 4 Towns within Aberdeenshire, which are identified by the LDP 2017.

* The final draft of the HLA 2017 (base date 1 January 2017) is due to go to the SDPA at the end of June and will be published in the summer.

** The base date for the ELA is 1 April 2017 and we are just about to start on it – a draft should be ready in the early autumn.

After four years since inception, the Delivery Team are making real progress in facilitating the delivery of sites allocated in the LDP. The Team have now merged with the Information and Research Team so are able to provide a more efficient and focussed service. As one Team the PIDT will aim to continue to progress this work and over the next year will:

- Continue to develop and promote the Action Programme as a proactive project management tool for delivery of the LDP;
- Create a joint database for the PIDT, which will be used as a wider tool for the Council and contain information regarding settlements and services, available/planned infrastructure and development rates;
- Be clearer on prospect of delivery of sites within the Plan period; and,
- Enhance the level of information available in the Action Programme, particularly in relation to funding / responsibility of infrastructure provision.

(Refer to **Chapter 2a** – Open for Business– **Case Study 8, 8a & 8b** – Quality of Engagement & Open for Business and **Case Study 11** – Developer Obligation Exemption, which illustrates examples of this proactive approach and the benefits of working with other services, developers and landowners to deliver quality outcomes in a range of areas.)

OPEN FOR BUSINESS THROUGH STRATEGIC DELIVERY

The Strategic Development Delivery Team (SDDT) Team has continued to operate and offer a dedicated point of contact for national and strategic scale planning applications and associated projects within Aberdeenshire. Staffing shortages over the past year have limited the capacity of the Team, but work has continued on large scale development through pre application, Screening, Scoping and application stages.

Project work including a review of the Major Applications process, including pre application service is underway alongside a review of design standards and how we utilise the Aberdeen City and Shire Design Review Panel

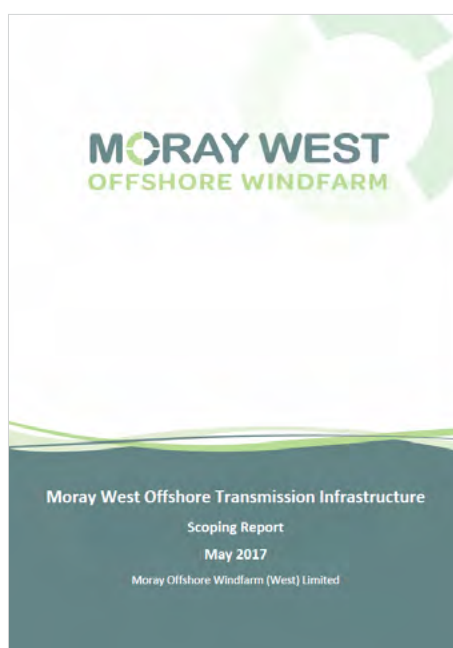
(Refer to Chapter 1 – Quality of Outcomes – Case Study 4 – Design Review Panel).

The Team continues to be the main point of contact for innovative and complex projects, including Statoil's "Batwind" project which consists of the installation of battery units at a previously approved substation site associated with **Statoil's Hywind offshore floating wind farm project**. This project represents innovative and revolutionary technology allowing for the storage of renewable energy prior to distribution or transmission. Throughout the pre application process the SDDT actively liaised with the developer (based in Norway) and facilitated meetings with stakeholders both in person and also remotely via Skype for Business software. The "gate checking" of submissions and supporting information was also carried out via Skype conference calls between Aberdeenshire and Norway, with specific details and amendments to plans and information discussed at these times and via this platform. This led to a more streamlined and co-ordinated submission, ensuring that issues with plans and supporting information could be addressed up front to avoid any delays in the submission of the application.

A similar approach to facilitating pre application discussions and gate checking has been adopted across other renewable energy projects, including the Moray and **Kincardine Offshore Wind Farms**, where the SDDT have acted on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council as the point of contact through Marine Licence, Section 36 and EIA Scoping consultations to ensure detailed and timeous responses can be offered.

The SDDT team has been in regular dialogue with the Moray Offshore Team and Marine Scotland (as well as other agencies) on the various projects above. In respect of the Moray Offshore projects:

Moray East – the Council have been dealing with various applications and consultations over the last few years. Within the current PPF Reporting Period we have had consultations for matters including EIA Scoping for an alternative layout/design for the wind farm itself.



Moray West – is the 'little sister' of the Moray East Scheme. We have been involved in EIA Scoping for the whole project (July 2016) as well as specifically for Offshore Transmission Infrastructure (current). Discussion and dialogue is ongoing with Moray Council about the possibility of shared areas of work as this project progresses.

The approach of the SDDT continues to be well received by developers in connection with the above projects, with a willingness to engage and collaborative working between the SDDT, developers and other agencies to project management development including the use of Planning Processing Agreements where appropriate to set out and agree timelines for the determination of applications. This continues to illustrate the benefits of the SDDT being focussed and experienced on the processing and delivery of innovative, National and Strategic development similarly continues to be an approach welcomed by developers with high quality working relationships established and in place to facilitate the delivery of these projects.

The above approach has been utilised across a wider range of development proposals, including with more mainstream residential and commercial developers. The benefits and collaborative working have been less prominent in these cases, but issues and solutions are being reviewed and will feed into the wider review of the Major Application and pre application process currently being carried out.



ABERDEENSHIRE MASTERPLANS

There has been continued progress with the Masterplans. The table below updates the current position in the reporting period.

AREA	TOTAL	APPROVED	ONGOING	NO CONTACT
BANFF & BUCHAN	10	3	1	6
BUCHAN	10	5	4	1
FORMARTINE	12	9	2	1
GARIOCH	9	8	1	0
KINCARDINE & MEARNES	8	6	1	1
MARR	7	5	1	1
ABERDEENSHIRE	56	36	10	10

MASTERPLAN TO PLANNING PERMISSION

The following case study maps out the progress following an approved masterplan. This demonstrates the use of the project management tools available to implement the planning process, backed by good levels of communication, collaboration, engagement and onwards monitoring and updating as development has commenced.



Testimony: Gary Purves (BLE (Hons) MRTPI), Land Development Manager, Colaren Homes:

"The background to this development is that the site had been allocated since the 2006 Local Plan. A combination of up-front site servicing costs, local housing market conditions, and the 2008 credit crunch meant that the site had not come forward for development despite a Development Brief being approved in 2008. In November of 2014 a new Masterplan for the entire M1 site, which was prepared in partnership between the landowner and Colaren Homes, was approved by the Banff & Buchan Area Committee which comprised 600 houses plus community facilities and employment land. As the developer we then proceeded with our more detailed plans for the first phase of the development comprising 120 houses. We held our first pre-application meeting with the Planning Service in July

2015 and a formal round-table meeting with the other relevant consultees in September 2015. Around this time we also initiated an EIA Screening Request and started to formulate our plans for the development. Subsequent to this we submitted our first draft layout plan and received comments on this in October 2015 which contained helpful advice from the Planning Case Officer on matters such as connectivity, housing mix, density and open space. We signed up to a Processing Agreement from the outset which, although it had to be amended during the process, was a helpful tool in ensuring that timescales were adhered to by all parties. The application was lodged and validated in March 2016. The majority of consultation responses were provided during April and May 2016. Through the process we had positive engagement with the Planning Service, and also with specific consultees on matters such as affordable housing, open space, and developer obligations. We were required to provide a formal written update to the Masterplan that was approved in

November 2014. In this regard we held a Local Members' briefing session in May 2016 in partnership with the Planning Service which was valuable in terms of explaining the main differences to the development relative to the original Masterplan prior to taking the application for detailed planning permission to the Area Committee meeting for determination. The application was unanimously approved by the Banff & Buchan Area Committee in June 2016 and following the conclusion of the Section 75 Legal Agreement the formal Decision Notice was issued in December 2016. Overall, as the developer of the site, I would say that our experiences of the planning process for this application were positive, and as a suggestion of an area that could be improved upon in future I would highlight the length of time taken by Legal Services to reach the stage of allowing the planning approval to be issued following the Area Committee meeting which we felt took too long."

The Review of Masterplan process is ongoing with benchmarking exercises and meetings carried out with Aberdeen City Council with a view to sharing ideas, principles and approaches to ensure co-ordinated approaches across sites within Aberdeenshire as well as a consistent approach to site delivery and associated mechanisms across the Strategic Development Area. To date the knowledge and understanding obtained from benchmarking exercises has been able to inform pre application and pre Masterplan discussions with developers for larger scale sites, including Cromleybank, Ellon. The Review will continue in 2017/18 with additional staff earmarked to progress this.

(Refer to Part 3a – Service Improvements 2017-18 – this commitment will continue into the next reporting period.)

OPEN FOR BUSINESS MAJOR APPLICATIONS

CASE STUDY 7 - MAJOR APPLICATION COLLABORATIVE WORKING

As part of a Major Housing Development consisting of up to 600 residential units (Blackdog M1), a first phase of 48 houses was previously approved. After the initiation of development, the Council's Housing Service sought to agree the provision on site of an increased quantity of Affordable Housing Units (drawn down from the quota to be otherwise provided within the remaining 552 within the allocated site). Essentially, this meant that there was the opportunity to facilitate the accelerated delivery of 9 additional Affordable Housing units.

The Council's Housing Service welcomed the potential for provision of 9 additional units at an earlier stage than previously envisaged, but had budget deadlines meaning that the application had to be approved (including revising the Section 75 Legal Agreement) prior to the end of March. **The application** was made valid on 31 January, giving 2 months for determination.

Through joint and collaborative working with the developer, Housing Association, as well as colleagues in Housing and Legal Services, the application was approved and the S75 amended within this timeframe in order to successfully facilitate the early release of affordable housing within a **Strategic Growth Area** (Section 4 New Spatial Strategy).



CASE STUDY 8 - QUALITY & ENGAGEMENT, OPEN FOR BUSINESS

The SDDT, along with the Council's Planning Information and Delivery Team (PIDT), have been working together to facilitate the delivery of large scale sites within a Strategic Growth Corridor in Aberdeenshire. Sites at Cromleybank, Ellon (980 Houses plus 2Ha Employment Land) and Balmedie (up to 200 houses across 2 sites plus up to 11Ha Employment land across various phases) have been progressed.

Both sites had stalled following initial allocation and movement towards delivery, due to a variety of issues. However, continued dialogue with developers and stakeholders, as well as working to understand and address site constraints, has enabled progress on the sites.

With regard to Cromleybank, monthly stakeholder meetings have re-commenced, with the SDDT and PIDT working with the developers and stakeholders to address issues, scope out and quality check supporting information and navigate POAN and Screening stages in order to accommodate amended project parameters. This joint working combines to provide greater certainty for the developer and reassurance that any resultant application can be assessed and processed as efficiently as possible as a result of the front loading of many detailed aspects in order to ultimately ensure the successful delivery of the development.

The case studies illustrated provide examples of a proactive approach and show the benefits of working with other Council Services, developers and landowners to deliver quality outcomes in a range of areas.

QUALITY OF SERVICE

Evidence of success from development plan action programmes, pre-application processes, policy in practice...

CASE STUDY 8A - CROMLEYBANK, ELLON

This case study focuses on Cromleybank, Ellon, a 980 Houses plus 2Ha Employment Land allocation identified within the LDP 2017. This is one of the largest allocated and currently undeveloped sites in the LDP and would act as a major expansion to the town of Ellon which currently has a population of approximately 9,000 people.

The Cromleybank allocation is for a mixed use development which aims to provide one of the largest and prosperous towns in Aberdeenshire with an integrated package of high quality development including 980 units of housing, new employment land and community facilities on and adjacent to the site of the recently built secondary school (built under a separate planning consent). Under the previous LDP, however, the site came with significant infrastructure issues that needed to be addressed.

In 2015 and early 2016, the Delivery Team took an active role in trying to progress the site to the stage where an application could be submitted with regular meetings with developers, Council Services and Elected Members. However, the issues surrounding infrastructure meant that no application came forward although the Development Framework was agreed by the Local Area Committee. Continued uncertainty regarding infrastructure requirements and the proposed LDP meant that the project was put on hold until the Reporter's Examination was concluded.

In January 2017 the pre application process was re-started as the developer/ relevant stakeholders were again keen to progress and deliver the site in light of the return of the LDP from the Scottish Government.

The previous work undertaken by the Team meant that a solution regarding certain constraints could be found and that the site could now be progressed with both the PIDT and the SDDT working closely with the developer/stakeholders to deliver the allocation of this major site.



In order to do this monthly stakeholder meetings are arranged by the PIDT for the developer/stakeholders, the Planning Service (SDDT) and any other relevant parties such as Roads, Developer Obligations and Housing. In these meetings, the PIDT work to resolve any outstanding issues by identifying actions and solutions.

Currently, the development is now at the stage where a planning application can be submitted. The work that has gone into the pre-application and delivery process has meant that significant progress has been made towards resolving the issues that constrained the development initially and we are confident that this major site can now be delivered. Additionally, both the SDDT and the developer are keen to enter into a Processing Agreement which would set out the timescales for submissions and a route to determination.

The above serves as an example of the PIDT project managing an allocated site in order to overcome constraints. This is an excellent example of working in tandem with internal Council Services and engaging positively with the development industry and other stakeholders at an early stage to progress a large scale development, building up a knowledge base and developing effective relationships between the development industry and Aberdeenshire Council.

The **Development Framework** and associated documents for the development site can be viewed on the Council's website.

CASE STUDY 8B - BALMEDIE



This case study focuses on two allocated sites OP1 and OP2 in Balmedie, allocated for up to 11Ha Employment land across various phases and 200 houses, respectively. **Balmedie** is a settlement located just north of Aberdeen City. It is located within the administrative area of **Formartine**.

The SDDT have been involved with the delivery of this development due to an unresolved issue with the required masterplan. Both sites mentioned above are required to submit a joint masterplan outlining how the sites would develop as one integrated development. There are, across the two sites, three different land owners and despite a number of meetings a consensus could not be reached with the land owners on how the site could be developed. The site has, therefore, been constrained for the last number of years. Part of the work carried out by the PIDT over the last year has been trying to move forward and resolve the constraints currently experienced on these sites.

The outcome of this work is that no agreement can be made for the required masterplan. We will, therefore, accept applications from each of the separate developers without going through the

masterplan process. The developers have been made aware there will be no agreed masterplan for these sites, and any **application** submitted will be required to be assessed as a departure from the LDP 2017. In order to ensure that the sites are integrated in the absence of a wider masterplan the Team are working closely with the individual developers to manage and oversee each individual development to ensure that the wider site is well integrated and connected despite the likely ad hoc nature of the development.

At this point both the PIDT and the SDDT have had positive pre-application discussion with two of the three site owners, both of which have confirmed that planning applications are forthcoming in the next few months and we are confident that the aims of delivering an integrated development will be realised.

The above Case Study serves as an example of how the Planning Authority are willing to enter into discussions regarding sites and take a proactive and flexible approach to ensure that sites allocated within the LDP can be delivered.

ABERDEENSHIRE IS 'OPEN FOR BUSINESS'

Development Management

A major consideration during the reporting period was the impact of the oil/gas downturn on development in general and the workloads in terms of application numbers. Whilst the numbers of applications reduced, it was not by as much as expected. A variety of application types were received in addition to pre application submissions. An additional awareness in terms of delivery and performance was cognisance to new pressures and requirements for change associated with the Planning Service's customers and key stakeholders as changes in the economic circumstances and market conditions dictated.

(*At the time of writing the Scottish Government official statistics were not available)

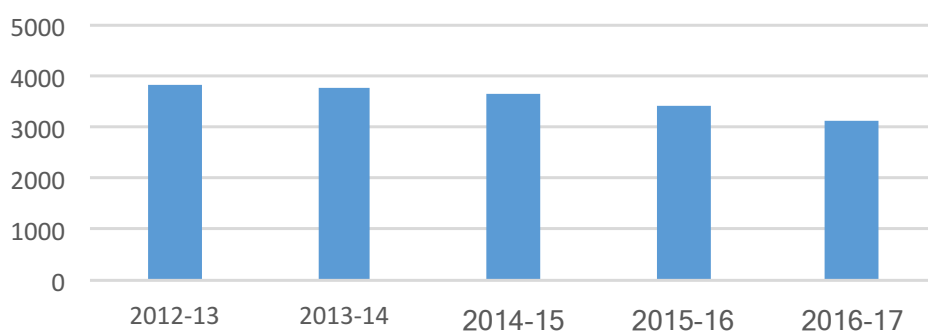
NUMBER OF PLANNING APPLICATION/NOTIFICATIONS RECEIVED (VALID), INCLUDES ALL TYPES OF SUBMISSION *

YEAR	APPLICATIONS
2012-13	3831
2013-14	3775
2014-15	3674
2015-16	3421
2016-17	3106

2016-17 BREAKDOWN BY MONTH

April	286
May	301
June	338
July	290
August	256
September	233
October	207
November	223
December	220
January	208
February	234
March	310
Total	3106

NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED



NUMBER OF VALID APPLICATIONS AND PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRIES: 2016/17

	APPS	ENQS
Major - Non Residential	4	11
Major + Local - Dwellings	937	538
Local - Non Residential	809	370
Local - Householder	866	129
Heritage	175	11
Local - Waste	3	0
Local - Minerals	8	1
Local - Electricity	25	7
All Others	279	6
Total	3106	1073

PRE APPLICATION PROMOTION

Continued Consultee Engagement – towards a ‘One Council’ approach.

PRE APPLICATION (AND LIAISON) IN ACTION – NEGOTIATION AND DISCUSSION

‘Open For Business’ – Pre application discussions. The Council’s Roads and Transportation Engineers, as a matter of course, work closely with Planning Officers and developers from first enquiry through to the completion of the construction of a new site. At pre-application stage, this means being available to jointly attend developer meetings or follow up on referrals from Planning Officers to give early advice on the likely infrastructure and transportation issues that will need to be considered within the development design, business case and risk register. The meetings take place both within Council and developer offices, and include site visits when required. The Planning and Roads Development Teams take pride in forging good working relationships with developers, agents and consulting engineers. This builds a common understanding of how to present practical, workable solutions and so avoid unnecessary technical hurdles as the scheme design develops. This is particularly important given the bespoke and sometimes complex nature of achieving a high quality of design in accordance with the Designing Streets principles. As an organisation we are strongly of the view that early intervention can save time and effort for all stakeholders as the planning application and subsequent construction takes place. Aberdeenshire Council covers a large geographical area but we have preserved an area office set up, providing facilities and opportunities to meet locally with developers and their agents.

PRE APPLICATION – PRO-ACTIVE APPROACH AND POSITIVE OUTCOMES

The following case study demonstrates a proactive approach to a proposed development, with associated implications for the community, and regeneration area, whilst dependent on certain funding streams which dictated timescales.

CASE STUDY 9 - FRASERBURGH SPORTS PITCH

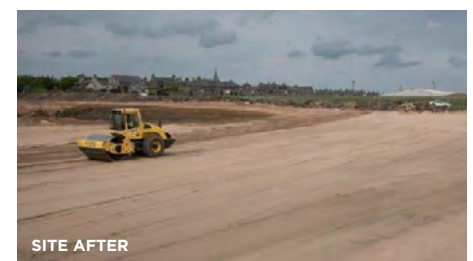
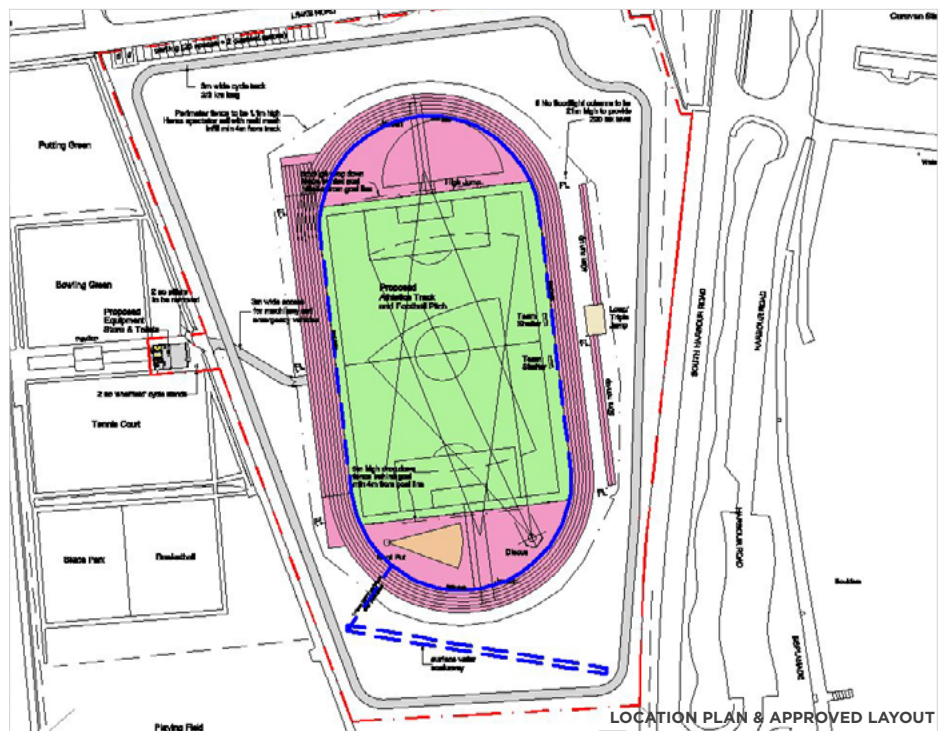
A new £1.2m sports facility is currently under construction at the South Links in Fraserburgh.

The 3.3 hectare site is to deliver a new 6 lane athletics track, separate cycling track and new full size modern sports pitch for the town, with the aim of meeting various aims and objectives, particularly those contained within the **Fraserburgh Regeneration Action Plan 2013-2017** which cited 'delivering new and or improved sports facilities' and 'improving the overall health and wellbeing by maintaining and encouraging sporting participation' amongst the circa 13,000 residents as two key objectives.

After a robust feasibility study and SWOT analysis of various sites in the town the site at the South Links was put forward given its clear linkages with the existing 'Fraserburgh Sports Hub' consisting of various existing facilities and pitches all located in close proximity to one centred on James Ramsay Park - the focal point of leisure and recreation within the town. The Planning Service's involvement in the proposal began at the pre-application enquiry stage in April 2016 when approached by an agent, appointed to represent the applicants - Fraserburgh Development Trust Limited - a membership led charity tasked with working with the local community to bring improvements to Fraserburgh and its surrounding area.

As part of the preliminary assessment of the proposal, it was confirmed that due to the size of the site that any formal planning application would be considered to be a major development under the hierarchy of development. The enquiry followed the formal Pre-application Service and was the subject of a Pre-application meeting with key consultees in attendance along with the developers. This meeting was held on the 26 May 2016 and provided the applicants/agents with the opportunity to inform consultees of their intentions whilst allowing the consultees in turn to highlight any specific issues and/or request assessments/ supporting information that would be required to ensure the submission of a complete planning application at the validation stage.

The formal planning application was subsequently lodged on the 22 July 2016, once the statutory Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) with the local community had been completed.



As part of the assessment of the planning application issues including the principle of building new sports facilities on protected land in addition to landscape impact, public access, car parking provision and infrastructure matters were all considered. On balance it was deemed that the application could be supported in principle as a result of the improved facilities which would be delivered with minimal negative impact upon the existing land use. All technical matters were adequately addressed with all consultees involved, including national bodies such as SEPA and Sports Scotland, remaining supportive of the development.

It was evident from initial discussions with the agent that the project was subject to strict timescales associated with funding streams, therefore it was essential that the application was appropriately project managed and that the determination period and the key determination stages identified and discussed at the initial pre-application stages were monitored and achieved during the formal determination period.

The Planning Service were in a position to manage the determination process and timescales to ensure that the planning application was reported to an agreed Area Committee meeting. The application was determined at an Area Committee meeting on the 27 September 2016 in line with the determination timetable. Following unanimous backing from Elected Members the formal planning decision was issued within the statutory determination period and the timescales required by the agent.

The successful determination of this planning application, in a timely and satisfactory manner for all involved, was achieved via the proactive approach adopted by the Planning Service and the agent from the outset along with clear communication throughout in terms of the aims and requirements for all parties. The close working relationship between the agent and the Planning Service from the initial pre-application stage continues via the recent discharge of conditions which allowed the developers to make a start on site in May 2017.

CASE STUDY 10 - LOCAL PRE-APPLICATION - QUALITY OUTCOMES THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND DISCUSSION

Planning permission was sought to part change the use of a hotel to a dwelling. Initially the Planning Service had concerns regarding amenity impact and also whether the viability of the hotel had been tested. Consequently, the initial application was withdrawn and the applicant engaged with both the Planning and Environmental Health Services with regard to the level of information relating to noise and viability required to allow for a favourable recommendation to be made. These discussions resulted in a revised application which the Service would be able to support albeit the application was withdrawn prior to granting permission. The hotel continues to operate today.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS - CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO REGENERATION

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 (ALDP 2017) continues to highlight and promote regeneration of its northernmost areas through a policy to promote start-up businesses through co funding from new housing and through a refresh of work through the '[4 Towns Strategy \(Item 7\)](#)'. New [Supplementary Guidance for Regeneration Priorities](#) is also referenced through the Plan.

Policy B4 Special development areas

We will consider helping start-up businesses in the regeneration priority area (as defined on the proposals maps and in detail in the "Regeneration Priority Area" Supplementary Guidance) by allowing co-funding through modest housing developments where these are essential to allow the development to proceed and this is not a substitute for normal development funding.

CASE STUDY 11 - PLANNING & REGENERATION: DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS EXEMPTION

Aberdeenshire Council has been carrying out a refresh of its approach to Regeneration by building on the work carried out previously in the '[4 Towns' of Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead \(Item 7\)](#)'. The strategy stated that the '4 Towns' should continue to be the focus of activity due to the poor Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and the continuing fragility of the local economies with their poor resilience to difficulties caused by factory closures and changing economic trends.

A significant issue requiring to be addressed in these areas are the number of vacant, derelict and disused buildings and sites within the town centres. These vacant, deteriorating, derelict and abandoned buildings and land have a highly detrimental impact on the appearance/amenity of the surrounding area, discouraging inward investment, negatively affecting surrounding property values, having a negative impact on regeneration and in some cases posing a health and safety risk to members of the public.

As part of continuing work to address these problems and improve the physical realm, the Council has now introduced an exemption within the '4 Towns' from having to pay developer obligations on new developments, particularly on sites within town centres.



An exemption from developer obligations within the four regeneration towns would have direct financial benefits to the developers and it could have a positive impact on the attractiveness of these areas for development. It would also result in a less bureaucratic system, reducing "red tape", and the perception that the Council may be hindering redevelopment opportunities by placing additional costs upon what may already be a subsidised project.

It is hoped that this positive measure of support from the Council will be used as a promotional tool and provide some certainty to developers in order to generate interest in developing in these areas. The ultimate goal is to bring life back into derelict or vacant buildings/sites and unlock the wider social and economic benefits that redevelopment would bring to these areas.

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to Regeneration of its four northern towns and Action Plans have been developed to

support this work of which the proposed exemption from Developer Obligations is part. Alongside this work Officers across the Council are also continuing to identify and deliver a range of innovative approaches to promote and encourage investment and economic activity within the area including the recent decision to proceed with a Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ) in Peterhead.

This proposal is also in keeping with the aims and objectives of The Town Centre First Principle, which was approved as a policy for Aberdeenshire Council in December 2016 requiring that: Government, Local Authorities, the wider public sector, businesses and communities put the health of town centres at the heart of proportionate and best value decision making, seeking to deliver the best local outcomes regarding investment and de-investment decisions, alignment of policies, targeting of available resources to priority town centre sites, and encouraging vibrancy, equality and diversity.

CHAPTER 2B – CERTAINTY

Aberdeenshire continuing to deliver certainty.

Delivering, promoting and retaining certainty remains a priority in all elements of the planning work we do.

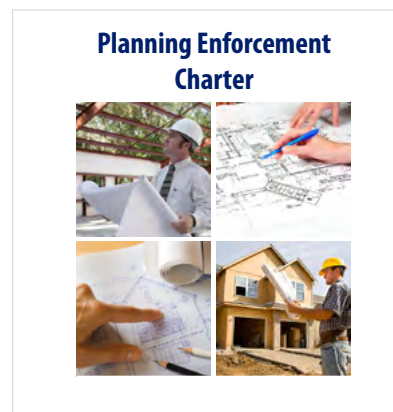
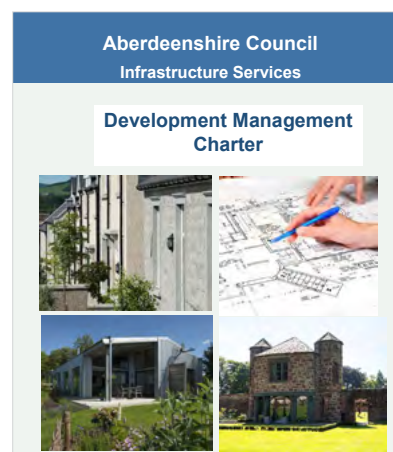
Certainty will rely upon an up to date Local Development Plan. The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan was heading towards adoption during the reporting period, with the Reporter's Report on the Examination being received and acted upon before the Plan was reported to the Full Council, prior to formal adoption.

Certainty was retained in ensuring all applications received continued to be dealt with in an efficient and timely manner. Certainty could be reflected in the rates of approved applications and applications dealt with under delegated powers remaining consistently high.

Certainty in dealing with major developments and associated Section 75 Legal Agreements kept the focus on these aspects of performance as a priority. Respective reviews and improvement projects have made progress.

Various service improvement initiatives and projects continued throughout the reporting period to ensure certainty as well as consistency and best practice.

Continuing the quest to deliver, promote and retain certainty both the **Development Management** and **Enforcement Charter** have been reviewed and updated.



DEVELOPMENT PLANNING



LDP HEARING TOOK PLACE IN INVERURIE

The Local Development Plan timetable set out in the **Development Plan Scheme**, was followed and adhered to. The Local Development Plan Examination however took 13 months (against a programmed 9 months) which caused some difficulties in terms of meeting deadlines for Committee approval of the Local Development Plan.

During the Examination a total of 22 Information Requests were received and responded to, and a single morning Hearing took place scrutinising issues relating to housing land supply.

On receipt of the **Reporter's Report** and **Table of Recommendations** on the Local Development Plan Examination on 20 December 2016 we acted efficiently to report the findings to six Area Committees before presenting the final Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 to **Aberdeenshire Council** at its meeting on 9 March 2017. All possible haste was employed in this process to ensure that the Plan was presented for adoption before the 5 May 2017 election.

CERTAINTY AND PERFORMANCE IN DECISION MAKING

PERFORMANCE 2016-2017 BOTH % IN 2 MONTHS AND AVERAGE WEEKS

2016/17	QUARTER 1 %/AVERAGE WEEKS	QUARTER 2 %/ AVERAGE WEEKS	QUARTER 3 %/ AVERAGE WEEKS	QUARTER 4 %/AVERAGE WEEKS	TOTAL 2016/17 %/ AVERAGE WEEKS
HOUSEHOLDER	96.1 / 6.6	96.6 / 7.0	95.3 / 6.7	96.2 / 6.4	96.1 / 6.7
NON-HOUSEHOLDER	85.4 / 9.5	84.6 / 11.9	81.3 / 9.2	88.4 / 8.3	84.9 / 9.9
2016/17	90.1 / 8.2	89.6 / 9.9	87.0 / 8.2	91.5 / 7.6	89.6 / 8.6
2015/16	76.1 / 13.1	74.9 / 10.4	75.3 / 10.5	78.1 / 11.7	76.0 / 11.4
2014/15	51 / 12.4	66.8 / 13.2	70.6 / 12.0	73.4 / 11.6	65.4 / 12.4

%S ONLY	QUARTER 1	QUARTER 2	QUARTER 3	QUARTER 4	TOTAL
2014/15	51%	67%	71%	73%	65%
2015/16	76%	75%	75%	78%	76%
2016/17	90%	90%	87%	92%	90%

Household performance continued to improve from the last reporting period at 93.6%/6.8 average weeks to 96.1%/6.7 average weeks.

Non-household performance has improved from the last reporting period at 65.7%/14.1 average weeks to 84.9%/9.9 average weeks.

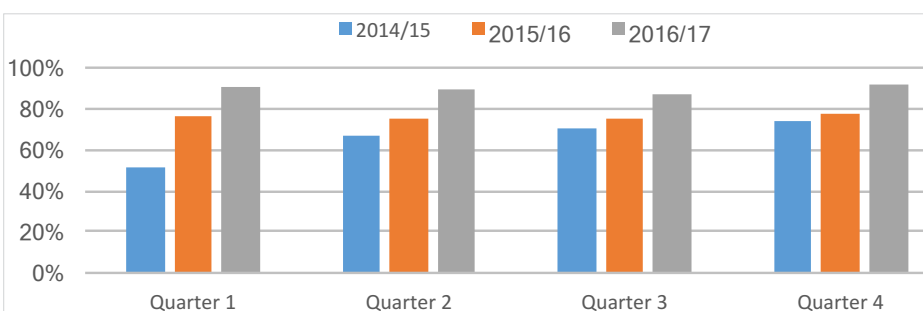
Overall Performance

Numbers of applications received reduced in this reporting period due to the full effect of the oil/gas downturn in the north east. This was a relatively unique set of circumstances for Aberdeenshire Council with the Planning Service dealing with less than the usual application workload. The numbers did not reduce as much as anticipated, with 315 less applications being received in the reporting period.

Notwithstanding, the focus of performance was as strong and arguably more so as the strong brief to continue improvement was very much adhered to by Officers. Any capacity in workload was diverted to other necessary work focusing on continuous improvement. [\(Refer to Chapter 2a – Improvement Project and Initiative Strategy\)](#)

Overall performance has continued to improve in local development categories. Householder decision-making remains at a high level of performance which is vital for the customer as the Service deal with a high number of domestic applications, each one of great importance for each applicant.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE 2016-17 % ALL LOCAL APPLICATIONS DETERMINED WITHIN 2 MONTHS



Local Development decision-making has again been the focus for continued improvement through various mechanisms and collaborative work with stakeholders. Retaining the focus and recording further improvement is welcomed. Despite a reduction in the numbers of applications received, there has been no let-up in the focus to improve performance. In fact the economic downturn has arguably necessitated stronger performance in delivery of development in certain areas of business and housing to address the changing market conditions.

[\(Refer to Chapter 2c – Communications, Engagement & Customer Service - Creating conditions for Certainty\)](#)

YEAR	APPLICATIONS
2012-13	3831
2013-14	3775
2014-15	3674
2015-16	3421
2016-17	3106

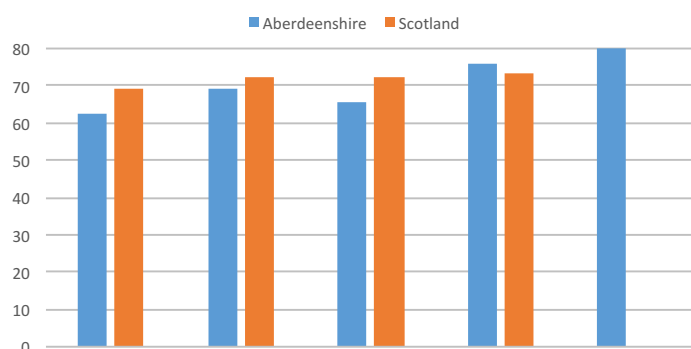
Performance – National comparison *

PERCENTAGE OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS DETERMINED WITHIN 2 MONTHS

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
ABERDEENSHIRE	62.3%	69.4%	65.4%	76.0%	89.6%
SCOTLAND	69.0%	72.5%	72.1%	73.4%	

*At the time of writing the Scottish Government official statistics were not available.

NATIONAL COMPARISON CHART



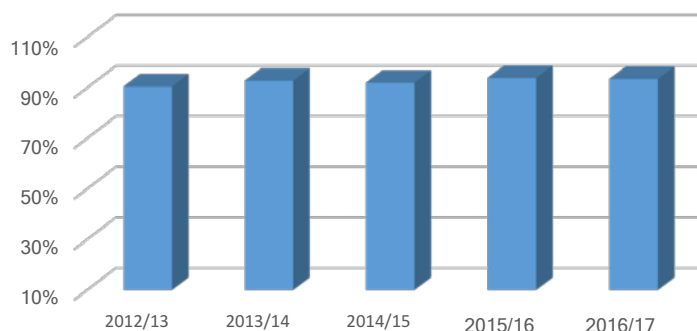
*At the time of writing the Scottish Government official statistics were not available.

RATES OF APPROVAL AND DELEGATION

Close monitoring of both rates of approval and delegation have continued. Both are vital to efficient decision making but also ensuring confidence of customers and the development industry.

Approval Rates

% OF APPLICATIONS APPROVED

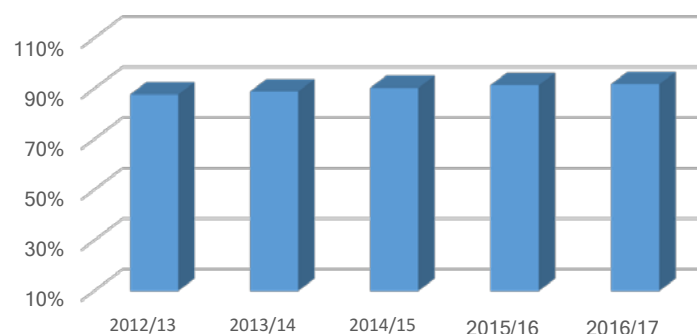


PERCENTAGE OF APPLICATIONS APPROVED DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

	% APPROVED
2012/13	90.5%
2013/14	92.8%
2014/15	92.0%
2015/16	93.9%
2016/17	93.5%

Delegated Rates

% OF DELEGATED DECISIONS



PERCENTAGE OF APPLICATIONS DELEGATED DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

	% DELEGATED
2012/13	87.7%
2013/14	88.9%
2014/15	90.3%
2015/16	91.4%
2016/17	91.8%

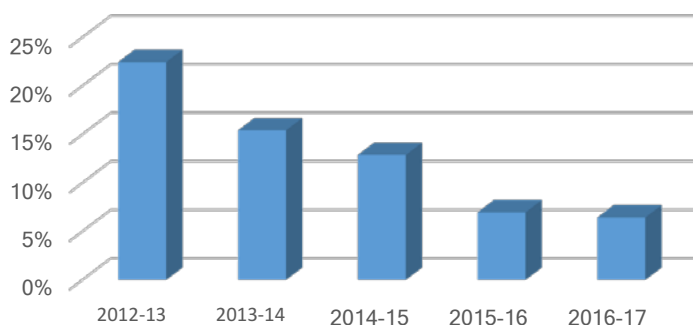
Legacy Cases

The continued focus on legacy case reduction and prevention has proved successful, with just 6% of all cases being over one year old.

PERCENTAGE OF PENDING APPLICATIONS LEGACY CASES (OVER ONE YEAR OLD)

	PENDING	LEGACY CASES	% LEGACY
2012-13	1033	232	22%
2013-14	947	146	15%
2014-15	761	98	13%
2015-16	617	43	7%
2016-17	667	43	6%

% PENDING LEGACY CASES



	AGE OF LEGACY CASES	*PPA IN PLACE
2011	1	0
2012	1	0
2013	3	1
2014	6	5
2015	15	9
2016	17	16

* Planning Processing Agreement

(Refer to - Chapter 3a - Efficient and Effective Decision Making - Legacy Strategy)

Performance Priorities

(Also refer to Chapter 2B Certainty – Major Applications with Legal Agreements)

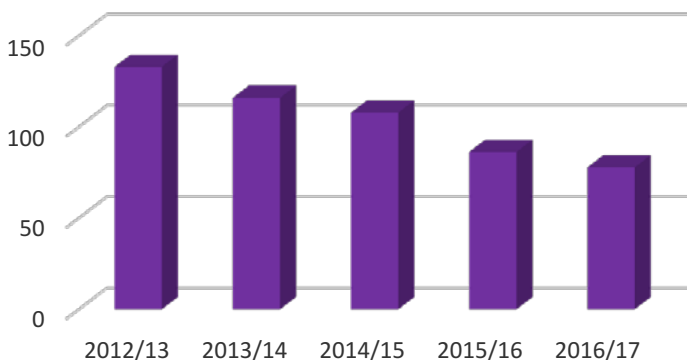
Priority focus has remained on:

- Major Application performance
- Legal Agreement performance

MAJOR APPLICATIONS PROGRESS IN PERFORMANCE

DECISION TIMESCALE - AVERAGE WEEKS

	AVERAGE WEEKS
2012/13	132.9
2013/14	115.9
2014/15	107.8
2015/16	86.3
2016/17	77.8



Major application timescales continue to slowly improve. Focus remains on reducing these timescales to more acceptably meet national averages. Again the project management tools have assisted. Further joint work with Legal Services has taken place during the reporting period with the sole aim of improving the Section 75 timescales, particularly relating to major applications. Currently a scoping exercise is taking place with a view to the roll out of an improvement project. The completion of this project and the outcomes will be added as a new Service improvement commitment for the coming year.

(Refer to Chapter 2B Certainty - Legal Conveyancing – Section 75 Timescales)

EXPLAINING DELAYS

As from Quarter 3, explanations on delayed applications are submitted to the Government's statisticians. This assists in not only identifying where the issues lie but also to prevent such issues occurring again by way of best practice and/or reviews in procedures.

MAJOR APPLICATION ASSESSMENT 2016/17

Looking into the major applications for the reporting period the following has resulted:

22 Major Applications Issued During Reporting Period
16 Had a PPA in place
15 Issued within the PPA timescale
6 Majors Issued without PPA in place

Of the 6 major applications that had no PPA's in place, 5 recorded delays. The following explanations for delay were found:

Major Application 1.

The agent for this application did not agree to enter into a Processing Agreement (PPA).

The timescales relating to the determination of the application were simply a result of process. The nature of the application required a Pre Determination Hearing to be held, this in itself was delayed as a result of a change in circumstances surrounding works to the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) adjacent to the site for which the applicant had to amend the submitted Transport Assessment (TA) at short notice as they were not made aware of the changes. Following this, a Service decision was made to assess all similar applications that included the provision of retail (supermarket) in tandem and present at the same Area Committee/ Full Council meetings. Therefore, the timescales were dictated by other applications up to the final decision.

Major Application 2.

The applicant was reluctant to sign a PPA. Area Committee Members further deferred the application to allow more time for matters to be concluded which resulted in the elongated application determination process.

Major Application 3.

This application was validated on 8 Sept 2014 and, following resolution of all technical matters, was reported to Committee on 28 April 2015 and again (following deferral) on 19 May 2015. Members delegated the granting of permission to the Planning Service subject to a road levy being agreed. Negotiation on this levy was concluded on 24 August 2015 and a S75 was instructed on that date. This S75 was concluded on 7 October 2015 and permission issued on 10 October 2015. The Service verbally pursued a Processing Agreement to manage this project but the applicant was not forthcoming in this regard. It is accepted that written records to this effect would have been beneficial and procedures have been put in place to ensure written evidence of any unsuccessful attempts to enter into Processing Agreements are recorded.

Major Application 4. (Legacy)

This application was delayed with respect to a Trunk Road issue. A Processing Agreement was not agreed with the applicant.

Major Application 5. (Legacy)

The applicant for this application did not agree to enter into a PPA. Area Committee deferrals added time to the process.

Major Application 6.

Issued in time

(Refer to Case Study 12 - Pre-App Review below)

CASE STUDY 12 - PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS REVIEW

A committed Service improvement from last year was to review the Major Application process.

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to improving its pre-application service by encouraging early collaboration with applicants and consultees. Alongside general pre-application enquiries the Council already provides a specific service for those undertaking a Major development. This involves bringing together key consultees to discuss the development proposals. It is, however, recognised that this service can be improved.

The Strategic Development Delivery Team (SDDT) along with a Council Improvement Officer are working together to review the existing pre application service. Initially the review covered Major Planning Applications only, but has since been expanded to take in all pre-application enquiries. The review includes looking at the pre-application information forms used, methods of logging the enquiries and also how to process the enquiries once allocated to an Officer in order to enhance the service.

So far, contact has been made with a range of service users and groups involved with the application process, including Planning Officers and consultees. Benchmarking has taken place with other Local Authorities in Scotland to ascertain their processes and procedures for providing pre-application advice. Focus groups have been held involving staff from all three area based Development Management Teams in order to map the process of managing pre-application requests and to understand the differences between the areas. Information regarding general timings of how long is spent on processing the different types of pre-application requests (householder, small/medium scale local and major developments) has also been collated.

We are now in the process of collating and reviewing all of the information gathered which will feed into updated guidance on the assessment of pre application advice requests and allow us to formulate recommendations for improvement. It is anticipated that the recommendations will include improving the quality of outcome in terms of quality and benefit and timescales for responses. Also consideration is to be given to the location of the major applications meetings to encourage Services to take part without having to travel into the main Council Offices in Aberdeen each time, the frequency of the major applications meetings, the minimum information required to be submitted for pre-application assessment and the possibility of charging for pre-application advice.

Whilst the review is still ongoing, it is anticipated that the recommendations will be phased in the first half of 2017/18, and will then be reassessed before March 2018.

(This will continue as a Committed Improvement – Refer to Section 3a – Service Improvements 2017-18)

PROCESSING AGREEMENTS

Processing Agreements (PPA's) continue to be routinely used on all National, Major, complex and a number of local scale applications to add greater certainty to the process and establish expectations as well as fostering constructive working relationships between stakeholders.

USE OF PPAS BY APPLICATION TYPE - % TIMESCALE MET

	NO. ISSUED WITH PPA	PPAS MET	% PPA MET
Major Applications	16	15	93.8%
Local Applications	446	415	93.0%
EIA Applications	0	0	n/a
Other Consents	29	29	100.0%
Total	491	459	93.5%

Buy in to the concept from stakeholders and developers continues to increase as knowledge and understanding of this project management tool becomes more prominent. PPA's and the benefits thereof are highlighted at early pre application stages of the development process, ordinarily at formal pre application meetings, if not before, as standard practice in line with internal guidance prepared and published previously. The SDDT continues to take an active role in PPA's across the Council, although Officers in the Area based Development Management Teams coordinate individual agreements and projects.

Benchmarking of PPA's with other Local Authorities has been carried out along with the SDDT presenting at an **Improvement Service workshop in June 2016** where the benefits and experiences of utilising this project management approach were shared with other Authorities.

Two Senior Planners from Aberdeenshire Council presented at the above workshop:

The use of PPA's in the delivery of National and Strategic Development

(Processing Agreements - Stuart Murison - Aberdeenshire Council)

Project Managing Major and Complex Planning Applications

(Communicating with Stakeholders - David MacLennan - Aberdeenshire Council)

Videos: <https://youtu.be/ISunjxTrj3E> ; <https://youtu.be/pOOlaC7t19A>

This work seeks to add to a culture of continuous improvement, looking to share best practice and improve or refine processes as much as possible.

Issues do remain with PPA's becoming an iterative process with some developers seeking to increase or extend the time period agreed in order to resolve issues or to provide essential information. This does serve to dilute the concept and is a matter that will require to be addressed through further work and collaboration with stakeholders. While there are many developers keen to utilise Processing Agreements as pro-active project management tools, there are also those who treat it as a tick box exercise that can delay any decision. Additional engagement and education is required therefore in order to refine and improve the process.

SENIOR OFFICERS ATTENDED AND PRESENTED AT AN IMPROVEMENT SERVICE WORKSHOP IN JUNE 2016



SUSTAINING THE ENVIRONMENT - CERTAINTY THROUGH ENVIRONMENT SPECIALIST ADVICE

A core driver behind Aberdeenshire's vision to be 'the best area' is that of sustaining our high quality environment and diverse culture. In order to strengthen and support this vision, the Development Management Service is able to access specialist internal advice from the Environment Teams with respect to the built and natural heritage, with a total of 137 planning and **Listed Building** applications and pre-application consultations supported in 2015/2016, up from 94 in the previous year.

Over the same time period, the percentage of planning and Listed Building applications responded to within the required internal timescale saw a significant improvement, more than doubling to over 50%, although it is acknowledged that further improvement is required.

Alongside the formal consultation response process, specialist advice with regard to the built and natural environment continued to be delivered to Development Management through a series of regular '**surgeries**' across Aberdeenshire, supporting a total of over 1700 applications in 2015/2016, up from less than 1000 in the 2014/2015. These are backed up by annual training updates to all Development Management teams across Aberdeenshire on natural heritage issues; the Natural Heritage Planning advice was reviewed, updated and promoted.

Specialist advice on the historic environment is also provided by Specialist Services **Archaeology** staff. A total of 371 planning applications and 10 major applications for Aberdeenshire in 2016/17 were advised upon by the Archaeology Team with an average response time of 18.36 days.

DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS - CO-ORDINATED APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

Since the publication of Planning Performance Framework 2015/16, there has been a co-ordinated approach by the Council's Conveyancing and Developer Obligations Teams to improve performance and secure the delivery of infrastructure and affordable housing.

The Developer Obligations Team sit within Business Services within the Council and are a consultee in the Development Management process. The Conveyancing Team also form part of the Council's Business Services and are responsible for administering the S75 Planning Obligation process following instruction from the Council's Development Management Teams.

As a consultee in the Development management process, the Developer Obligations Team has sought to improve performance by:

A. Developer Obligations Workshops and Seminars

Between August and December 2016 the Developer Obligations team embarked on a tour of Aberdeenshire hosting a series of seminars and workshops for Council Committees, Community Councils, Area Management Teams, Agents and Developers. The purpose of the workshops and seminars was to:

- Clarify the legislative background to the collection and spending of contributions;
- Promote the work of the Developer Obligations Team;
- Clearly outline the different ways to engage with the Team;
- Promote the benefits of pre-application discussions; and,
- Highlight the successful delivery of infrastructure as a result of Developer Obligations.



B. Developer Obligations Customer Charter

In January 2017, the Developer Obligations Team produced its first Customer Charter in consultation with key stakeholders in the Developer Obligations process.

The Charter outlines:

- The level of service that the Developer Obligations Team has committed to provide to its partners and customers;
- The time taken to respond to formal consultations and enquiries;
- The level of information that should be submitted in support of a planning application or enquiry in respect of Developer Obligations; and,
- How to contact the Team.

C. Procedure for the Refusal of Planning Permission without Developer Obligations being agreed

Previously there was agreement between the Planning Service and the Developer Obligations Team that no planning applications qualifying for Developer Obligations would be determined without agreement on the level of contribution to be secured. This was to prevent a situation (that occurred regularly) where any subsequent appeal/ review that was upheld would be done so without securing Developer Obligations.

It has now been recognised that this has been a barrier to the timeous determination of applications meriting the refusal of planning permission.

The Developer Obligations process has now been revised to allow applications to be refused where they do not satisfy the relevant Developer Obligations policies in the Local Development Plan.

In circumstances where an application is refused and an appeal/ review is submitted, the Developer Obligations Assessment Report is now included in the Planning Case Officer's response to the grounds of appeal. This ensures that the matter of Developer Obligations is included in the Reporter/ LRB's assessment of the appeal/review.

D. Access to Uniform and Idox

Working in partnership with the Planning Service the Developer Obligations Team has access to the software used to facilitate the statutory development management and building standards processes.

This has enabled the Developer Obligations Team to monitor the planning/ building histories of sites, invoice developers as and when completion certificates for qualifying developments have been obtained and also fully digitise the Developer Obligations process.

E. Issuing Acknowledgement Emails when Consultations are received

In consultation with the Development Management Teams the failure to acknowledge the receipt of a consultation request was considered to cause confusion as to whether a response from the Developer Obligations Team had been received. This would lead to delays in the determination of planning applications. In response an acknowledgement letter template has been created and is issued to the Planning Case Officer once a consultation request has been received.

F. Developer Obligations Presence in Area Offices

To ensure that the channels of communication remain open between the Developer Obligations Team and the Development Management Teams, Officers from the Developer Obligations Team are encouraged to work from the Banchory Office as well as each of the Development Management area offices. This gives Officers the opportunity to discuss consultations, visit sites and learn about the respective Development Management and Developer Contributions processes.

Together these measures have impacted significantly on the performance of the Developer Obligations Team and the Planning Service's Development Management Teams.

Since being introduced each of the measures detailed above have led to a 40% increase in pre-application enquiries submitted directly to the Developer Obligation team since October 2016. In addition, there has been a marked increase in the performance of the Developer Obligations Team whereby 97% of the consultation requests received are processed and Heads of Terms issued within 14 days. This compares to previous figures of 82% during the period of PPF 2015/16. These improvements to the level of service provided by the Developer Obligations team give applicants, land owners and the Development Management Case Officer clarity and certainty over the level of contribution that is likely to be generated by a proposed development. This can be directly attributed to the evidenced improvement in the timescales involved in determining non-householder planning applications over the last 12 months.

The work of the Developer Obligations Team is synonymous with that of the Conveyancing Team within the Council's Legal and Governance Service. This is due to the need to secure contributions by way of Legal Agreements. Both teams work in partnership with the Planning Service to determine planning applications as quickly as possible while maintaining quality within the decision making process.

TIMESCALES FOR APPLICATIONS WITH LEGAL AGREEMENTS

As part of the Council's co-ordinated approach to improving performance the Conveyancing Team embarked on a sequence of improvements that were set out in the PPF 2015/16 and this, in conjunction with more accurate reporting of planning applications with Legal Agreements has seen the average timescales for the determination of planning applications with legal agreements drop to an average of 15 weeks from the last reporting period (2015/16).

This has been achieved by taking into account the number of planning applications that are subject to both Section 75 and Section 69 Legal Agreements whereas previously the Council only reported applications with Section 75 Legal Agreements. As such although improvement is recorded overall there cannot be a direct comparison between the two reporting periods given the presence of the Section 69 Agreements now being taken into account.

LOCAL APPLICATIONS WITH S75 LEGAL AGREEMENTS

For the purposes of the reporting period and the progress of Section 75 timescales we have to remove the S69s and include the S75s only.

- **Major applications – as per above all 3 majors had S75s, averaging 125 weeks; (Last year 160.2)**
- **Local applications – 18 had S75s, averaging 73.0 weeks; (Last year – 55.7)**
- **Total – 21, averaging 80.4 weeks. (Last year – 65.4)**

During 2016/2017, 18 local applications were determined with Section 75 Legal Agreements. These applications took an average of 73.0 weeks to determine up from an average of 55.7 weeks during 2015/2016.

Some analysis has been done and there is evidence that the lack of Processing Agreements and the submission of the majority of the local applications prior to the introduction of the Council's Section 75 template would have impacted on timescales. It is positive to note that the 7 applications submitted after 1 March 2016 that were subject to the Council's Section 75 template took an average of 22 weeks to determine. The most notable delay in the S75 process relates directly to the time taken for applicants/ land owners to sign the finalised document and return it to the Council. This is evidence that is being brought forward to form part of the Improvement Project committed for the next reporting period.

Refer to: Local Applications with S75 Legal Agreements

MAJOR APPLICATIONS WITH S75 LEGAL AGREEMENTS

Although the average time taken to process Major Applications with S75 Legal Agreements remains high at 125 weeks this is a reduction from 160.2 weeks in 2015/2016. The Council's commitment to clearing legacy applications to promote the delivery of strategic development in Aberdeenshire continues and this does inevitably have elements of impact on performance. The offending Major Legacy Applications with Legal Agreements that were determined in 2016/2017 were not the subject of Processing Agreements. Following PPF 2015/16 measures are now established to promote the use of Processing Agreements for all Major Planning Applications that attract Legal Agreements. This is reflected in the Headline Indicators whereby 16 out of 22 Major Planning Applications determined in 2016/2017 were the subject of a Processing Agreement. Only 6 out of the 22 Major Applications determined by the Council did not benefit from a Processing Agreement and only 3 of which required S75 Legal Agreements. An analysis of the delays are demonstrated in the table below whereby the most significant delays in the S75 process occurred during the negotiations of the draft document and when the finalised S75 was issued to the applicant/ land owner for signing. Had the S75 Legal Agreements been the subject of the template introduced on 1 March 2016 it is likely that the time taken to process these applications would have been reduced. These 3 applications are legacy applications having been submitted to the Council between 2013 and 2014. Omitting these applications from the Headline Indicators gives an average timescale for the determination of Major Planning Applications of 30.6 weeks which is slightly higher than the Scottish average for 2015/2016 (30.5 weeks).

APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE VALID	DATE OF S75 INSTRUCTION	S75 ISSUED FOR SIGNING	SIGNED S75 RETURNED	DECISION ISSUED	PPA	WEEKS
APP/2013/0816	18.03.2013	01.10.2013	27.02.2014	31.03.2016	08.04.2016	No	160
APP/2014/3671	16.10.2014	01.06.2015	30.06.2015	21.06.2016	31.10.2016	No	106
APP/2014/3200	08.09.2014	10.09.2015	23.09.2015	07.10.2016	10.10.2016	No	109

The Council's **Scheme of Delegation** allows Officers to report applications attracting Legal Agreements back to Committee for refusal in circumstances where:

- The Committee has already sought to grant planning permission subject to the completion of a Legal Agreement; and,
- The Legal Agreement has not been concluded 4/6 months after the application was originally reported to the Committee.

This option is not however conducive to securing the delivery of development on strategic land allocations within Aberdeenshire or addressing the current housing need in North East Scotland. In the case of the Major Legacy Applications referred to above (applications ref: APP/2013/0816, APP/2014/3671 and APP/2014/3200), all 3 sites formed strategic commercial and housing development land allocated by the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

The Council advocates working in partnership with applicants and landowners to secure the delivery of development in Aberdeenshire. To refuse planning permission on these sites at a time of economic uncertainty in North East Scotland for reasons relating to the time taken to conclude complex Legal Agreements involving multiple landowners would not be the approach of a Council that is supportive of the region's major employers or one that is Open for Business. Instead the Planning Service in partnership with the Legal and Governance Service continued to negotiate and liaise with the parties involved to ensure the conclusion of the required Legal Agreements and the delivery of planning permission on these strategic land allocations. These decisions will deliver housing while creating job opportunities and sustaining employment in the Aberdeenshire development industry. This is exemplified by a project on the delivery of Affordable Housing where partnership working was successfully demonstrated:

Project on the Delivery of Affordable Housing through the planning system

PREVIOUS, CURRENT AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT MEASURES

The Master Section 75 Spreadsheet introduced as an improvement measure in PPF2015/16 has been effective for Legal Services to monitor the progress of Section 75's. This promotes a continuation of partnership working and improved communication in the timeous conclusion of Section 75 Legal Agreements and determination of planning applications. Further upgrades to the Spreadsheet access is currently being reviewed with the advent of Office 365 and the associated tools available for document sharing.

The data stored in the Master Spreadsheet demonstrates that delays occur in the Section 75 process in a variety of ways e.g. the content of S75 instructions, the submission of inaccurate title

packages by applicants and breaches in the deadlines issued by the Council for the conclusion of Section 75 Legal Agreements once the final document has been issued for signing. The applications that have been subject to the Council's S75 template demonstrates reduced conclusion and determination times. This evidences the success of the template. In addition to the above factors impacting on the timescales involved in the determination of applications with Section 75 Legal Agreements a common factor in all applications with Section 75 Legal Agreements reported in this PPF relates to there being no Planning Processing Agreement in place although this is now a very rare instance.

To address these issues the Planning Service and Legal and Governance Service shall work together over the next 12 months on an Improvement Project which shall consider the following:

- Create a more effective shared domain for the Master Spreadsheet;
- Establish a protocol for the refusal of non-strategic applications where S75 Legal Agreements are being delayed by applicants/ landowners without reason;
- Establish thresholds for the payment of Developer Obligations by Section 69 and Section 75 Legal Agreements;
- Establish a consultation protocol for PPA's taking account of the timescales involved in the completion of S75 Legal Agreements;
- Provide further and continued training to the Council's Developer Obligations and Planning Teams on the content of Section 75 Instructions; and,
- Provide guidance on the submission of title packages and appropriate deed plans to applicants and landowners at the earliest possible stage in the planning process.

These improvement measures will allow the Council to provide certainty and clarity to our customers as well as realise significant time savings in the Section 75 process and consequently the determination of applications.

Externally, the Conveyancing Team is working closely in partnership with the Scottish Government as part of a pilot project formed under the Planning Review to review, streamline and improve its processes in negotiating Planning Agreements (including securing affordable housing) with developers. Aberdeenshire Council is one of only three Councils which have been selected to take part in this pilot. Under the auspices of this project the Conveyancing Team has seized the opportunity to share its knowledge, experience and lessons learned with others taking part in this pilot – and wider. It is anticipated that the outcome of this pilot will inform the National Planning Review and best practice at the highest level.

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES - CERTAINTY FOR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS

Improvement project and Initiative Strategy

In the previous reporting period many of the ongoing projects and initiatives were completed and outcomes reported. Some were at a stage of pre completion and there were some that have been further reviewed to ensure processes and procedures remain up to date and relevant. This overall strategy continues and new projects have been added.

PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED PROJECTS/INITIATIVES

PROJECT/INITIATIVE	PROGRESS	OUTCOMES
Model Conditions	Rolled out	Training/full use/monitoring/future review
Customer Survey Work	Annual	Action Plans, review of processes, monitoring, improved service
Assessment of Administrative Support	Continuing	More effective and efficient support service
Prior Approval Process	Rolled out	Training/full use/monitoring/update per new legislation
RCC Checklist	Created/Rolled out	Full use/monitoring
Best Practice Manual	Rolled out but continuous/live document. Working group will remain active	Full use by staff/on line/continuously monitored and updated

CONTINUING/NEW

PROJECT	PROGRESS	OUTCOMES
Major Application process review	Engaging with developers various focus groups/ forums, amalgamated into pre application review.	More effective and efficient major application process measured by customer satisfaction and quality delivery.
Pre Application Review	Commenced - benchmarking, engagement with staff and stakeholders – part of larger review including major application process	More effective and efficient pre application process, fit for purpose Quality outputs to match any charging regime that may be introduced.
Legal Section 75 timescales	Legal/Planning Improvement project – to be carried out - scoping commenced	Improve processes and timescales
Costing Review	Scoping has commenced and working groups set up	Consider and present options for charging including pre application service
STC Review	Consultation phase	Review process/relate to Legal Improvement project

MODEL CONDITIONS UPDATE

CASE STUDY 13A - MODEL CONDITION REVIEW:

Following the completion of the Model Conditions document in 2016, the Model Conditions Group remain in place and have an active role in monitoring the document and resolving any issues highlighted by the Development Management staff and consultees that have arisen via the application of planning conditions. This approach has allowed greater levels of communication and certainty between the Development Management Section, Planning Enforcement Team and consultees to ensure that use of Model Conditions is promoted and that any issues highlighted will be actioned and updates will be communicated in a consistent manner to the relevant staff.

A key element of the ongoing work undertaken by the Group involves regular liaison with consultees and Development Management staff at team meetings to ensure that information remains up to date. The Model Conditions Group have also been promoting awareness of the use of Model Conditions when determining planning applications via further training events organised with the Enforcement Team. The training events attended by the Environment Health Section and Development Management staff allowed an opportunity to reinforce and promote continued good practice and discuss any specific issues that staff have been encountering when applying Model Conditions.

Model Conditions Staff Guidance

PRIOR APPROVAL PROCESS UPDATE

CASE STUDY 13B: PRIOR NOTIFICATION PROCESS:

The Prior Notification/Prior Approval Working Group have completed their review of the internal process followed by the Council and have produced guidance notes to clarify the procedure for dealing with Prior Notifications.

The Working Group have since undertaken training sessions with members of Development Management staff responsible for overseeing the validation process to clarify the procedure and the relevant levels of information

required to ensure consistency in following the procedure. Awareness sessions have also been held with Development Management staff at Area Team meetings to communicate the process that requires to be followed and ensure that staff have a clear understanding of the procedure that now requires to be followed. The relevant changes have been agreed in terms of updates to the Uniform system, however the formal update has still to be completed.

STOP THE CLOCK UPDATE

CASE STUDY 13C: STOP THE CLOCK REVIEW WORKING GROUP PROCESS:

A Review of the Council's internal Stop the Clock guidance (STC) and the application of the STC as a project management tool during the last two years is underway. In context, the Scottish Government return on the number of planning applications which have been the subject of Stop the Clock has dipped from 129 applications in 2015-2016 to 55 applications in 2016-2017.

The aim of the Review is to examine the existing guidance notes, clarify staff awareness of the project management tool and make provision for internal training if deemed necessary. In addition, the Working Group have been asked to identify the reasons behind this pattern and to explore whether the Planning Service are making full use of the STC mechanism and if not establish and address any barriers which are discouraging the Development Management Section from applying STC. As part of the Review discussions and feedback sessions have taken place with the Development Management Area Teams. In addition benchmarking has been undertaken with other Local Authorities to review their guidance and use of STC. The Review is presently on-going and will feed into the Legal Improvement Project committed for the next reporting period. Outcomes and actions will form part of the next PPF.

(STC Review - continues as a commitment - refer to Part 3a - Service Improvements 2017-18)

CASE STUDY 13D: BEST PRACTICE MANUAL

Following on from the Development Management Manual, the Best Practice Manual has been created and this has been on going as a continuous improvement project by the Officer Working Group. (Refer to PPF 2015-16 Case Study 19C DM Manual). The Best Practice Manual, similar to the Development Management Manual is a wholly electronic document for staff use. The chosen topics are clearly not exhaustive and as such the document is a 'live' one and the Working Group remains as an active entity.

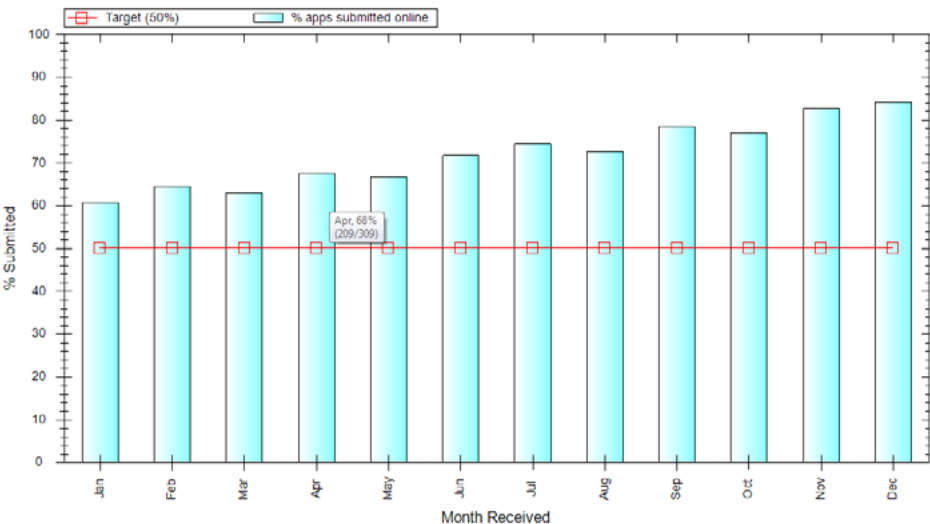
BEST PRACTICE MANUAL - EXTRACT OF ELECTRONIC INDEX

1. Checklists	31/05/2017 11:13	File folder
2. Standard Descriptions	31/05/2017 11:45	File folder
3. Consultations	20/06/2017 09:55	File folder
4. Neighbour Notifications	02/06/2017 13:09	File folder
5. Press Advert including Map	05/06/2017 09:33	File folder
6. Decline to Determine	05/06/2017 09:33	File folder
7. Process for Permitted Development	02/06/2017 13:09	File folder
8. Definition of a Road	05/06/2017 11:48	File folder
9. How to Measure Eaves Height	27/06/2017 16:04	File folder
10. Pre-application Guide - Local and Ma...	31/05/2017 11:49	File folder
11. Site Visit Procedure	31/05/2017 11:50	File folder
12. Planner Process Map for Planning Ap...	31/05/2017 11:13	File folder
13. Report Writing - including Report Te...	17/07/2017 16:45	File folder
14. Referral to Committees - Scheme of ...	31/05/2017 12:02	File folder
15. Section 42 Guidance	05/06/2017 10:47	File folder
16. Short Term Letting	31/05/2017 12:02	File folder
17. EPS Form	31/05/2017 12:03	File folder
18. EIA Guidance	17/07/2017 16:48	File folder
19. Compliance with Conditions	05/06/2017 10:47	File folder
20. NRM Process	02/06/2017 13:09	File folder
21. SP50 Guidance and Outcomes	31/05/2017 11:13	File folder
22. Enforcement Procedures and Process ...	07/06/2017 10:38	File folder
23. Appeal Guidance	31/05/2017 12:20	File folder
24. Protocols	20/06/2017 09:54	File folder
25. Biomass Boilers for Agri Holdings	20/07/2017 17:21	File folder

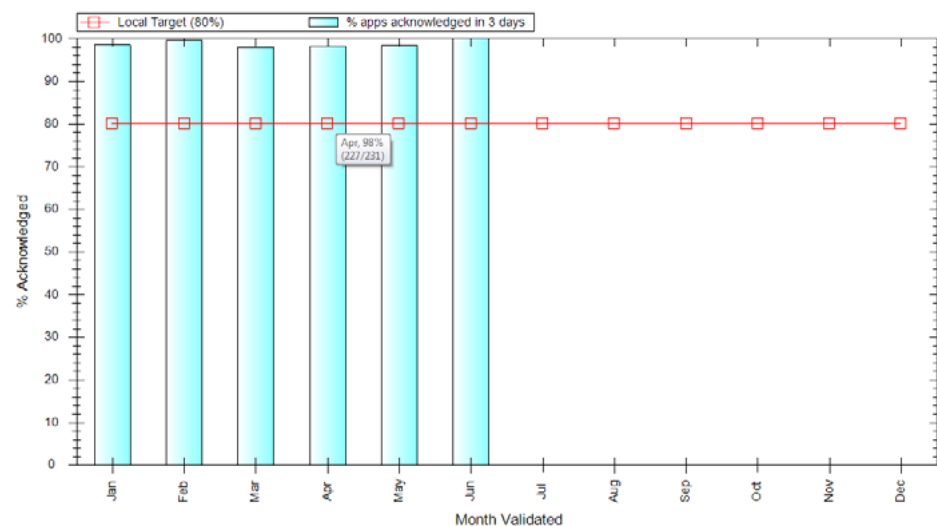
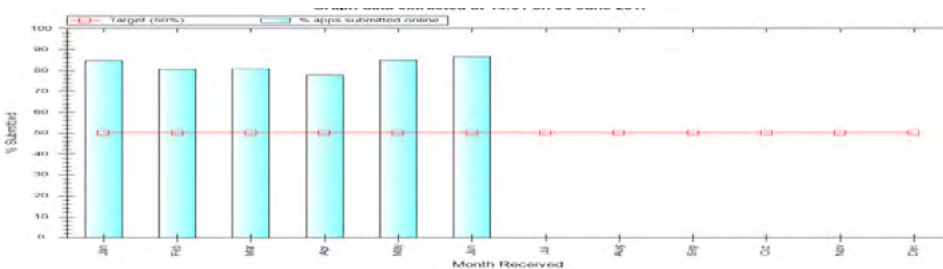
CONTINUED CERTAINTY FOR THE CUSTOMER - E PLANNING PROMOTION AND PERFORMANCE

The e Planning Team continue to strive to move all workflows onto the next stage within a timely manner. The e Planning Team are the central feeder of Electronic and Mail submissions for all Planning and Building Warrant Staff. August 2016 brought the introduction of a second Scottish Government Portal for Building Standards and Building Warrant Applications, Technical Observation Responses and Additional Supporting Forms. This involved the training of 2 additional full time staff members and a huge increase in workloads. The introduction of a second Portal meant additional learning for existing staff and the introduction of electronic submissions to agents and applicants for all Building Warrant items. With agents now seeing and appreciating the benefits of the use of the Portals, our electronic submissions are increasing all the time, our average for planning applications is now just over 80%.

CHART BELOW SHOWS THE PERCENTAGE OF PLANNING ONLINE SUBMISSIONS FOR 2016



JANUARY TO JUNE 2017



The introduction of the second portal for Building Standards has encouraged agents to use this service even more which has increased our online submissions by a further 10%. We have also seen an increase in additional items such as Revised Drawings, Non Material Variations and Compliance of Conditions being submitted via the Planning Portal, this all saves time and resources and brings a quicker response time to the agent.

We continue to monitor where the portal is not being used by certain agents

CHART LEFT SHOWS THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF VALID APPLICATIONS ACKNOWLEDGED WITHIN 3 WORKING DAYS, WITH PERCENTAGES AVERAGING 99% FOR JANUARY TO JUNE 2017.

ENFORCEMENT IN ABERDEENSHIRE

Progress Made and Improvements Undertaken

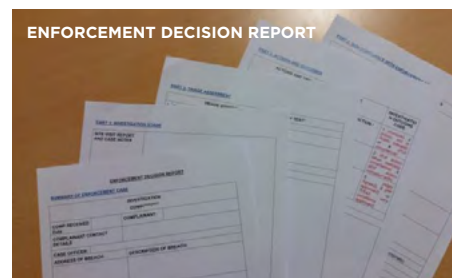
INTERNAL AUDIT OF PLANNING ENFORCEMENT

An Internal Audit of Planning Enforcement was undertaken between September 2016 and January 2017. Council Auditors undertook a review of the processes in place relating to planning enforcement. This involved selecting samples of enforcement complaints and reviewing the handling of the initial complaints through to the final outcome. The Audit concluded that, overall, the processes were adequate and adhered to. A number of improvements were recommended which resulted in procedures being updated accordingly.

Some of the key improvements implemented included:

- Providing guidance to the public on matters that the Enforcement Team would/would not deal with, with the aim of reducing the number of non-breach complaints
- Developing a Site Visit Protocol to ensure that site visits are consistently documented
- Developing a Decision Report to consistently record decision making

- Improving communication with complainants at the outcome stage
- Providing guidance to staff on the serving of statutory Notices and carrying out land searches to ensure that formal Notices are served timeously and to reduce the risk of challenge.



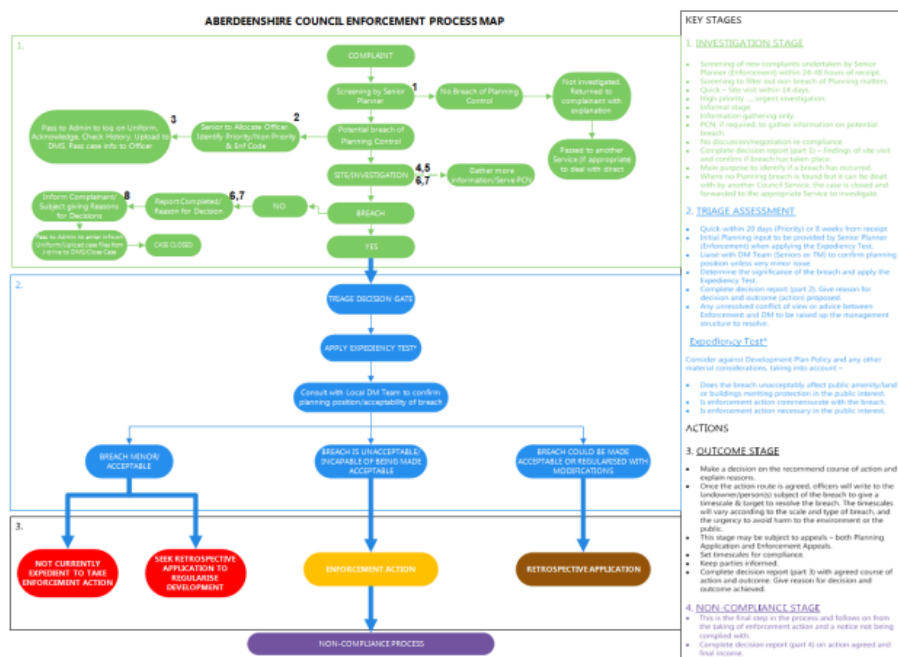
Overall, the Audit was positive and reflected, in part, the work undertaken in the previous 12 months to improve ways of working within planning enforcement. Central to the outcome of the Audit was a clear enforcement process map setting out the key stages and how decisions would be taken, supported by a series of procedural notes.

ENFORCEMENT PROCESS MAP AND PROCEDURE NOTES

The Enforcement Process Map provides a strong framework for planning enforcement activities in Aberdeenshire. It sets out a clear structure for decision making at each stage of the enforcement process –

1. **Investigation Stage** – identifying if a breach has occurred
2. **Triage Assessment Stage** – determine significance of the breach and apply 'Expediency Test'
3. **Action/Outcome Stage** – agree course of action/outcome and timescales
4. **Non-Compliance Stage** – agree final step in process

The Procedure Notes provide guidance to staff on a range of topics such as how to complete a decision report, codes for recording breaches and outcomes, closing enforcement complaints, recording site visits in Uniform, non-compliance options, how to deal with retrospective applications, and uploading records to Uniform. There are also a series of enforcement admin user notes which have been produced for day to day operating procedures.



PLANNING ENFORCEMENT CHARTER UPDATED AND EXPANDED

The **Planning Enforcement Charter** was updated and expanded in March 2017. While it follows a similar format and content to the previous Charter it also includes a number of new provisions to reflect new processes and procedures as part of Service improvements and also the recommendations of the Council's Internal Audit of planning enforcement. Some of the key improvements include:

- Clarification on the difference between a planning enforcement complaint and a complaint about Service provision,
- An explanation of how complaints are prioritised,
- Examples provided of planning breaches and non breaches
- An explanation of the enforcement process in Aberdeenshire, step by step and how decisions are reached
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) about planning enforcement

ENFORCEMENT PRIORITY SYSTEM AND SERVICE STANDARDS

The Public expects that enforcement complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible. However, the volume of complaints precludes immediate action being taken on all complaints received. Over the years this has caused frustration when expectations, albeit unrealistic at times, are not met and has led to complaints from the public about delays and the Enforcement Service generally. This is not unique to Aberdeenshire but is an issue facing most, if not all, Enforcement Authorities. In 2016 – 2017 one of the key improvements for the Enforcement Service has been to establish a clear framework for planning enforcement setting out how complaints are prioritised and how decisions are reached. The Planning Enforcement Charter sets out the types of breaches which are considered 'priority' and 'non-priority'.

Prioritising complaints is a key strand of the enforcement process with 'priority' complaints being investigated within the first 24 – 48hrs of a valid complaint being received and all other complaints visited within 14 days. Improved screening of complaints at the outset has ensured that more serious breaches are prioritised and acted upon urgently.

High Priority	
Theme	Examples
Causing immediate harm to public amenity or the environment	Adverts causing serious road safety issues
Causing unacceptable or irreversible harm	Partial or full demolition of a Listed Building (LB)
Cases where it is immediately apparent that development is unacceptable on planning grounds	Works to trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) or within a Conservation Area
Causing or likely to cause permanent damage/long term effects	Demolition of a building in a Conservation Area
Causing immediate danger or threat to public safety	
Potential to escalate if not addressed promptly	
Non Priority	
Theme	Examples
Unlikely to give rise to severe or lasting harm	Minor breaches of a planning condition or approved plans
Cases that may warrant the submission of a retrospective planning application to regulate acceptable development or impose conditions	Adverts causing harm or serious harm to visual amenity
Breach causing low harm/non immediate harm to public amenity or the environment	Minor works without planning permission e.g. gates, walls, fences, satellite dishes, domestic outbuildings
Breaches likely to remain stable	Minor variations or breaches that exceed PD (Permitted Development) limits
	Breaches that have gone undetected for a long time (but still within period for taking action)

The Service Standards to be applied to 'priority' and 'non priority' complaints ensures that resources are more effectively used to deal with cases which are causing or likely to cause immediate severe or lasting harm to amenity, the environment or public safety. The Priority System and Service Standards are part of a suite of measures, including a new enforcement process, which provide a strong and transparent framework for enforcement activities in Aberdeenshire.

ENFORCEMENT PERFORMANCE – HOW ARE WE DOING ?

The number of enforcement complaints received and resolved in 2016 – 2017 has fallen from the previous period. The reduction in new complaints received (from 674 to 486) is largely due to more robust screening of complaints at the outset and the subsequent filtering out of non valid complaints (non-breach related complaints). The number of complaints resolved (closed) has also reduced from 1050 to 436. However, the figure for the previous period was artificially high due to the Team clearing a backlog of pre-2015 work resulting in a large volume of cases being resolved and closed. The figures for the 2016 – 2017 period are positive and show that compared to previous years, more cases are being closed and the gap between the number of complaints received and the number resolved is closing (486 received and 436 closed).

Some areas of Aberdeenshire continue to receive more complaints than others and the workload and complexity can vary. This has been challenging for Management to ensure that sufficient staffing resources are in places of greater pressure and are able to respond to urgent enforcement intervention should the need arise. Work has begun to review the distribution of the enforcement workload and will continue into the next reporting period.

Monitoring of workload shows that breaches were largely resolved through compliance rather than formal enforcement action. However, the number of Enforcement Notices served in the period remains fairly constant compared to the previous period (43 in 2016 – 2017 and 45 in 2015 – 2016) and reflects the Enforcement Team using a number of tools to address breaches, which include both informal and formal approaches.

IMPROVEMENTS TO BE COMPLETED

Prepare Member and Area Committee Briefing Protocol for Enforcement

Due to the audit of Planning Enforcement taking priority in late 2016 through to spring 2017, work on the Briefing Protocol had not commenced. Also given the Council Elections in May 2017 with the potential for new Elected Members and Committee Chairs it was decided to postpone the commencement of work until after summer 2017. This will be carried forward as a commitment for the next period.

Finalise the Enforcement Policy

As above, due to the audit of planning enforcement, work on the Enforcement Policy was postponed until the outcomes and recommendations of the audit were known. Work on enforcement priorities, which were to be included in the Policy, were however implemented and incorporated into the Planning Enforcement Charter. This will be carried forward as a commitment for the next period.

(Refer to Section 3a & 3b – Service Improvements 2017-18)

NEW IMPROVEMENTS FOR 2017 - 2018

Develop the Planning Enforcement Content on Council's Website

Following on from the improvement made in 2015 – 2016, it is recognised that there is an opportunity to further develop the website to help customers of the Service and the general public have a better understanding of planning enforcement, its purpose, what it can and cannot achieve, and the processes and outcomes involved. This will expand on the guidance contained in the Planning Enforcement Charter.

Develop Relations with Procurator Fiscal Office – Collaboration and Liaison

In November 2016 Officers from the Enforcement Team had an introductory meeting with representatives of the Area Procurator Fiscal Office to establish initial links. A dedicated point of contact was agreed within the Procurator Fiscal's Office who would provide advice and guidance on potential cases being brought for prosecution and on reporting processes. The meeting was very positive with a collaborative approach being agreed to help the Planning Authority bring forward cases of non-compliance for effective prosecution. Further work and training will be required on reporting processes and this is planned for 2017 – 2018.

(Refer to Section 3a – Service Improvements 2017-18)

ENFORCEMENT CASE STUDY 1 – EVIDENCING SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES THROUGH NEGOTIATION AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING



Breach – The Enforcement Team received a complaint relating to a housing development proceeding without the approved access being formed and an unauthorised access being constructed. An initial site visit identified that building works were well under way with all construction traffic being taken via a new formed access onto a narrow C classed road. The planning permission granted for the 50 house development showed a new access onto the A90 trunk road, albeit there were no specific conditions requiring the formation of the approved access at the outset of the development. The formation of the temporary access onto the C road did represent a breach of planning control and one which the local Roads Authority and Transport Scotland raised significant road safety concerns. The developers cited delays with obtaining permits to form an opening onto the trunk road as the reason for the temporary access.

Collaboration with other multiple agencies – Close working with Transport Scotland and their agents to explore mitigation schemes to address the road safety issues onto the A90 and with the Council's Roads Service relating to road safety interests on the local C road.

Working with developers – early contact was made with developers to discuss the breach and regular contact continued to explore various mitigation schemes to address road safety issues.

Outcome – Resolution of the breach was achieved between the agencies, the developers and the Enforcement Team working collaboratively to achieve an outcome that was satisfactory to all parties without recourse to the taking of formal enforcement action. The enforcement officer took the lead role and was the central point of contact for communications between the parties. By identifying the issues that were underlying and causing the breach, with co-operation and a willingness to reach a solution, the parties were able to agree a way forward leading to the breach being resolved. The works were promptly undertaken over a 48hr period to construct the approved access and the use of the unauthorised access ceased.

ENFORCEMENT CASE STUDY 2 – EVIDENCING SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES THROUGH FORMAL ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Breach – the Enforcement Team became involved in what had previously been a long running legal and planning dispute between neighbouring land uses relating to light glare caused by unauthorised floodlights at a recreation grounds. Most recently a retrospective planning permission had been granted in March 2016 for the erection of flood lights. One of the planning conditions required the flood lights to be fitted with louvres to limit the impact of glare on the surrounding area and that the louvres be fitted within 3 months of the date of the approval. Informal attempts to seek compliance with the condition were undertaken but had not proved successful and the breach continued unaddressed.

Effective Intervention – The case was referred to the Enforcement Team in March 2017. Within 5 days of receipt of the complaint, the site was visited and a Temporary Stop Notice issued to cease the use of the flood lights. The operators and interested parties were also advised of the potential for a subsequent Enforcement Notice should the breach continue. Within the following 6 days the louvres were fitted and inspected by a planning officer confirming that the condition had been complied with.

Outcome – this is a good example of effective planning enforcement in action where swift formal enforcement action was taken to resolve a breach of planning control where informal action had previously proven ineffective.

CHAPTER 2C – COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT & CUSTOMER SERVICE

We continue to engage with our customers, key stakeholders and Elected Members in a variety of ways.

As part of the Local Development Plan, core work was undertaken on the evaluation of the LDP engagement process – asking the question ‘How Was It for You?’ This satisfied a Service improvement commitment for the reporting period.

Development Management customers were given the opportunity to comment on their experiences of the Service through the regular Customer Survey.

Work continued with the customer through Customer Survey feedback and actions and ensuring satisfaction through complaint management and monitoring.

Engagement to support Community aspirations enabled partnership with a local village development trust in Laurencekirk, Planning Assist Scotland and the Council's Delivery Team and other Council Services to conduct a Charrette that produced a masterplan for the area and a community vision statement.

Creating conditions for certainty has been prevalent through developer/housebuilder engagement to enable, support and assist where possible the rapidly changing economic environment and resulting market conditions. Joint working and liaison with key stakeholders has continued and increased to ensure best working practice.

An expansion of the project management approach, out-with the Development Plan has looked at Development Management and their internal stakeholders with a view to implementing a ‘One Council’ approach.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING



We continued to provide regular updates on Twitter throughout the year in relation to the Local Development Plan and in particular with regard to the ongoing Examination. For example, regular tweets were provided to advise of Information Requests received from the Reporter.

The “How was it for you” project demonstrates best practice in evaluating all the stages of Plan preparation. During the period when the Reporters were auditing the Plan engagement took place with external customers and stakeholders on the processes that we had used to inform the Local Development Plan 2017. Similar processes took place with Elected Members and key stakeholders.

Findings from this exercise have been very informative in highlighting what innovations employed in the Local Development Plan preparation process were successful, and which were arguably less successful. Those where a demonstrable success was noted will be retained and built upon to improve future consultations.

The Viewpoint report of the Citizens' Panel is found via the following link:

<http://www.ouraberdeenshire.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Viewpoint-46-Report-Final.pdf>

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT: CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Customer Focus - Customer Survey - 2016-17

There has on the whole been improvements in areas identified as concerns by customers in the previous Survey. The implementation and monitoring of the Action Plans agreed by the Team Managers and Senior Planners is achieving positive results in terms of the level and quality of the service provided by the Development Management Teams.

Marr
Kincardine & Mearns
Garioch
Formartine
Buchan
Banff & Buchan

Survey Outcomes:

As part of the Service Committed Improvements for the reporting period, the measurement of outputs and measurable targets for Customer Surveys were applied. While improvements have been achieved in specific areas as noted below it is disappointing to note that the overall level of satisfaction while remaining in the 80% satisfaction/very satisfied bracket has dipped slightly below the previous Aberdeenshire target of 88%.

2015
Satisfied / Fairly Satisfied - 85%
Fairly / Very Dissatisfied - 8.5%

2016
Satisfied / Fairly Satisfied - 88.6%
Fairly / Very Dissatisfied - 4.8%

2017
Satisfied / Fairly Satisfied- 82.3%
Fairly / Very Dissatisfied - 10.2%



Extract Development Management customer engagement survey:

Based upon customer feedback it is noted that there remains scope for improvements to be undertaken in certain areas and it appears that customers are still experiencing some concerns with the following:

- Availability of staff working between offices and ability to contact Planning staff
- Pre-application in terms of the quality of advice provided and timescales

Q10: HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH THE FOLLOWING:

Availability of staff:

2017:
V Satisfied / F Satisfied - 83.6%
F Dissatisfied / V Dissatisfied- 3.6%

2016: V Satisfied / F Satisfied- 88.8% F Dissatisfied / V Dissatisfied- 4.8%

Q11: HOW EASY WAS IT TO CONTACT THE PLANNING OFFICER DEALING WITH YOUR PLANNING APPLICATION:

2017:
V Easy / F Easy - 80.4%
F Difficult / V Difficult - 13.5%

2016:
V Easy / F Easy - 93.8%
F Difficult - 6.1%

While the Survey shows that the satisfaction level has reduced slightly, it is noted that this has been offset by a reduction in the level of dissatisfaction.

The overall level of satisfaction remains positive and the measures implemented by the Planning Service in terms of protocol for working in different offices, desk booking systems, communication methods and response timescales. The use of electronic calendars, the ability to transfer calls between offices, instant messaging and emails and the

introduction of Skype for Business appear on the majority to be working well.

During the last year there has been a greater degree of cross team working within the Development Management Teams in response to staffing issues within certain area teams. Focus remains on the overall approach to cross team working to ensure the delivery of a high quality Development Management service to customers and this is regularly monitored and reviewed by Team Managers and Seniors.

A specific area of concern highlighted by the customers relates to issues associated with ease of contact via telephones in certain area teams. In this regard, the Council have/are in the process of rolling out Skype for Business to replace the existing IP phone system. This new communication system will further assist communication and availability of Planning Officers by making it easier for customers to contact Planning staff via a single contact number when they are working between different locations. The Skype for Business roll out will have been completed by the end of 2017. The communication procedure and timescale for response times to messages is continually monitored and reviewed and specific areas of concern are highlighted and discussed via one to ones and team meetings.

CASE STUDY 14 - RESPONDING TO CUSTOMER COMMENTS/CONCERNS:

In terms of the action plans agreed and implemented following the previous Customer Survey a number of specific actions were identified based upon customer feedback.

Action Plan

Advising applicants/agents prior to a decision if refusal and the explanation of the decision:

The majority of customer responses to the Survey were associated with applications granted rather than refused and there were only on average 2-3 applications in each team that were refused.

The lack of an explanation of why an application is being refused was highlighted as a concern which was identified as a measure requiring action. In response to this specific issue the Planning Service agreed and promoted standard practice for communication with customers and facilitated training for less experienced staff via team meetings and one to ones to develop confidence and communication skills within the teams.

Q14 IF YOUR APPLICATION WAS REFUSED, HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH THE EXPLANATION OF THE DECISION?

2017:
V Satisfied / F Satisfied 67%
Fairly Dissatisfied 17%

2016:
V Satisfied / F Satisfied 33%
F Dissatisfied / V Dissatisfied 44%

Promotion of pre-application advice and ensure that responses are provided in a consistent and timely manner:

Q8: DID YOU SEEK PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE PRIOR TO SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION?

2017:
Yes 63% No 34%

2016:
Yes 51% No 49%

The promotion of the pre-application service at both local and major levels by the Development Management Service has resulted in an increase in uptake. The levels of pre-application advice and its effectiveness in terms of the quality of the advice and timescales remains an area which the Service acknowledge that improvements are required. The Service are in the process of reviewing the pre-application process as part of an Improvement project, this remains an ongoing action that will be progressed during the next year.

(Refer to Chapter 2b Certainty - Case Study 12 - Pre-Application Review)

FEEDBACK/COMPLAINTS

	2016/17	2015/16
Complaints	73	109
Service Requests	352	305
Compliments	52	66

RESPONSE TIMES	RESPONDED TO WITHIN 20 DAYS	RESPONDED OUT WITH 20 DAYS
2016/17	58 (79.5%)	15 (20.5%)
2015/16	85 (78%)	24 (22%)

WE DEAL WITH 2 CATEGORIES OF COMPLAINTS/REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION:

Frontline complaints - complaints directly about the Service, its processes, procedures, how it has handled an application for example.

Service Requests - are not complaints as

such but often requests for information/ progress/action. These can be as resource intensive as some frontline complaints.

GOOD NEWS

It is gratifying that customers take the time to respond with thanks or compliments regarding the service that they have received.

The Planning Service received fifty two emails / letters of compliments, from our customers, during the period of this Report. A selection of quotes from these compliments are shown below.

"I would like to say how impressed I have been with your response and the help that we have received. Having had experiences of dealing with various Authorities it has been a rewarding pleasure to have received such help and prompt replies".

"Thank you to you and your colleagues for a very professional and helpful service

throughout the application process; it was greatly appreciated".

"I would like to thank you and your staff member who responded to me in double quick time with my applications. It is wonderful to be so well looked after and my clients are delighted with this service. It showcases Aberdeenshire at its best".
"Thank you for all your help in dealing with this matter, we both must say that you have been most pleasant and approachable to deal with".

CUSTOMER EXCELLENCE

2017-18 will see Development Management embark on gaining the Customer Service Excellence standard. This will be included as a Service Commitment for the next reporting period.

Site visit technology to compliment the use of the Uniform system in Development Management (already being rolled out to the Building Standards Service) will be similarly rolled out in the next reporting period (i.e. use of tablets instead of paper plans on site).

(Refer to Part 3a Service Improvements 2017-2018)

CASE STUDY 15 - LAURENCEKIRK CHARRETTE - ENGAGING AND PROMOTING COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

Community Engagement through the Charrette Process

Charetteplus®

Among the many activities for the year were a series of charrette projects. PAS's Charetteplus® approach provides the crucial link between planning and community planning, allowing for earlier and more meaningful engagement in placemaking.

Charetteplus® builds upon the traditional charrette model of engagement, promoted and supported by the Scottish Government through its Charrette Mainstreaming Programme. This involves intensive community engagement events which take place over a number of days.

Laurencekirk Charrette

Laurencekirk Development Trust (LDT) secured funding to conduct a Charrette which helped the Development Trust capture, and translate into plans the community's aspirations for their settlement. LDT appointed Planning Assist Scotland (PAS) to lead the project and produce a masterplan for the area and a community vision statement. The project was in place to look at the development opportunities on the old Mearns Academy site as well as the wider town.

Shaping Laurencekirk



The Charrette consisted of two community days focusing on different topics over the two days specifically the future of the old Academy site, what can happen with the land to the north east of the old Academy site (south OP1 site) and the community's overall aspirations of Laurencekirk. As well as having the more detailed workshops there was also a public exhibition held over the two days for people to view the exhibition boards that had been produced by PAS. Work was also carried out with local primary school children to gain their views.

In order for the Charrette to go ahead PAS and LDT involved the community, local stakeholders as well as the Council. The role of the Delivery Team, along with other Council Services, was to guide the project by highlighting any potential issues which would need to be addressed in order to ensure the objectives of the project were achievable.

The main roles of the Delivery and Policy Teams were to advise on the policies within the Local Development Plan as well as National Policies. Due to the location of the site highlighting other material considerations and providing guidance and advice, i.e. proximity to pipelines was also a fundamental role of both Planning Policy and the Delivery Team. Another key role of the Delivery Team within the project was to provide information on the likely timescales of the delivery of the allocated sites and infrastructure within Laurencekirk as this had implications for funding.

PAS, after collating all of the feedback, received from both the community and Council Services, produced three key outcomes. These were:

- A community led masterplan for the Old Academy site,
- A community led masterplan for the land to the north-east of the Old Academy site, and
- A Community Vision Statement.

Four main themes emerging through the plans and vision statement of what the participants would like Laurencekirk to be were:

- A vibrant and accessible High Street
- Strong links to surrounding countryside promoting healthy lifestyles
- Having a clear and strong identity, and
- An inclusive and intergenerational community.

This project was a good example of the community, a community group and Council Services working together to achieve a workable masterplan, which will aid in the future development of the town.

LAURENCEKIRK MASTERPLAN



POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT – PROJECT MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Whilst a project managed approach is commonplace within the Development Plan preparation process, the same ethos is being applied to the Aberdeenshire Council Development Management process. Planning Officers are encouraged to be the project managers for each of their cases and each case should be treated as a project whereby they are responsible for co-ordination, communication, good organisation and engagement with the applicant and other relevant parties for each application, right through the process to determination and beyond where necessary.

CASE STUDY 16: POSITIVE ENGAGEMENT – GOOD OUTCOMES – SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

This development, while relating to an original 2012 planning application, has only over the last year, been able to be progressed towards implementation. As a result the engagement processes reflected below and the agent testimony reflects the ongoing process that continued through the current reporting period.

Agent/Customer Testimony of Good Service/Engagement

“We were in touch with the Planning Authority regularly in relation to the above site, initially this was due to NMV requirements due to variations in turbine supply availability which were all met with patience and a positive attitude irrespective of the number of times the goalposts changed at our end. Further to this we were in discussions about the removal of condition 5 relating to the drainage and watercourse detail. The advice offered was good and guided us to a Section 42 as the most suitable course of action. Running in tandem with this process was the application for an amended access. Again communication with the Planning Department, was always found to be helpful and friendly. Communications for all persisted throughout the processes of each separate application and regardless of the variety of communications that were coming from the site as a whole were always directed appropriately in relation to the relevant application to avoid

confusion which was greatly beneficial to us. Timescales were met and the Planner was extremely helpful in their role to not only progress the application within the timescales but also provided significant contributions in relation to policy and process to allow us to achieve our end goals of developing the site within the conditions of the associated permission. Finally, we were in discussion in respect of the discharge of conditions for both the new access and the principal application. This was met in the same professional and friendly manner with all staff we dealt with. All condition discharges were received in very good time resulting in the successful initiation of the development from our perspective. Overall the experience of our working with the Local Authority on this site for the above variation and applications was very positive and efficient.”

John Moisey, Senior Environmental Planner, Muirden Energy

Background to the case

This customer testimony related to a three turbine development which was approved on appeal by the Local Review Body (LRB) after being recommended for refusal. The agent approached the Planning Service with regards to a proposed change in turbine model and was advised to submit a Non-Material Variation (NMV). Multiple NMV requests were submitted for this due to changes from the developer. Clear communication and management of

the information was therefore required. The agent also required advice on the best way to address a condition attached by the LRB which the applicant considered made the proposal potentially unviable (no development within 20m of a watercourse). Following a series of discussions analysing all options, involving discussions with both internal and external consultees we were able to advise that the best way forward was to submit a Section 42 application to remove the condition. We advised him of the requirements of this application and the submission process and explained the purpose of a Section 42 decision notice. The application was dealt with efficiently along with a separate application for a new access at the same time. Furthermore, conditions had to be discharged prior to commencement and the expiry of the application was approaching. While this related to one overall development there were several applications and amendments to be considered at the same time, meaning that the Planning Service had to ensure we provided quick and consistent responses. Another issue similar to this has arisen with the same agent at a different site and he has sought our advice again based on the advice offered previously. Links to the relevant planning applications are below.

[APP/2016/0093](#), [APP/2016/0030](#), and [APP/2012/1121](#).

CREATING CONDITIONS FOR CERTAINTY

In response to the downturn in market conditions in the north east a greater and more urgent need was recognised to engage and work with housebuilders and developers and to respond to the issues being experienced and raised by these groups.

HOUSEBUILDERS FORUM

Two Housebuilders Forums were held in the reporting period (June 2016 and January 2107).

SOME GENERAL ISSUES/CONCERNS WERE RAISED:

- Market conditions – requirement to recalibrate sites to best fit the new demand for smaller houses.
- Planning/transportation engagement and communications
- RCC – late changes to RCC occurring in the process

The general theme was how we deliver a successful 'One Council' approach. This aimed to ensure that all the relevant parts of the Council were communicating with each other towards achieving a common goal in planning and delivering development.

(Refer to Chapter 2c - Case Study 17 Conglass, Inverurie)

Outcomes

LISTENING AND REACTING

Various approaches were made from developers with regards to their requirements in response to the changing market and economic downturn in the north east. Many were looking to recalibrate their sites in response to changing demand in the housing market.

THE PLANNING SERVICE RESPONDED:

- Encouraged pre application discussion
- Created a process and **Guidance** to assist both Planning Officers and applicants.
- Adopted a project management approach to co-ordinate a 'One Council' approach to dealing with these requests and subsequent applications.

PLANNING APPROACH TO A 'ONE COUNCIL'

The need for a 'One Council' approach has become more apparent in dealing with the implications of the economic changes within Aberdeenshire and a strong awareness that the Planning process is a catalyst with regards to retaining certainty and an 'open for business' approach to all types of development. Whilst not a new phenomenon, to enable good communication between all parts of the Council, the requests from developers to allow changes to housing numbers and amendments to already approved development, required an even greater assertiveness of approach and a willingness to think differently and 'think out of the box' when required. It also has allowed the Planning Service to take a greater project management approach to development management, with Planning Officers being better empowered to act as Project Managers and co-ordinate an approach to seek effective outcomes to allow developers to manage the current economic conditions.

The case study overleaf demonstrates this approach:

CASE STUDY 17 – CONGLASS, INVERURIE - SITE RECALIBRATION



CONGLASS – PROPOSED STREET SCENE

By way of context, due to changes in the local economy and impact this has had on housing demand within the area, a number of housebuilders approached the Council to discuss scope for increasing the density on allocated sites. In response, the Planning Service acknowledged the need to adopt a pragmatic and consistent approach to this issue particularly with regard to the advice provided at a Service wide level and the planning application determination process to be followed. As such a Council strategy outlining the various issues and considerations that required to be taken into account when dealing with planning applications under this remit was agreed in conjunction with relevant consultees. This approach provided housebuilders with a greater level of clarity on the parameters that all parties had to work within and ensured that the Planning Service were able to positively engage with housebuilders. Specifically the approach adopted provided was clear on the key considerations and supporting information and justification that housebuilders would be required to submit when engaging in pre-application and formal application discussions with the Planning Service and consultees.

This particular site was allocated for up to 27 dwelling-houses in the Local Development Plan 2012 and received planning permission for 31 dwelling-houses in September 2014. The current request was to increase the density to over 60 residential units.

In line with the agreed Council wide approach the Planning Service entered into pre-application discussions with the housebuilder in relation to the layout and design, along with the level of information that would be required to justify such a significant increase in density. This resulted in a conceptual layout that could

inform the statutory public consultation for a major development. The project was refined through the PAC process and a scheme submitted for approval in July 2016.

The application submitted contained a range of supporting information on the design principles, increase and delivery of a higher number and earlier phasing of affordable units and figures concerning additional floorspace and bedroom numbers to give a full picture of the nature of the increase. This information was submitted in line with the key consideration and justification identified within the Council protocol. The submission of the information allowed the Planning Service to liaise with consultees in a timeous manner and to confirm support for the proposal and progress in a short timescale towards determination.

The application attracted a very small number of representations and was presented to the Garioch Area Committee in December 2016. At the meeting, the majority of Members welcomed the change of house types and sizes and the high degree of affordable housing being provided on site and commended the developer for their approach to the site and response to the current market pressures.

Following issuing of the decision, the developer has agreed a deal for early delivery of the affordable housing on the site with a Registered Social Landlord and has made a start on site with marketing underway.

QUOTES FROM BANCON PLANNING MANAGER:

"Great to work through the process so positively from start to finish."

"The standard of Service from Aberdeenshire Planning Department continues to get better and better."

The above demonstrates the planning approach to the corporate wide 'One Council' approach being promoted through 'Working towards One Aberdeenshire' approach. This involves all employees being asked their views and sharing experiences as employees of Aberdeenshire and ultimately having a shared understanding about what it means to work for Aberdeenshire Council. This is to help us all to work together better within our communities and across Services in the most helpful way possible. Use our combined experiences to build on our strengths as a council.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE JIM SAVEGE EXPLAINS:

"Doing the right thing isn't included within anyone's job description but that's what makes us great at serving our communities. This process will help us look at the best of what's on offer and help others to achieve likewise in their towns and villages."

Outcomes:

PLANNING/TRANSPORTATION ENGAGEMENT AND RCC ISSUES

An Agents' Forum was arranged in response to the perception that Planning /Transportation communication was a prime cause of changes to RCC layouts late in the planning process. The Forum was largely Transportation led and dealt with the following:

JOINT WORKING AND ENGAGEMENT

CASE STUDY 18 - JOINT ROADS/AGENT/DEVELOPER ENGAGEMENT: AGENTS' FORUM MEETINGS.

A series of meetings has taken place in the reporting period which have looked in detail at the requirements of Designing Streets design and facilitated discussions with developers and their agents on commonly encountered difficulties and how these can be addressed or avoided. The Forums' discussions have considered the policy issues, planning and preparation, pre-application discussions with the Council, working with guidance and standards, common design issues, how to produce a good Roads Construction Consent (RCC) submission, how to deal with any required RCC changes and how to get roads adopted promptly on completion.

Examples of commonly encountered difficulties such as speed management, efficient use of road space, when to use or omit footways, flood management, SUDS drainage details, accommodating parking etc. were discussed. This led to potential solutions aimed at avoiding unnecessary complications in the design and any unnecessary expenditure.

One of the issues that was raised by the agents/developers was the pre application process and some raised concerns at inconsistencies and what they perceived as inadequate outputs to some pre application requests.

Actions that resulted:

EXTRACT:

Issue: *Timing to ensure that Roads/Transportation are involved at the pre-application stage prior to RCC submission and consistency of advice offered between the local Roads Development sections.*

Action: Review of the pre-app process, format, participation, timescales, consistency and level of advice provided during the pre-app process to be undertaken by the Planning Service in conjunction with Roads Development/Policy Sections to ensure that consistent and meaningful advice is provided in a timely manner.

Undertake SER in accordance with Local Authority guidance and relevant national policy/guidance (e.g. Designing Streets).

SER to include areas such as:

■ Agreement of street layout including landscaping proposals in relation to the following:

- Vehicle tracking of layout (particular attention to be given to refuse vehicles and buses)
- Approval of key visibility splays
- Speed control
- Agreement of drainage discharge rates
- Agreement of SUDS techniques
- Schematic drainage layout for foul and surface water including dimension requirements against building and landscaping
- Key materials palette
- Utilities strategy

In some instances, insufficient detail may exist at planning permission in principle stage to justify RCC processes to take place. Balanced decisions on individual applications are required.

Issue: *Clarification required in relation to the level of detail required at the pre-app and PPP stages to accompany RCC submission .*

Action: Roads/Transportation note that advice is presently contained within Designing Streets, as per presentation slides (extract below), however, Roads/Policy Sections will review whether the RCC checklist can be split into pre and post planning consent stages.

Actions

The Council recognises that bespoke design sometimes requires non-standard details and has developed a process for developers to gain the necessary approvals for their use. This can achieve a higher quality of design and in time widen the list of detailing options, drawing both on Council and developer expertise and innovation. The Forum meetings explained the process and explored the advantages and disadvantages of working out-with normal standards.

(Refer to Chapter 2a – Open for Business – Quality of Engagement – Continuation of Engagement at Chapelton.)

Presentation



ELECTED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

On-going engagement with Members and the Planning Service happens on a daily basis. The current Scheme of Delegation involves Members through a notification stage where Members become involved in the decision making process in certain circumstances. Through the Ward Pages * Members are encouraged to liaise with Officers if they have any queries about the planning process.

***Ward Pages:** Ward Pages is an electronic communication tool specifically created for officer communication with elected members.

PLANNING & BUILDING STANDARDS MEMBER OFFICER WORK GROUP

The Planning and Building Standards Service (P&BS) has a Member Officer Working Group (MOWG). MOWG, which meets as and when required, but generally 4-6 times a year, consists of 8 Councillors (chaired by the Chair of Infrastructure Services Committee) and Officers from the P&BS. The main purpose of the Working Group is to allow Members and Officers to discuss relevant planning and Building Standards related matters in a less formal manner and for Members to both provide a “steer” of how to progress with future Committee Reports and strategies as well as giving informal thoughts and advice regarding such matters. Officers attending MOWG are normally the Head of Service, relevant Service Managers and particular Officers who have prepared Reports or given oral presentations/updates.

During 2016/17 matters discussed included regular Local Development Plan updates and discussions regarding intended courses of action as well as policy interpretation matters, the [Planning Review](#), (Item 9) Scheme of Delegation, Committee Site Visit protocol, North East Scotland Biological Records Centre Strategy 2017-2020, Aberdeenshire Outdoor Access Strategy 2017-2020, Customer Services Excellence Award for Building Standards, Local Development Plan Supplementary Guidance and the Planning Performance Framework.

Officers and Councillors appreciate the opportunity to discuss various planning and building standards related matters at an early stage and also in an informal manner. As MOWG generally contains Councillors from the Infrastructure Services Committee and all 6 Aberdeenshire Administrative areas are represented which means that when matters are before Members at Committees there has already been Member input and can also help “smooth the way” for Member discussion and approval. Minutes of the meetings are kept.

Aberdeenshire Council has recently confirmed its intention to maintain MOWG and discussions have started with Members regarding the role of MOWG and how it can be used even more as a Steering Group and sounding board for the next Local Development Plan as there was some criticism through the “How was it for you” project carried out by the Policy Team following completion of the recently adopted Local Development Plan that earlier Member engagement would have helped the Plan preparation process.

MOWG is a very important, valuable and successful element of the Member engagement the Planning & Building Standards Service carries out and one that the Service is keen to continue and further utilise in the coming year.

[Places, People and Planning - A Consultation on the Future of the Scottish Planning System](#)

Following the above being reported to MOWG, the Consultation Report went to the Infrastructure Services Committee. At Members’ behest a further meeting was had between Planning Managers and the Chair, Vice Chair and opposition Member to finalise the Council’s views on the consultation.



INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES COMMITTEE

PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS MEMBER/OFFICER WORKING GROUP

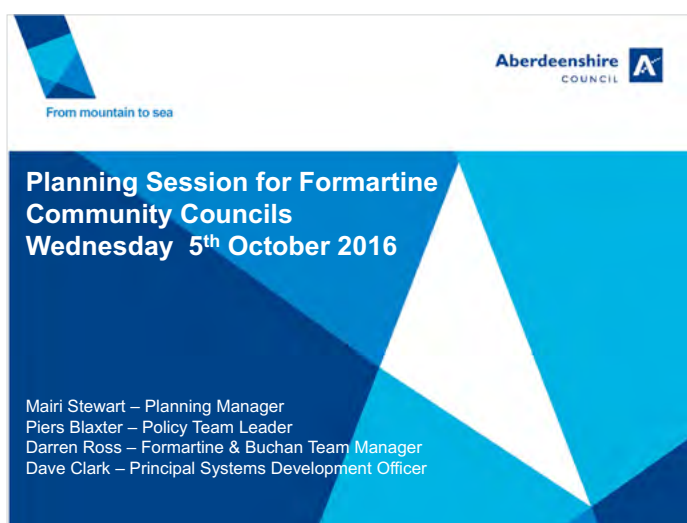
WEDNESDAY, 25 JANUARY, 2017, at 2.00 P.M.

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the PLANNING AND BUILDING STANDARDS MEMBER/OFFICER WORKING GROUP to be held in CONFERENCE ROOM C, WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, on WEDNESDAY, 25 JANUARY, 2017, at 2.00 P.M.

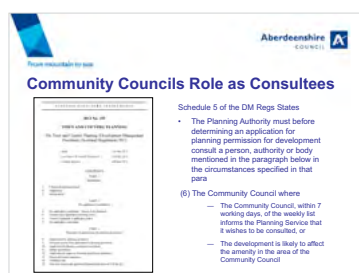
COMMUNITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT

Further Community Council engagement took place in the Report period through Forums, one to one meetings and general correspondence through the planning process.

CASE STUDY 19 – COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM



An evening Forum was held in one of the administrative areas of the Council. On this occasion it was in the Formartine area. There are 12 Community Council groups in this area and the Forums allow them to come together and meet Council Officers, listen and participate in presentations on relevant topics and topics they wish to highlight, whether to gain further knowledge, discuss any particular issues or refresh on particular aspects of the Council Services.



The presentation covered the various elements of the planning process:

- Community Council Role
- What is Planning?
- Community Council Role
- Community Council influence
- What are Development Plans?
- Development Management & the Planning Application Process
- Community Council Role in the Development Plan Process
- Development Management & the Planning Application Process
- Community Council Role in the Development Plan Process
- Community Council Role In Development Management
- Role of Community Councils
- Community Councils Role as Consultees
- Means of Communication

- Implications/Liaisons
- Use Material Considerations
- What's Not Material Considerations?

This also included a presentation on the e planning agenda by a Systems Development Officer who was at hand to demonstrate the Planning Public Access System and the useful tools available for the Community Councils to use. e.g. – How to access the system, track applications and set up weekly lists which will update automatically giving 'real time' information on applications.

Detailed guidance is available for the public to access.

	
Contents	
Introduction	
User Details	
Registration	5
Log In	7
My Profile	8
Searching	
Simple Search	14
Advanced Search	15
Weekly/Monthly Lists Search	17
Property Search	18
Map Search	20
Accessing Cases Directly	27
Search Results	
Saving A Search	29
Record Details	29
Tracking Applications	36

To follow on from previous reporting years a refreshed Community Council focus will be added as a commitment to the next reporting year (2017-18). This is to continue a high level of engagement to all the Community Councils and given political changes within the Council, changes to personnel within the Community Councils and the likely changes through the Planning Review.

(Refer to Section 3a - Service Improvements 2017-18)

FLOODING ENGAGEMENT - OUTCOMES/RESULTS

In 2015 into 2016 Storm Frank had a devastating impact on areas of Aberdeenshire. The last Planning Performance Framework reported on the collaborative work and engagement that took place between the Planning Service, stakeholders and the communities affected.

Thankfully many outcomes have been positive as repair, renovation and refurbishment has taken place in many of the towns, villages and rural areas to enable residents to return to their homes and businesses to get back up and running.

The following examples demonstrates the outcome of such work and in fact covers several of the performance categories giving a good example of pre-application engagement, negotiation, flexibility, and non-standard design where benefits for the applicant and for the historic environment all played a part in the solution.

CASE STUDY 20: RESIDENTIAL AFTERMATH OF FLOODING EVENT - ENGAGEMENT AND NEGOTIATION TOWARD A PRAGMATIC 'NON-STANDARD' DESIGN OUTCOME- OSPREY COTTAGE, BALLATER

Full Planning Permission was sought for the erection of a replacement dwelling-house within the heart of Ballater Conservation Area following significant damage caused by the floods of December 2015, rendering the existing cottage uninhabitable and viably beyond repair.

Pre-application advice was sought relating to this proposal which initially sought a contemporary house of sizeable scale with extensive glazing and a generally office/art deco type appearance. The agent was offered a quick response which advised that the contemporary proposal was not considered to be appropriate in its context as it did not fit successfully enough with this part of the Conservation Area and its prominent setting adjacent to the River Dee. Following several pre-application discussions with Development Management and Environment Team planning staff a different design approach was submitted in the planning application.

The amended replacement house design was positioned largely on the footprint of the existing property and was 2¾ storeys in height, with the ground floor where flooding would cause most impact, reserved for garage and storage space.

While this solution was of non-typical design, the rationale was supported by the Planning Service as it offered protection of habitable living areas from future flooding. Balconies were proposed to provide emergency escape relief, including egress opportunities, during potential events. While the design approach in this respect was not commonly found in the Conservation Area, the Planning Service in consultation with SEPA, considered this to be a pragmatic design response to flood risk. Furthermore, following further negotiations small scale changes were made to adopt design cues, from the surroundings, including window detailing and material finishes, to allow the proposed house to sit comfortably in its historic setting. The finalised design developed significantly from the pre-application stage and resulted in a recommendation of approval to the Marr Area Committee. This recommendation was supported.

While the design was atypical, and did not entirely fit with policies relating to the historic environment, the Planning Service provided support as it merged, the competing elements of technical flood risk mitigation and the need for recognition of the historic setting, into a satisfactory solution for all. Flexibility and an understanding of the wider issues played a significant role in the handling of this case and contributed to negotiations over design. Supporting justification and pre-application engagement were fundamental to the decision making process.



RE-APP PROPOSAL



(With kind permission from Charles Smith Architect)



FINAL APPROVED PROPOSAL

CASE STUDY 21: THE FLOODING PRO-FORMA SYSTEM: OUTCOMES

Here is further evidence of collaborative work, engagement, and flexibility to deal with exceptional circumstances. As reported in the last PPF (2015-16) a Pro-forma system was set up to enable immediate advice and action to be taken in respect of re-building/repair works to address the various areas of flood damage. The system also allowed for rapid consultation with the relevant stakeholders/consultees and subsequent rapid decisions.

Flood Pro-forma and associated Decision Sheet

Aberdeenshire Council	
Aberdeenshire Council Flooding Proforma	
(In response to 2015/2016 Flood Event only)	
Applicant Details: Inchmarnock Estate	
Agent: Gerry Robb Architectural Design Services	
Title: 010	
Facsimile: 010	
Surname: Henry	
Contact Address:	
Gerry Robb Architectural Design Services	
Bridgeway Road	
Aberdeen	
Postcode: AB14 5HF Telephone: 011338 86369 E Mail: info@gerryrobb.co.uk	
Location/Address for Grid Reference of Proposed Works	
Tassach pool - Headhinch and Cambus O'May	
Grid ref: N0426965	
Brief Description of Proposed Works including Method Statement (where applicable) (supplement with additional information if possible and where necessary)	
Replacement of existing hut @ same location.	
Previous hut details:	
- Dates from 1990s? - Walls of log construction with light stain finish - Roof lined with felt - Glazed patio doors to North with windows on all elevations, finished to match logs - Slightly raised of the ground on block piers - Small deck to North with balustrade - Log burner installed	
Proposed hut details:	
- Walls to be of log construction with dark stain finish - Roof finish to be box profile sheeting, finished red (TBC) - Timber frame windows and doors arranged as shown, finished with dark stain to match walls (TBC) - Hut sited on masonry foundation - Log burner installed - Walls footprint differs from previous hut as discussed during pre-app. Floor area is same.	
Are the works considered:	
Repair/Maintenance ☐	
Replacement ☒	
Would the works be:	
Permanent ☒	
Temporary ☐	

FLOOD PRO-FORMA

CASE STUDY 21A - INCHLEY, DEE STREET, BALLATER

APP/2016/2127 (LBC) / APP/2016/2126 (FPP)

A B-listed Property within the Ballater Conservation Area was significantly damaged during the floods of December 2015. A series of pre-application discussions were held at flood specific planning surgeries in February 2016 and site meetings attended by Historic Environment Scotland and Built Heritage Officers from the Environment Team were carried out promptly. Using the Council's flooding Pro-forma system put in place to deal with planning enquiries for flood related proposals, a suitable and quick solution to repairing the damage was reached. The Pro-forma process allowed for some works, which would normally require Listed Building Consent such as stripping of internal walls and flooring, to proceed immediately, prior to gaining consent. Following this, a part retrospective application was submitted to cover these previously agreed works but which also included further proposals. The benefit of the Pro-forma system was that emergency works could be carried out to prevent delays and further damage. Successful engagement and collaborative working with relevant parties allowed for a smoother application process. The Pro-forma system also allowed the Planning Service to expedite the formal applications, providing quick decisions and advice which ultimately enabled repair works to commence quickly. From site observations the property has been repaired to a habitable standard and has been occupied again since spring 2017.

IMAGE SHOWING EXTENT OF FLOODS AND DAMAGE (FRONT GARDEN)



EXISTING PLANS



APPROVED DETAILED FLOOR PLANS



CASE STUDY 21B - HELPING RURAL BUSINESSES UP AND RUNNING - FISHING HUT, TASSACHD, CAMBUS O'MAY

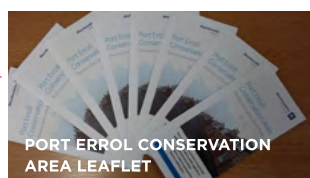
An existing fishing hut near Cambus O'May was destroyed by the December 2015 floods. A flooding Pro-forma was submitted for this seeking advice on whether planning permission was required for a replacement hut on the same footprint. The Pro-forma was introduced to enable a fast track system of advice to allow the Planning Service to agree works which are on a like for like basis. Through this process, which involved an immediate site visit and quick consultations with external consultees including Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the Planning Service concluded that no planning application was required as this was a replacement hut and any impacts would be minimal. Due to the Pro-forma system this enquiry was prioritised allowing the Planning Service to provide a decision in 13 days. The fishing hut was rebuilt quickly and opened for business. The photos below show the damage and the result. Several Pro-formas were submitted for replacement fishing huts and other riparian works to river banks and tracks which have since been completed.



ABERDEENSHIRE BUILT HERITAGE ENGAGEMENT

Conservation Area Reviews/designations: public engagement carried out in accordance as per agreed process at e.g. Buchanhaven, Old Deer, Inverallochy, Cairnbulg, Broadsea and Kennethmont.

(Refer to Chapter 1a - High Quality Development on the Ground - Conservation Area Reviews)



Community engagement with local groups and residents in relation to options for the future of Tullich Kirk and carved symbol stones collection to inform decision making and bids for funding. Lead group identified and newsletter to be produced.

Engagement with Community Council and church representatives in relation to future options for **Inverurie Pictish symbol stones** to inform decision making.

Doors Open Day – Took place in the central area of Aberdeenshire with a hub in Inverurie to encourage residents and visitors to explore fascinating buildings and learn about the heritage of the area. Preparations have already commenced for **Doors Open Day 2017**

Aberdeenshire Local Access Forum – engagement with representatives from different interest groups to inform decisions on access and encourage support for responsible access behaviours.



ALOAF MEETING SITTYTON FARM

CHAPTER 3 - GOVERNANCE

CHAPTER 3A - EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

Project management principles continued to facilitate the Local Development Plan preparation and Elected Member engagement provided opportunity for Members to express their views on policies and allocations of the new LDP.

Legacy cases and the prevention of such remain an ongoing priority. With numbers greatly reduced the focus is on prevention through the Legacy Team being retained under a dedicated resource.

A major step forward in decision making efficiency was the official roll out of the Council's new Scheme of Governance and the 'standalone' Planning Scheme which gives greater clarity and understanding of the governance behind decision making. Strong collaboration and liaison continues with the relevant Services and Planning, always looking to improve on the decision making processes. Similarly external liaison continues in various formats.

Workload management is vital to maintain high standards of efficient and effective decision making along with relevant training of both Officers and Elected Members.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Key to our Local Development Plan preparation performance has been the role of the Area Committees, with each Area Committee being given the opportunity to consider and debate policy and allocations before they are presented to Infrastructure Services Committee and Full Council. A PRINCE II management style has been used.

While this is a time consuming process, it is one that the Planning Policy Team have managed successfully. Both the Forestry and Woodland Supplementary Guidance and the Special Landscape Areas Supplementary Guidance were subject to this process early in the 2016-2017 period, along with other policy advice produced

such as the [Town Centre Heath Checks](#) 2015. A clear and transparent process allows the views of Area Committees to be accurately recorded for the policies as they apply in their area for reference to the central Committees where, ultimately, decisions are made. Not all the views of the Area Committees were supported by Infrastructure Services Committee, or by Full Council, but it allows the scope of the debate held in these busy Committees to be focused only on the contentious issues.



DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Legacy Strategy

Legacy Team

The Legacy Team, which was set up in March 2015, continues to focus on existing cases which have been pending for over one year with a view to concluding them as quickly as possible.

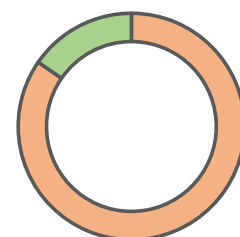
The table below shows how many legacy applications are outstanding as of the end of April 2017.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	TOTAL
No. of pending legacy cases at 30 April 2017	1	1	2	1	4	2	11

The work undertaken by the Legal Team with support from the Legacy Co-ordinator to push forward with S75 Agreements and complex land registry issues has been continuing over the last year. Regular meetings, improved communication between the Legal and Planning Teams, and lessons learned have increased the efficiency of concluding applications.

LEGACY CASES CONCLUDED SINCE OCT 2016

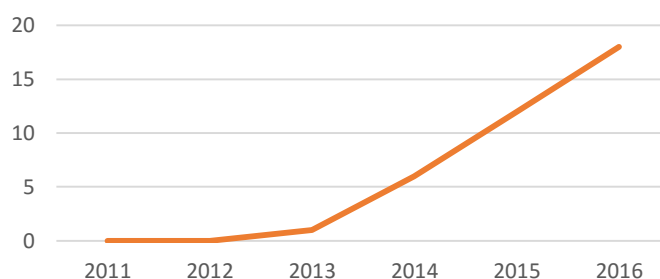
The majority of legacy applications since the beginning of October 2016 have been approved (79%), with only a few being refused or withdrawn. The chart below shows that the majority of the applications approved during this time have been through the process of agreeing and registering a S75 agreement.



■ with S75 agreement ■ without S75 agreement

There is a key focus in the Planning Teams to minimise future applications becoming 'legacy'. The graph below illustrates the increased use of processing agreements which has dramatically reduced the number of cases becoming legacy.

USE OF PROCESSING AGREEMENT CASES PENDING FOR OVER 1 YEAR



CASE STUDY 22A: AN EXAMPLE OF LEGACY PREVENTION

Two applications which were validated on the 23 September 2015 were considered within an appropriate timescale by the Case Officer. The applications were to be refused but have remained pending due to non-payment of advert fees. The Case Officer for these applications correctly applied the use of stop the clock during November 2015 whilst waiting for payment to be received, thus preventing them from becoming legacy cases. Repeated attempts have been made to contact the applicant and legal action is now being pursued in order to conclude these cases.

CASE STUDY 22B: NON-PAYMENT OF FEES CAUSING LEGACY CASES

Non-payment of advert fees has been identified as a cause for delay in concluding a small number of cases across the Aberdeenshire Council area. The Legacy Team and the Legal Team have worked together to produce a protocol for dealing with these situations and, having now dealt with a few of these cases, are able to identify the potential for delay and act quicker in order to prevent legacy cases from arising.

LIAISONS AND PROTOCOLS

Planning & Legal Governance

The regular programme of liaison meetings to facilitate joint working between the Planning Service and the Governance Team within the Legal and Governance Service continued. In 2016/17 this resulted in the following:-

- Producing a stand-alone Planning Scheme of Delegation as part of the Council's Governance Framework Review. This has been rolled out as part of the new Scheme of Governance.
 - Introducing an amendment to the Council's List of Delegated Powers to Officers to refuse planning applications where planning obligations are not concluded within defined timescales, and obtaining approval from Scottish Ministers.
 - Agreeing a new template letter for pursuing non-payment of advertising fees.
 - Delivering further training to Elected Members and Council Officers on the new Planning Pre-Application Process.
 - Agreeing a protocol for consultation responses from the Developer Obligations Team in respect of planning applications.
-

NEW SCHEME OF GOVERNANCE

The Council follow clear procedures to ensure that all decisions are lawful, accessible and transparent. These procedures are contained within the Scheme of Governance which is effective from 27 January 2017.

(Roll out of new Scheme of Governance)

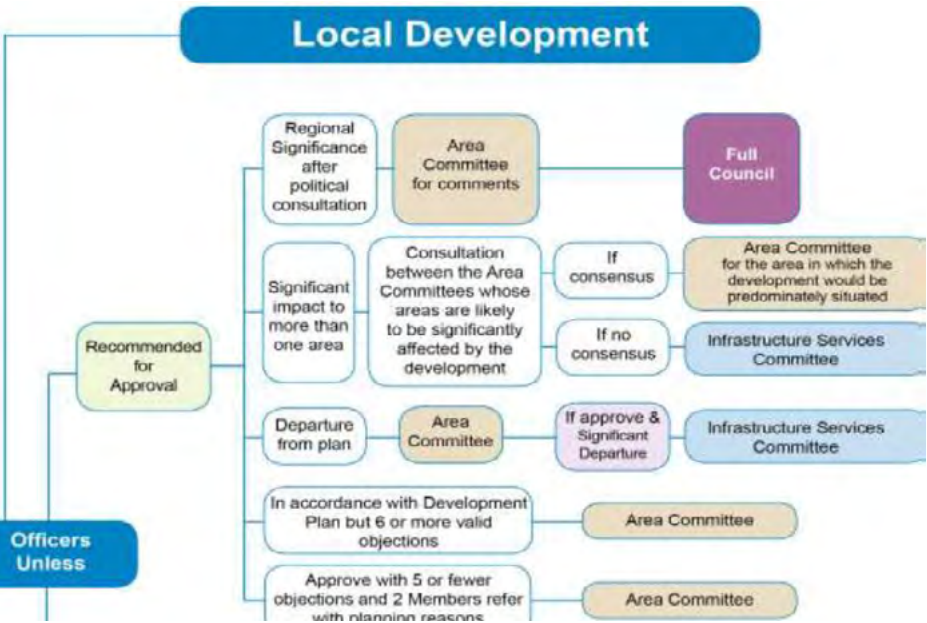


The Planning Service, working with colleagues from Legal & Governance, has now implemented a standalone List of Planning Delegations as part of the Council's wider review of its Scheme of Governance. This document sets out how planning applications and local development matters are dealt with by the Council; lists all delegations relating to the determination of planning applications including those powers reserved to Full Council; and also contains guidance on objections, material considerations and appeals. The purpose of the List of Planning Delegations was to produce a user friendly version of the Scheme of Delegation pertaining to Planning which could be better understood by Officers and the public alike.

SCHEME OF GOVERNANCE

PART 2C - PLANNING DELEGATIONS

An example of the ‘easy read’ information was the ‘[Decision making flowchart \(page 145\)](#)’, which clearly sets out the route of decision making in all areas.



CASE STUDY 23A - REPORT TEMPLATE REVIEW

An associated review of all Committee Report templates was carried out corporately in response to the new Scheme of Governance. The main aim was to ensure that Officers should be aware of the powers they have under the Scheme of Delegation and be explicit about which power is being exercised when undertaking duties.

As such where a Report now comes to Committee, the relevant power of the Committee (from the List of Committee Powers) to receive that Report should be contained within the Report.

Planning Reports required a different approach as planning templates differ, given the nature of reporting required to Committees. A Team Manager Group reviewed the planning templates, in liaison with colleagues from Legal, to ensure consistency, clarity and relevance

with regards to the required governance information, from the list of Committee powers and planning powers in the Scheme of Delegation.

Planning template

All Committee Report Templates have now been updated to include the relevant governance information and updated guidance has been produced on how to use the template. For example (Planning Committee Reports) includes various drop down options to ensure the correct reference is made to the relevant part of the Scheme of Governance that informs both the author, the recipient of the Report and the public as to exactly why a planning application is required to go to Committee.

Guidance

GOOD PRACTICE - GUIDANCE ON WHAT IS CONSIDERED A SIGNIFICANT DEPARTURE

(Please refer to page 151 in the linked document)

As part of creating the stand alone Development Management – Planning Delegations document, the opportunity was taken to clarify areas where difficulties had occurred in defining certain aspects of the decision-making process. One such issue was ‘what constitutes a ‘significant departure’? The route of decision making is dependent on whether a departure is significant or not and often the definition of this caused issues both for Officers and the public.

*All decisions made by Aberdeenshire Council are made in **accordance** with the Local Development Plan **unless** there are material **planning considerations** which outweigh the policy and are persuasive enough to justify a departure from policy. Each planning application has to be carefully considered against the policies and material considerations before the application can be determined. A proposed development may “tick all the boxes” in relation to most policies*

but not all. Decision makers must weigh each consideration and decide whether material considerations are enough to outweigh the policy.

*Some proposed developments would be **significantly contrary** to the Local Development Plan, irrespective of the application's place in the hierarchy of development. Officers cannot determine applications that are significantly contrary to the Plan and need to go to Full Council or Infrastructure Services Committee as appropriate.*

It is not possible to give a definition for a significant departure. Each application has to be considered on its own merits and so “significance” must be relevant to that application when weighed against the relevant policies.

(Extract from - Scheme of Governance
Part 2C - Planning Delegations - 27
January 2017)

GOVERNANCE CHAMPIONS

CASE STUDY 23B – NEW SCHEME OF GOVERNANCE – ENGAGEMENT, AWARENESS AND TRAINING

The Governance Champion for the Planning Service is responsible for ensuring that all Officers are fully aware of the new Scheme of Governance and how to use it on a daily basis. The Governance Champion formed part of the Project Team – Future Governance Officers’ Group that was set up to input and formulate the new Scheme of Governance. Each part of the Scheme of Governance was divided up and each Officer Group allocated to a particular aspect of the Scheme.

‘As the Governance Service Champion for Planning you have been involved with and witnessed first-hand the enormous project that has been ‘Future Governance’.

Feedback on the Scheme of Governance collaborative and inclusive approach:

“The engagement with the Service relating to the planning delegations document was excellent. Fortnightly meetings were held, advice was clear, precise and there was a true feeling of working together to ensure that the document is fit for purpose. The workshop engaged all Members and robust debate informed the final document. The new style document is a great improvement on what existed before. Officers, Elected Members and the public will all benefit from the work that the Team did.”

(Head of Planning & Building Standards)

CASE STUDY 23C – GOVERNANCE CHAMPIONS

The Planning Governance Champion was the Development Management Service Manager. It is the Champion’s role to deliver training to colleagues to enable an understanding of the Scheme of Governance, and an understanding on what, as Officers, they are empowered to do. A training session with the Planning Management Teams was carried out and this was cascaded to Managers and Team Managers to similarly train their teams. One of the Area Team Managers was co-opted on to the project team to lead on the Part 2C of the Scheme relating to Development Management.

Monitoring and review of the Scheme will continue with the relevant Champion and Team Manager being the point of contact for the Planning Service.

S of G Training - **Training Notes** and
Power Point

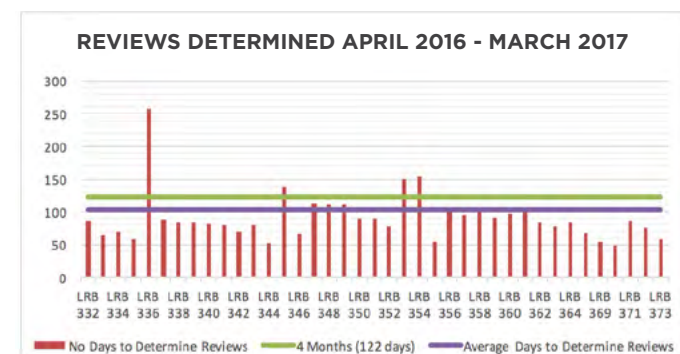
EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING BY ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL'S LOCAL REVIEW BODY (LRB)

CASE STUDY 24 - ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL - IMPROVING OUTCOMES - LOCAL REVIEW BODY

The number of submissions presented to the Local Review Body (LRB) for the period April 2016 to March 2017 was 43 in total and of those cases 39 have been determined, and the Review Decision Notices have been issued to the applicant/agent. Of the 39 Review Decision Notices issued by March 2017 89% met the Scottish Government performance target of 122 days which shows an improved performance from the previous year which was 86%. Of the 4 outstanding cases where Decision Notices were not issued within the period, 3 of those related to cases where the Planning Adviser sought advice from consultees on drafting planning conditions (these Notices have now been issued) and one is scheduled to be presented to the LRB meeting in June 2017.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/2016	2016/17
Received	52	61	53	43
Decision Notices Issued	49	60	53	39
Average Days	143	121	93	103
Under 122 days	19	39	46	35
% under 122 days	38%	65%	86%	89%

The average time taken to determine the 39 cases where Review Decision Notices have been issued was 103 days. Seven of those Reviews took more than the 103 average days to determine due to the LRB following further procedure by way of seeking additional information from consultees or external parties or, where a Notice of Intention had been issued which sought confirmation from the applicant/agent that Developer Obligations contributions had been paid, prior to the Review Decision Notice being issued. Four of those cases missed the Scottish Government 122 day target, however, this again was attributed to the LRB following further procedure to consult parties on additional information received, all of which was out-with the control of the LRB.



The table above shows four cases which exceeded the 122 determination period. LRB 336 was due to a combination of

seeking additional information and a site inspection and LRBs 345, 353 and 354 were due to seeking additional information which had to be the subject of consultation with all parties before that information could be presented to the LRB at a reconvened meeting.

The Local Review Body has undertaken 6 site inspections (with 3 of these being at one site) during 2016/17 which is a significant reduction from the previous year when 14 site inspections were carried out. This has reduced the time allocated to the work of the Local Review Body for Members and Officers and has helped to reduce delays. The reduction in site visits can be attributed to the significant reduction in Wind Turbine applications and to the introduction of new IT smart screens within meeting rooms which has enabled Local Review Body members to view better quality photo-montages of the application sites and surrounding areas. This has assisted them in determining applications rather than deferring applications for site visits.

The average number of days between the meeting and the site visit for each of the six cases was 21 days which is a significant improvement from the previous year 2015/16 which took an average of 40 days, and from 2014/2015 which took 53 days.

	MEETING DATE	SITE VISIT	NO DAYS
LRB 333	25/05/2016	17/06/2016	23
LRB 336	29/07/2016	26/08/2016	28
LRB 359	25/11/2016	16/12/2016	21
LRB 366	31/03/2017	19/04/2017	19
LRB 367	31/03/2017	19/04/2017	19
LRB 368	31/03/2017	19/04/2017	19
Average No	21.5	Total	129

The Local Review Body undertook a review of its operation during 2016/17, and considered how other Scottish Local Authorities administer their Local Review Body to see if best practice could be adopted. It was concluded that the current practice in Aberdeenshire replicated that of other Scottish Local Authorities, however, it was agreed that the LRB membership should change following the Local Government elections in 2017. This change would allow each Area Committee (6 in total) to nominate 1 substantive member and 1 substitute with a view to ensuring the substitute members become more involved in the work of the Local Review Body and that the workload is shared between all members to ensure a consistent approach to decision making.

Post PPF Reporting Period:

A new Local Review Body has now been appointed and any outstanding cases will be presented to a new Local Review Body at its first meeting in June 2017 following training sessions which will include training on the newly adopted Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan, 2017.

TRANSPORTATION/ROADS & PLANNING

Protocols/Liaison Groups.

The Council's Planning and Roads Teams regularly meet to review the integration of working practices and so ensure effective, efficient and consistent handling of planning applications. During the last year this has focussed on the Designing Streets national planning policy and resulted in a series of meetings with developers, agents and consulting engineers to share best practice and address any difficulties arising from the policy. These workshops are described in further detail in Chapter 2C and Case Study 18 above. A key consideration has been that the Council's Engineers should play a key role in the master planning of new developments from early in the life of the projects. This means that the streetscape can be designed out in a way which considers the safety and the practical considerations of how the street will be used and maintained. Strenuous efforts are being made by both Planning and Roads Teams to encourage developers to allow this early engagement with their designers.

(Refer to Pre application in action – Negotiation and Discussion in Chapter 2a – Open for Business)

Joint Review of RCC Checklist Planning/Roads Service

As per the agreed commitment following liaison with developers and agents the Services have undertaken a review of the checklist. The Roads Service have since reached agreement on the format of a RCC checklist which will be rolled out to developers to assist them with future RCC submissions. At this stage the Roads Service are trialling an internal checklist guide (based upon the principles of the Street Engineering Review (SER))/ QA checklist when commenting on the roads elements of planning applications. This approach is being applied to secure consistency in terms of the level of information requested by the Services and will be monitored and reviewed at a future Development Management/Transportation liaison meeting.

(Refer to PPF 2015-2016 Part 4A Service Improvements (Page 95))



CASE STUDY 25 – PLANNING/ ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH/ WASTE/FLOOD PREVENTION ENGAGEMENT

Case Study 25 collectively refers to the cross service engagement work that has been on-going between the Planning Service and Environmental Health, Waste and Flood Prevention. The following associated Case Studies **25a**, **25b** and **25c** cover the different elements of engagement and protocol creation.

CASE STUDY 25A - PLANNING - ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: REVIEW OF PROTOCOL

Following the roll out of the Development Management/Environmental Health (DM/EH) protocol in March 2016 work has continued to monitor and review the success of this. Version 2 is now in use following revisions and further work on the complaint management arrangements.

This protocol, internal training and further monitoring has resulted in improvements being achieved with an improvement from 50% (year 15/16) to 61.5% (year 16/17) of all applications having a consultation conclusion reached within the agreed period. Work continues in this regard and further inter-Service liaison continues.

Version 2 Protocol

PLANNING 25B – PLANNING – ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COMPLAINTS PROTOCOL

It has long been recognised that how Development Management and Environmental Health react and interact in terms of complaints was inconsistent. In this regard a small project team, under the guidance of a Senior Continuous Improvement Officer, was established to de-construct the various practices which existed and to redesign with the focus being on ensuring efficient use of resources and also delivering effective (where possible) resolution to complaints in as timeous a manner as possible.

The key improvements identified are:

- Early signposting of which Service (Planning or Environmental Health) will lead on the complaint whereas historically this has been ad hoc and inconsistent across the Council
- Timescales set out for each component part of the process
- A separate and distinct line of communication for responding to the applicant and the complainant. For instance specialist EH Officers will lead on detailed technical information and Planning will lead on responding and communicating with the complainant.
- Managing expectations of all parties involved.

Protocol

PLANNING CASE STUDY 25C – WASTE & FLOOD PREVENTION LIAISON & PROTOCOL

Recognising that Waste Management response rates had room to improve, from 24% of all consultations responded to within 14 days in calendar year 2015 to 66% of applications responded to in 14 days in calendar year 2016, management across both Services developed a protocol setting out criteria for pre-application engagement, responding to planning consultations and also the level of application the service wish to be consulted on. Work continues and in the coming months further reviewing of the protocol will take place.

Protocol

Flooding is a highly relevant issue following the aftermath of “Storm Frank” in January 2016. This has heightened awareness of flooding issues and partly as a consequence of this Development Management and Flood Prevention and Coastal Protection (FPCP) have worked on an inter-Service protocol. This protocol covers areas such as when the FPCP team wish to be consulted and their remit relative to SEPA. In the interests of improving performance and making efficiencies agreed parameters have been agreed in the areas of consultation, response rate targets and complaint management. It is hoped that in future we will be able to demonstrate a clear improvement in this regard.

Protocol

CAIRNGORM NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY (CNPA) ENGAGEMENT/JOINT WORKING

The CNPA Process was reviewed and refreshed to firstly form part of the Council’s new Scheme of Governance and also the Best Practice Manual

Joint Aberdeenshire/CNPA process

Planning applications in the Cairngorms National Park are decided by either the relevant Local Authority, in this case Aberdeenshire Council, or by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA). CNPA “calls in” and determines larger applications within the Park which raise a planning issue of general significance to the National Park aims. The call-in occurs within three weeks of receipt of notification from the Local Authority of a planning application.

If an application is “called in” CNPA Officers assess the proposal against the Cairngorms National Park Local Development Plan and make recommendations to the CNPA Planning Committee who make the final decision on the application.

For applications which are not “called in” Aberdeenshire Council Planning Officers determine the application using the delegated powers outlined above or make a recommendation to the local Area Committee.

There is a Planning Service Protocol in place between the Cairngorms National Park Authority and the 5 Local Authorities, including Aberdeenshire Council, which is regularly reviewed.

Liaison continues between the Planning Service and the CNPA. The annual Protocol meeting took place in January 2017 to review the adopted [CNPA/Councils Protocol](#).

Agenda

CNPA Liaison and Engagement

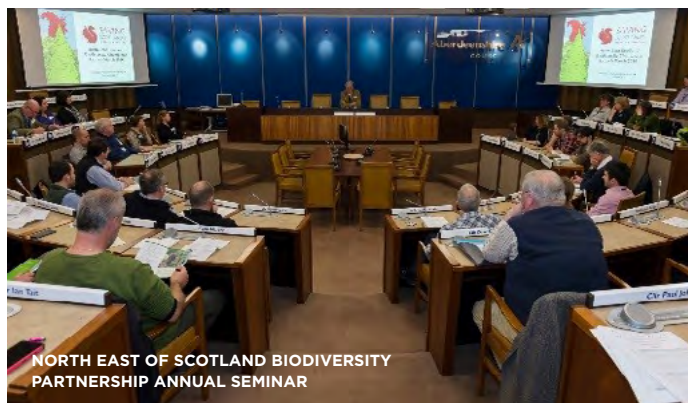
Following preparation of the new [Aberdeenshire Forestry and Woodland Strategy](#), there has been liaison with the Cairngorms National Park Authority as they begin to prepare strategies in relation to woodland and forestry. Lessons learned and approaches taken have been passed on, so as to aid their process and promote consistency across the region.

SNH and SEPA

Collaboration continues in various ways with SNH; in addition to the annual liaison meeting held this year, Council Ecologists met with the SNH Licensing Team and Bat Surveyors.

SEPA liaison continues through Northeast Local Advisory Group (flood risk management) and also through the river basin planning process in identifying Council assets considered a barrier to fish passage and priorities for removal.

Aberdeenshire Council is leading on the co-ordination of a LEADER funding bid for a wider co-operation project on the control of invasive species; both SNH and SEPA are partners on this, along with other organisations – including the Dee Catchment Partnership and various River Trusts.



NORTH EAST OF SCOTLAND BIODIVERSITY
PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL SEMINAR

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING EFFICIENT & EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING

- **Review of Tree Preservation Orders** (TPOs): continuing to work with colleagues in Legal Services to **review a total of 140 TPOs**. The Review process is now in its third phase, having agreed 12 revocations and re-served 36 TPOs. Aberdeenshire is one of the first Council's in Scotland to undertake a comprehensive Review of TPOs. Other Authorities are keen to learn from our experience and our approach and lessons learned have been shared at national professional group level.
 - Conservation Area Reviews: as described under Quality of Outcomes (Chapter 1a)
 - Continued review of Council Owned and Managed Assets (see Chapter 1b: High Quality Development on the Ground).
 - Continued review of Council Owned and Managed Paths (see Chapter 4 Continuous Improvement).
-

NATURAL HERITAGE - MAKING PROCESSES MORE EFFICIENT

European Protected Species – Process Refresh

Best practice continues to be applied as Aberdeenshire Council retains its reputation of adhering to legislation regarding bats and ensuring their protection from development. As part of the Best Practice Manual, the European Protected Species (EPS) process has been reviewed and refreshed in liaison with the Planning Environment Team. The aim was to make what is an already complex process more streamlined and efficient and allow Officers a full understanding of the process and how to apply it consistently and efficiently. This will now form part of the Best Practice Manual.

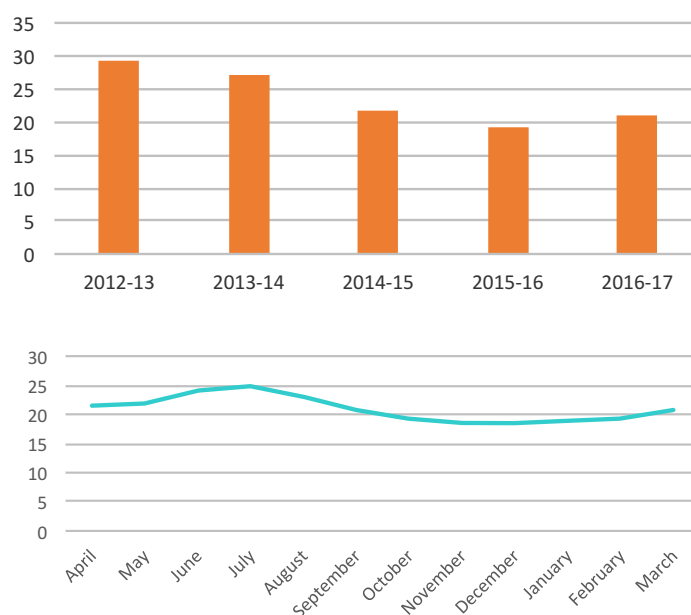
EFFECTIVE WORKLOAD DISTRIBUTION

The average workload per Case Officer has slightly increased to an average of 21 per Officer. This is just on the cusp of the recognised 'ideal' target of between 20-30 cases per Officer. Again this is a reflection of the economic conditions impacting upon the north east area. Being an average workload this does not necessarily reflect the actual case-load of any one Officer at any one time across the Area Teams nor the variations in staff turnover that have occurred throughout the reporting period. Again the flexibility of the Uniform system has proven extremely beneficial in ensuring case-load work can be distributed to where the greatest pressures occur, both in terms of application numbers, type and staff resources. Nor is there a reflection of other work that Officers have been undertaking in terms of project initiatives, reviewing of processes and procedures and pre application work.

From the latter part of the reporting year both application numbers and fees have increased.

AVERAGE CASELOAD PER PLANNER - 2016-17

Current No. Planners	35			32	32
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
No. Pending (End)	1028	943	761	619	667
Average per Planner	29	27	22	19	21



PERFORMANCE - FLEXIBLE RESOURCES

Again, through the reporting year the use of electronic work streaming has been invaluable to continue effective and efficient decision making. This was particularly relevant throughout specific periods of the reporting year where several Planner vacancies proved challenging.

The three Development Management Team Managers monitor workload and output. For a period in 2016/17 the Buchan and Formartine Team, which are based in Peterhead and Ellon, underwent substantial staff changes. These changes had a direct influence on the ability to effectively cover new cases.

In order to retain performance and keep case-loads manageable for the Officers remaining in the team during this transitional period, a number of applications were allocated to Kincardine & Mearns/Marr Team based in Stonehaven. The Officers tasked with these applications happened to have had previous experience of the Buchan and Formartine Area and had previously developed working relationships with agents within the area.

CASE STUDY 26 – BEING FLEXIBLE FOR PERFORMANCE

In terms of monitoring the Case Officers progress with the Buchan and Formartine applications, the use of Skype for Business software allowed Senior Planners to liaise with the Planning Officers while working from different bases thus saving time by allowing the Planner to discuss challenging issues with the Senior without having to travel long distances for a meeting. The Senior and Planner have been able to exchange views and discuss solutions in face to face Skype conversations while also visually sharing files. The combination of this technology, staff awareness and willingness to utilise the resources available to them means that performance is maintained and applications reach the correct outcome efficiently.

CHAPTER 3B - EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

Work has continued to ensure that our management structures are fit for purpose, from the way we operate across the geographical spread of the area offices and how we ensure structures are best placed and formed to serve our customers and deliver quality service.

The reporting year has brought further focus on recruitment and the ability to attract planning staff to the area. The Development Management Teams continue to be based in 5 area offices, along with Environment Planning colleagues. The other

elements of the Planning Service (Policy, Delivery/Information & Research and Strategic Delivery) are based at the Council's Headquarters. The Enforcement Team are all based in Inverurie. The embracing of Worksmart by the Planning Service is now accepted practice and all the teams utilise the opportunities that allow flexibility in working practices and patterns that wholly meet the needs of our business. Part of the success of flexible working is retaining strong lines of communication between all levels of the Service.

A variety of projects and initiatives have continued aiming to improve process and procedures and consistency in practice.

(Refer to Chapter 3a - Efficient and Effective Decision Making - Improvement Project and Initiative Strategy (Table) and Case Study 26 - Being Flexible for Performance)

CASE STUDY 27 - RECRUITMENT IN ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

Whilst staff numbers have been relatively stable over the last few years, the reporting period brought a period of staffing variation, change and uncertainty. At one point in the reporting period there were eleven planning vacancies. Obviously cognisance was given to budget constraints, but also maintaining performance. Both recent and previous experience had proven difficult in attracting Planners to the north east, particularly to the more northern areas. Through liaison with Recruitment and HR colleagues work was done in trying to recruit in different ways. Contact was made with relevant Universities and also the format and content of the initial advert was considered and enhanced. Micro sites were developed for each of the areas in Aberdeenshire where the area planning offices are based. These were to effectively 'sell' the areas to prospective candidates to better inform what was available and why a move to Aberdeenshire to work and live was of benefit.

All aspects of flexible working and Worksmart were also highlighted.

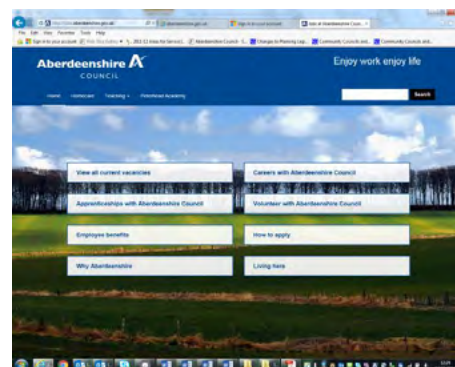
Currently the vacancies have come down to 3 fixed term posts and various new **Planning Officers** are now in post.

We are looking for Planners to join our Team:

Planning Officers

The area based Development Management Teams of the Planning Service, of which there are three covering Banff & Buchan/Garioch, Buchan/Formartine, and Kincardine & Mearns/Marr (Administrative Map) are responsible for dealing with all statutory functions in relation to development proposals submitted to the Council for planning permission. As one of the busiest Planning Authorities in Scotland, the Teams are performance driven in terms of efficiency in process and decision making, provision of customer care, and delivery of quality sustainable development.

Microsite



OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLANNERS

The following testimonial is from a relevantly recently recruited Planning Officer and demonstrates the opportunities available to Planning Officers within Aberdeenshire in terms of gaining experience, being given a wide range of interesting work and the ability to widen their experience within other areas and teams within the planning service. This testimonial will form part of an expanded recruitment drive to attract Planning Officers to the area.



James Hewitt
Planning Officer

I initially joined Aberdeenshire Council as a Planner within the Development Management Team for Buchan & Formartine in April 2015, having graduated from the University of Aberdeen with a degree in Geography and Spatial Planning. Working within a small but busy Development Management office provided me with ample opportunities to develop my skill set and knowledge base. The work was varied, ranging from house extensions and agricultural notifications to multi house developments and energy proposals. The team were key in guiding me through the challenges any new Planner faces, and overall the experience gave me a solid understanding and base from which to continue to grow.

More recently I have joined the Strategic Development Delivery Team within the Council. In my new post, the workload is varied and in addition to processing strategic / national applications, includes project work such as reviewing the Design Panel process within the Council. Without doubt, I would not have had the confidence, knowledge or skills to push myself to join this team without my earlier experience within the Buchan & Formartine Area Team and the overall supportive environment within the Service. While the work continues to be challenging, my experience with the Council has taught me – the bigger the challenge, the larger the opportunity.

CASE STUDY 28 - SHARING PRACTICES - PROVIDING A SERVICE

The Archaeology Service continues to provide specialist archaeological advice and assistance to Moray and Angus Councils through Service Level Agreements and a Shared Service Agreement with Aberdeen City Council. To support the various Planning functions annual training sessions are held with staff to ensure an understanding of policy changes, Condition wording, and how the teams work together during the process of managing archaeological mitigation works as an application progresses. For Aberdeen City Council trial on-site learning opportunities have been introduced for planning staff which consider design options for progressing development on sites involving archaeology. The approach taken by the team ensures consistent archaeological advice is provided across the north east of Scotland over four Councils, to the developer industry, and indeed to all landowners at a pre-application stage.

The Archaeology Service maintains the Sites and Monuments Record, more commonly referred to as the SMR, for Aberdeenshire, Angus and Moray Councils.

Access the [Aberdeenshire](#), [Angus](#) or [Moray](#) online summary SMR databases

Some projects by the Archaeology Service:

- [Masons' Marks Project](#)
 - [Aberdeenshire Historic Kirkyards](#)
 - [Buildings of Aberdeenshire: A Celebration](#)
 - [Kinnaird Head Castle](#)
-



KINNAIRD HEAD CASTLE

Effective Management Structures rely on good engagement and communication.

A suite of regular communications occurs within the Services, the Directorship and corporately, where feedback, information dissemination, information sharing, achievements, learning and networking all occur.

FORUM	FREQUENCY	OUTCOMES
Chief Executive Leadership Days	Twice yearly	Corporate messages 'One Council' – priorities and outcomes Cross-service collaboration Leadership actions Performance
Director Infrastructure Services Away Days	Every 4/5 months	Director information dissemination Budget priorities Inter-service sharing and collaboration Performance
Managers Away Days	Quarterly	Service actions Managerial feedback/ input Problem solving/ solution finding Performance
Regular Manager/Team Manager Meetings	3 weekly	Operational issues/ problem solving Staffing issues Project work, cross team working Feedback/dissemination of managerial/ service and corporate information Performance
Team Manager/Senior Meetings	Weekly	Performance monitoring Operational/application issues
Area Team Meetings	3-4 weekly	Performance reporting Feedback/dissemination of managerial, service and corporate information
One to Ones	Weekly	

Effective tools of communication

Work with other internal services and external bodies are referenced in other Chapters of the Planning Performance Framework.

Various communication tools allow better and more flexible and remote contact. Skype for Business has been further rolled out and now all telephone communication internally and externally is through Skype Business. Office 365 has been similarly rolled out to allow sharing of documents through One Note, One Drive and Share Point.

CHAPTER 3C – FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Fastidious monitoring of Service budgets continues with liaison between Director, Head of Service and Planning Managers to ensure tight control and review of their own budget lines. Each Manager has individual sessions and liaison with the Service's dedicated Accountant and the Accountant attends the Head of Service's Management Team meetings on a regular basis. This input is vital to feed into and implement the Council's Financial Strategy, and to reflect the ongoing pressures with likely focus on further savings.

Measuring performance continues to occur through the Council's Covalent System with Planning Managers and Team Managers responsible for the monitoring and updating of the system. Feedback to and scrutiny from Members ensures they are kept updated and have the ability to influence performance in a regular and transparent way.

Focus in this reporting period has been on the roll out of the new Scheme of Governance and, in particular, new arrangements for Procurement within the Council.

Performance measuring

Continues through the Covalent System and reporting to Elected Members through the Area Committees and the Infrastructure Services Committee (ISC).

[Garioch Area Committee Quarter 3 2016-2017 Performance Report \(Aberdeenshire Performs\)](#)

[Infrastructure Services Quarter 3 2016-2017 Performance Report \(Aberdeenshire Performs\)](#)

Performance Scrutiny

Following Performance Indicators being reported to Area Committees there may be actions to carry out, if Members query any aspect of performance. Team Managers and Seniors are responsible for performance monitoring and dealing with any subsequent Member requests.

An example of this is the [Garioch Area Committee](#) on the Quarter 3 performance statistics queried elements of planning performance:

GARIOCH AREA COMMITTEE OUTSTANDING BUSINESS (EXTRACT):

Provide clarification as to whether the staffing issues been resolved? (Ref ISSP5 SO5)

Planning and Building Standards – Comments refer to 3 measures, i.e.:-

5.3 The work undertaken to clear backlog as a result of staffing changes within the team has been a factor in this dip. The focus moving forward is to restore the determination levels in line with the higher level of performance consistently achieved in previous Quarters.

5.5 The level of performance in Quarter 4 has improved and is above the 55% Aberdeenshire target. Staffing changes within the team during this period has contributed in part to this dip however the use of staffing resources within the wider area team to manage workloads and performance levels has assisted in this upward trend during Q4.

5.7 "The improvement in this Quarter has been achieved during an ongoing period of staffing changes within the team. The overall performance is above the previous Quarter, notwithstanding the improvement achieved during this period measures remain in place to ensure that the distribution of work within the team is maintained at a manageable level. "

RESPONSE:

Staffing update in response to staffing issue associated with the Q3 performance:

The Garioch Area Development Management Team had two Planner vacancies during the Quarter 3 period. Following a recruitment process undertaken in January 2017 the vacancies have since been filled and the new members of staff are now in post. Since that time an additional Planner vacancy for a Fixed term period has arisen as a result of a member of the team undertaking a secondment opportunity to the Planning Policy Section. A recruitment process is presently underway and the Service are taking steps to fill the vacancy.

At the present time the team is operating with 5 Development Management Planners with assistance being provided by colleagues within the Banff & Buchan area part of the Team.

Performance is on all meeting agendas within Development Management:

- Management Team Meetings
- Team Managers Meetings
- Senior Meetings
- One to Ones – monitoring of performance with individual Officers is done using the Uniform Enterprise System.

CASE STUDY 29 - IMPROVED FINANCIAL AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT OF ENVIRONMENT CARS/TH PROJECTS

In line with the Council's commitment to robust financial management and continuous improvement an internal audit of the Portsoy Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) project took place following the project's completion in 2016. The audit included a comprehensive review of all the documents and available correspondence in relation to the management of the Scheme and examined the following areas: processes; authorities/permissions; document management; evidence of ownership and match funding; recording of meetings and decisions; recording risks and issues; monitoring and site visits; project reporting; payment systems and protocol and post project monitoring. All requested documents were available to evidence the required processes however the Audit did identify a number of areas for improvement, particularly in relation to document management for the overall project and individual projects in both CARS and Towns Heritage schemes. The Audit recommendations have been actioned by the creation of additional documentation and improved filing systems. These changes are now being rolled out in the implementation of the current CARS and TH schemes in Banff and Fraserburgh and should result in improved project and financial management.

(Refer to Chapter 1a - High Quality Development on the Ground - Aberdeenshire Placemaking - Built Heritage and Regeneration Investment Projects-)

FINANCIAL GOVERNANCE

Financial regulations provide the framework for managing the Council's financial affairs and apply to every member and employee of the Council or anyone acting on its behalf.

Aberdeenshire Council's Financial Regulations form part of the Council's overall Scheme of Governance which took effect from 27 January 2017.

It is the responsibility of planning management to ensure that all staff are fully aware of the financial regulations and their own responsibilities.

The new Scheme of Governance sets out the **Financial Regulations** in a clearer more user friendly format. This also includes new regulations in respect of procurement.



From mountain to sea

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



Scheme of Governance Part 3 – Financial Regulations

27 January 2017

Planning Fees

Planning fees have reduced this year, as was expected due to the economic downturn. During the latter part of the reporting year, both application numbers and fees were recording an upwards trend.

2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
2,628,409.36	2,942,711.01	2,515,000	2,108,350.78

Building Warrant Fees

2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
2,286,973.50	2,242,552.24	2,894,000	1,618,792.44



CHAPTER 4 - CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Policy Interpretation Notes – Revision Request Form

To request an amendment / update / addition to a Policy Interpretation Note, please complete this form and e-mail it to development@aberdeenshire.gov.uk, an annotated copy of the relevant PIN, may also be submitted along with this form. Acceptable forms of annotation are Inserted Comments or Track Changed Amendments. As these documents are read-only they will require to be saved and e-mailed.

Employee Details:	
Forename:	Click here to enter text
Surname:	Click here to enter text
Job Title:	Click here to enter text
Location:	Click here to enter text
Line Manager:	Click here to enter text

Please select PIN: [Please select a PIN from this dropdown list](#)

Details of Revision (please indicate the section number of the PIN):
Click here to enter text

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE IN POLICY INTERPRETATION

Development Plan practitioners have prepared a complete suite of “Policy Interpretation Notes” to assist Development Management Planners. These have gone live with the publication of the Plan that is now adopted by Aberdeenshire Council. Each sets out, in a standard format, the reasoning for the policy and the strict interpretation of the terms used to ensure that all the development management teams are working from a common understanding. The Policy Interpretation Notes are dynamic in nature to allow additional comments and interpretations to be added so as to keep them up to date in the light of changing circumstances over time.

(Refer to Case Study – Development Management using the Plan - Chapter 2a Open for business)

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

During the reporting period the Development Management teams experienced a sudden and largely unexpected downturn in staff numbers. The north east economic downturn undoubtedly played its part. Although recruitment to replace the vacancies took place, the Service took the opportunity to allow staff to develop and gain experience in other planning functions and thus secondment opportunities were offered to all staff in Development Management to move around either area teams or move into the Policy, Enforcement or Delivery and Information Teams. It is hoped that the perceived benefits of ‘growing your own’, experienced all round Planner will prove successful.

(Refer to Case Study 27- Recruitment in Aberdeenshire Council - Chapter 3b – Effective Management Structures)

CASE STUDY 30 – SECONDMENT OPPORTUNITY WITHIN THE PLANNING SERVICE

Aoife Murphy - Development Management to Planning Information and Delivery Team (PIDT)

I previously worked in Development Management for 3½ years before an opportunity arose to move to the Delivery Team on a secondment. The Delivery Team operate as a dedicated cross-service body working within Infrastructure Services, primarily tasked with working with industry/ services to aid the progression and delivery of allocated sites identified within the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP). This is in addition to acting as the main single point of contact for the development industry, which increasingly use the Team as a first point of contact to resolve a variety of issues, which may impact upon the delivery of the sites allocated in the LDP.

During my time in Development Management I dealt with a wider variety of applications ranging from minor extensions to more complex proposals. Although I thoroughly enjoy working in that area of planning I had a number of reasons for wanting to make the change. These included developing my career within planning by developing skills such as project management, working more closely with internal services, e.g. Policy and stakeholders to gain insight into issues or challenges. There is also the opportunity to undertake more practical work by using the Property Investment Fund to enhance buildings, and getting a wider view of Planning on the region of Aberdeenshire rather than focusing on a smaller administrative area.

I have now been in the post for 3 months as of May 2017 and I believe that having Development Management experience helps me in my new role in a number of ways. A large part of the work I do looks at the allocated sites within the



current LDP and help progress them to a deliverable stage. This involves facilitating meetings with stakeholders and being able to discuss the constraints that may be causing some issue. This work differs from Development Management in that I am no longer assessing planning applications or focusing on a specific area, but having a background in Development Management means that I have a good knowledge of such constraints which aids me when trying to find solutions.

Other work I have been involved in during my first 3 months with the PIDT include working on the 4 regeneration towns identified by the LDP, engaging with property owners in order for them to receive grant money from the Property Investment Fund in order to bring their building back into use and compiling development briefs for potential development sites that may be brought forward by Aberdeenshire Council in its role as a facilitator of development.

So far I have found this opportunity to be beneficial to me and my career in planning. My knowledge of Aberdeenshire has grown as I am now looking at development proposals in a different way and seeing the overall benefit to Aberdeenshire rather than just viewing projects in isolation. I will have a varied workload and will not just focus on the Development Management aspect of planning. In addition I believe that this opportunity will benefit the Council's Planning Service as I will be able to use the knowledge I have gained from Development Management in my new role. I will have an improved skill set and greater experience when I return to Development Management at the end of my secondment.

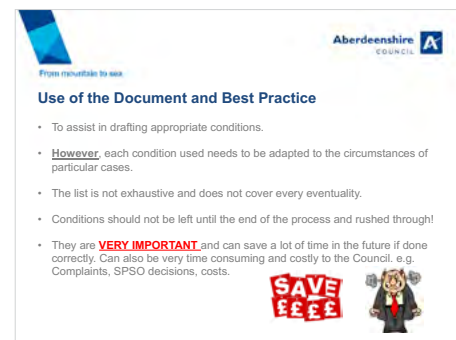
CASE STUDY 31 - DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING DAY

Both the requirement for the continuous development of staff and the opportunity for all area staff to meet up, given the wide geographical spread of the teams, a training day for all Development Management is considered very important. One such event took place during the reporting year. Held in the headquarters (Council Chamber) it aimed to cover relevant topics, as well as issues of importance and interest.

The Agenda covered a wide range of topics, with two interactive sessions included:

- [Local Development Plan Update](#)
- [Local Review Body in Aberdeenshire](#)
- [Developer Obligations – aims and objectives of team, processes, procedure reviews](#)
- [Private Water Supplies – Environmental Health and Planning requirements](#)
- [Model Conditions in Practice – Interactive Workshop](#)
- Quiz

MODEL CONDITIONS SESSION

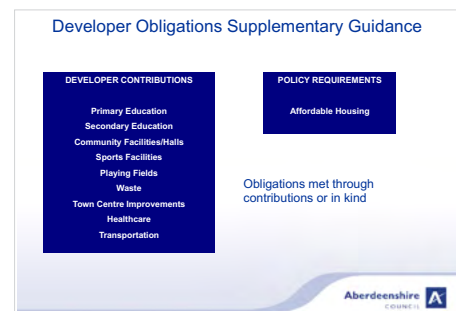


Use of the Document and Best Practice

- To assist in drafting appropriate conditions.
- **However**, each condition used needs to be adapted to the circumstances of particular cases.
- The list is not exhaustive and does not cover every eventuality.
- Conditions should not be left until the end of the process and rushed through!
- They are **VERY IMPORTANT** and can save a lot of time in the future if done correctly. Can also be very time consuming and costly to the Council. e.g. Complaints, SPSO decisions, costs.

SAVE ££££

DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS SESSION



Developer Obligations Supplementary Guidance

DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

- Primary Education
- Secondary Education
- Community Facilities/Halls
- Sports Facilities
- Playing Fields
- Waste
- Town Centre Improvements
- Healthcare
- Transportation

POLICY REQUIREMENTS

- Affordable Housing

Obligations met through contributions or in kind

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING TEAM – CONTINUING TO IMPROVE

- Continuous improvement project ongoing in respect of Council owned non-operational assets. (Refer to Chapter 1 – Quality of Outcomes – Other Built Heritage Projects (HAMP))
- Completion of Silver 'KDI' (improvement project) in respect of Council owned and managed paths
- Completion of Access Strategy
- Online applications in respect of Works to Protected Trees continues to enable tracking of applications
- Ongoing review of TPOs: 51 out of 141 TPOs reviewed
- Provision of internal training and Depot Tool Box talks to ensure that protected species are considered in work carried out by the Local Authority across all Services – including Housing and Property Services.
- Identification of Councillor Biodiversity Champions to raise awareness of range of species, habitats and projects
- Completion of internal protocol and staff guidance for Prior Notifications and Prior Approval Processes for Agricultural, Forestry Biomass, Private Ways and Buildings.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT STAFF TRAINING

All [training is recorded and monitored](#). Reminders of the need for compulsory training and the need to renew training is sent to Managers on a regular basis.

EARS

Personal training plans continue to be done on an annual basis through the staff appraisal EARS reviews. (Employee Annual Review). Each plan is used throughout the year with each member of staff as they look to continually improve their knowledge and experience both as an individual professional and for the benefit of the Service.

ALDO

All staff are required to carry out compulsory training. The Data Protection Act Awareness Course & Refresher Course is compulsory training and staff are monitored to ensure they have

carried out the training and that this is kept up to date.

New and updated HR policies are expected to be fully adhered to and bespoke training is arranged. A training course on Attendance Management has been organised for all managers.

LEGAL

A training event in the early part of the reporting year took together all staff in planning and the Conveyancing part of Legal Services. This enabled each Service to meet and find out respective roles and any improved collaboration that could occur to improve service output and performance.

WORKING GROUPS

As reported throughout the PPF document various working groups have been set up within Development Management to carry out and implement various projects and initiatives. This has enabled Officers to be empowered in making decisions and leading and supervising projects. (Refer to Chapter 2b – Certainty – Improvement Project and Initiative Strategy).

BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking has continued in various guises with other Local Authorities. Some major benchmarking has been necessary with Aberdeen City to deal with the Strategic Transport Fund challenge. Other sharing of information on costing of services, Section 42 processes and prior notification has occurred.



PART 2: SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Part 2 of this Report was compiled, drawing on evidence from the following sources:

All supporting evidence has been integrated within the body of the text by use of hyperlinks to relevant documents, websites and information.



PART 3A: SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS 2017-18

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE IN POLICY INTERPRETATION

In the coming year we will:

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

- Undertake comprehensive training on the new Local Development Plan with Elected Members to emphasise the key changes that have occurred since 2012.
- Work with an Elected Member Steering Group to inform the approach to be taken for policy in the next Local Development Plan.
- Work with development stakeholders and infrastructure providers on a means of assessment of information required to accompany bids for development to the Plan.
- Develop and implement a robust monitoring scheme for the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 to ensure that any unforeseen consequences of the Plan are identified and picked up in sufficient time to inform the next Plan.
- Publish a revised version and resolve comments on Supplementary Guidance No. 7 Developer Obligations following comments made by the Reporters in the Report of the Examination.
- Develop and publish Planning Advice on the detail of Policy C1 Using Resources in buildings. This would consider specifically the standards that would apply and where exceptions might be made including to take account of financial viability. The guidance will also set out the circumstances and timescales in applying an increase in the target for low or zero carbon generating technologies and the parameters for assessing the feasibility of district heating schemes in major developments.
- Implement a revised web-based vehicle for the promotion of the content of the Plan, using the Story Map product to deliver quality Development Plan information.
- Undertake Town Centre Health-checks on 11 major town centres in the area, including an element of community engagement.
- Undertake a root and branch assessment of the need and demand for housing land in Aberdeenshire to resolve issues associated with development land allocations following past practice (i.e. what has been in past plans) rather than meeting both developers and community aspirations.
- Undertake place based assessments of 60-70 of our settlements, working with communities to identify land use planning actions that should be taken forward in the forthcoming plan to meet community objectives. Part of this process will be the development of Place Standard assessments the outcomes of which will be shared with other relevant Services.

- Develop and implement a programme of work to inform and build upon the Heat network map in Aberdeenshire to increase knowledge of planning to maximise the use of currently redundant heat sources.

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING

- Historic Assets Management Project: continue agreed programme of maintenance and repair of Council owned structures
- Complete at least 3 further Conservation Area Reviews: Roanheads, Crovie and Gardenstown
- Fraserburgh CARS/THI:
 1. Delivery of Saltoun Square project
 2. Acquisition of former John Trail building and project development
 3. Initiation of one further other priority project
 4. Delivery of 5 Small Grants projects
 5. Appointment of young people as apprentices and establishment of training programme for contractors, conservation professionals and property owners.
- Banff CARS:
 1. Complete renovation of the Smiddy to create a Silver Smith Centre
 2. Support the North East Scotland Preservation Trust to secure ownership of priority buildings
 3. Develop funding for 49-53 Bridge Street and 18-20 Low Street
 4. Commence restoration of 1A Carmelite Street,
 5. Secure repair of Tollbooth Hotel.
- Review of Tree Preservation Orders:
 1. Undertake Phase 3; involving surveying and assessing 30 existing TPOs and proposing revocations and re-serving of TPOs as appropriate,
 2. Identify and select TPOs for inclusion in Phase 4.
- Adopt completed Forest and Woodland strategy as supplementary guidance to Local Development Plan
- Access: deliver access improvements across Aberdeenshire in accordance with agreed programme. Including missing link in Deeside Way.
- Access: work with community groups to take forward volunteering initiatives.
- Run a number of workshops to support community led path developments
- Complete review of key strategies for Historic and Natural Environments.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT IN THE COMING YEAR WE WILL:

CONTINUING (FURTHER IMPROVEMENT) / CONTINUED (NOT COMPLETE) / NEW

OPEN FOR BUSINESS	HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND
- New Commitment – Section 75 Legal/Planning improvement project - Continued Commitment – Masterplan process Review (on-going)	New Commitment – Design Panel process Review
CERTAINTY	COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
- New/Continued Commitment – Pre application & Major Application process review - Continued Commitment – Enforcement Policy - Continued Commitment – Prepare a Member and Area Committee Protocol for Enforcement - New Commitment – Develop the Planning Enforcement content on Council's website - New Commitment – Develop Relations with Procurator Fiscal Office – Collaboration and Liaison	- Carry out further Customer Surveys once yearly - New Commitment – Re-focus on Community Council Engagement - New Commitment – Achieve Service Excellence status for Development Management - New Commitment – Implement Site Visit technology
EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING	EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES
Continued Commitment – STC review	
GOVERNANCE	COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

PLANNING PERFORMANCE TARGETS *	PLANNING PERFORMANCE TARGETS *
Average Timescales: - Major Applications – Achieve an average of 35 weeks - Local Applications – Achieve an average of 11 weeks - Household Applications – Achieve an average of 6 weeks - Other Applications – Achieve an average of 8 weeks - Measurement of outputs and measurable targets for Customer Surveys to be applied**** - E Planning Online Submission – Achieve 90% of customers submitting on line applications.	% Within 2 Months : - All Planning Applications – Determine 70% within 2 months - Non Householder Applications – Determine 65% within 2 months - Householder Applications – Determine 95% within 2 months - Processing Agreements – 100% major applications subject to a Processing Agreement **Legal Agreements – Achieve an average of 32 weeks - Legacy Applications: - Reduce pre 2009 to 0 - Reduce Overall (post 2009) by 50%

*Subject to Target

**Based on Benchmarking Performance

*** Carry forward from 2015/16 TO 2016/17

**** Measurable Targets and Outputs

PART 3B: DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS IN 2016-17:

DELIVERY OF OUR IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS COMMITTED IN 2015-2016

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

COMMITTED IMPROVEMENTS AND ACTIONS	COMPLETE?	
Completion of "How was it for you"	No	Majority of components of the study completed within schedule. Still progressing final report for publication in May 2017
Review of the On-Line Local Development Plan provision	Yes	Review undertaken and Story Map product identified for on-line Local Development Plan

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING

COMMITTED IMPROVEMENTS AND ACTIONS	COMPLETE?
Paths KDI – continue implementation, investigating opportunities to work with community groups to take maintenance responsibility.	Yes
Access Strategy– to be finalised.	Yes
Complete Historic Assets Management Project and embark on agreed programme of maintenance and repair of council owned structures.	Yes
Complete Phase 2 of TPO Review and commence Phase 3.	Yes
Complete at least three Conservation Area reviews/designations (Buchanhaven, Ardmore Distillery and Kennethmont, Stonehaven).	Yes
Fraserburgh – CARS/TH to begin July 2016, delivering restoration projects for key historic properties in the town centre, including conservation and renovation work to 1 Saltoun Square.	Yes
Banff CARS – Silversmith Centre to be completed;; other priority projects to be developed and further small grants to be delivered.	No
Portsoy CARS – project to be completed June 2016.	Yes
Complete review of key Strategies for Historic and Natural environments.	No

DELIVERY OF OUR IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS COMMITTED IN 2015-2016

GREEN - COMPLETE AMBER - PARTIAL COMPLETION RED - NOT COMPLETE BLUE - CONTINUED

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

OPEN FOR BUSINESS	COMPLETE	HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND	COMPLETE
- Continue to focus on significantly improving the performance of Major Applications * - Continue to work with Legal Services through implementation of their Programme of Actions significantly to improve Section 75 delivery timescales* - Improvement project	- Partial - improvement but still need for further improvement - YES work continues - Elements of improvement		
CERTAINTY	COMPLETE	COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE	COMPLETE
Enforcement - Prepare a Member and Area Committee Briefing Protocol for Enforcement *** - Finalise Enforcement Policy *** - Prepare Enforcement Priority System - Target and promote E Planning to 40% customers not currently using E Planning - Review Major Application Process ***	- NO - NO - YES - YES - >80% now using on line portal - Partial - on-going	- Carry out further Customer Surveys once yearly - Targeted engagement with Consultees - Flooding & Coastal Protection/Waste Service	- YES - YES
EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING	COMPLETE	EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES	COMPLETE
- Joint Review of RCC Checklist Planning/Roads Service - Review of use of Stop the Clock ***	- YES - Partial - on-going		

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE	COMPLETE	CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	COMPLETE
		Continue to Benchmark other authorities.	YES
PLANNING PERFORMANCE TARGETS	ACHIEVED	PLANNING PERFORMANCE TARGETS	ACHIEVED
Average Timescales: - Major Applications - Achieve an average of 35 weeks - Local Applications - Achieve an average of 11 weeks - Household Applications - Achieve an average of 6 weeks - Other Applications - Achieve an average of 8 weeks - Measurement of outputs and measurable targets for Customer Surveys to be applied**** - E Planning Online Submission - 65% of customers submitting on line applications.	77.8 (Improvement) 9.9 (Improvement) 6.7 (Improvement) 7.8 (Improvement) - YES 80%+ (Improvement)	% Within 2 Months : - All Planning Applications - Determine 70% within 2 months - Non Householder Applications - Determine 65% within 2 months - Householder Applications - Determine 95% within 2 months - Processing Agreements - 100% major applications subject to a Processing Agreement **Legal Agreements - Achieve an average of 32 weeks - Legacy Applications - Reduce pre 2009 to 0 - Reduce Overall (post 2009) by 50%	89.6/8.6 (Improvement) 84.9 (Improvement) 96.1 (down by 0.1) 73% (Improvement) - Major Application - 125 Average Weeks (Improvement) - Local - 15 Average Weeks (Note below) 0 43 remaining - 6%

*Subject to Target

**Based on Benchmarking Performance

*** Carry forward from 2015/16 TO 2016/17

**** Measurable Targets and Outputs

Note - Section 69 Legal Agreements now being recorded along with Section 75 - cannot be compared to 2015-16.

PART 4: NATIONAL HEADLINE INDICATORS (NHIS)



KEY OUTCOMES	2015-16	2016-2017
Development Planning: - Age of local/strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i> - Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? - Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? - Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	3 years and 3 months SDP 2 years Yes No Yes	4 years and 10 months SDP 3 years Yes No Yes

KEY OUTCOMES	2015-16		2016-2017		
EFFECTIVE LAND SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF OUTPUTS	AHMA	RHMA	AHMA	RHMA	NOTES
Established Land Supply	33,821 units	13,084 units	33,821 units	13,084 units	Note 1
5 year effective housing land supply	11,250 units	3,510 units	11,250 units	3,510 units	Note 1
5 year housing supply target	7,668 units	3,271 units	7,668 units	3,271 units	Note 1
5 year effective housing land supply	7.3 years	5.4 years	7.3 years	5.4 years	Note 1
Housing approvals	2,512 units		2,281 units		Note 2
Housing completions over the last 5 years	5,831 units		5,831 units		Note 3
Marketable employment land supply	341 ha		341 ha		Note 4
Employment land take-up during reporting year	16.1 ha		9 ha		Note 4

NOTE 1

There is no change since 2015/16 because the 2016 Housing Land Audit remains the most up to date source of approved figures. Housing land supply figures are not available for Aberdeenshire, only for Housing Market Area (HMAs) as required by the Strategic Development Plan. The Aberdeen HMA includes Aberdeen City.

There is currently 7.3 yrs. worth of effective housing land in the Aberdeen HMA, demonstrating the generous supply provided by allocations in the Strategic Development Plan and Local Development Plan and sites are continuing to progress. There are however signs that development rates on some sites are slowing to reflect the current market situation which continues to be negatively influenced by difficulties in the oil and gas sector.

In the Rural HMA there is 5.5 yrs. worth of effective housing land. The extent of the effective supply in the Rural HMA is primarily limited by low demand in parts of the area which affects the number of units which can reasonably be expected to come forward within five years. As

a result, only a small amount of the total land available appears in the five year supply. There are many more sites in the post five year effective supply (3,675 units) which could come forward earlier if required. In addition, there are almost 3,000 units constrained only by marketability and which could become effective if demand picks up.

Source: Housing Land Audit 2016. Figures correct as at 1 January 2016

NOTE 2

The number of housing approvals in Aberdeenshire has been decreasing over the last couple of years and stands at 2,281 for 2016/17. This is likely to be a reflection of the changing local economic and market conditions.

Source: Uniform Housing Approvals April 2016 – March 2017

NOTE 3

There is no change since 2015/16 because the 2016 Housing Land Audit remains the most up to date source of approved figures.

There were 1,316 completions in

Aberdeenshire in 2015. Over the last five years 3,320 units were built in the Aberdeenshire part of the Aberdeen HMA and 2,463 in the Rural HMA.

Source: Housing Land Audit 2016. Figures correct as at 1 January 2016

NOTE 4

The marketable employment supply in Aberdeenshire has remained the same as in 2015-16 and remains well in excess of Strategic Development Plan targets. Of this marketable land, 70 ha is classed as being immediately available, an increase of 10 ha since last year.

Take-up of employment land over the year was 9 ha, a significant fall from the previous year and lower than the 15 ha average of recent years. This may reflect difficulties in the market given the current economic situation in the area but it may just be a timing issue as there are currently 13 ha under construction, a significant increase from the previous year.

Source: Employment Land Audit 2015/16. Figures correct as at 1 April 2016

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT	2016-2017	2015-2016
Project Planning - Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice - Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	15% (394) 16 (73%)	10% (322) 7 (32%)
Decision-making - Application approval rate - Delegation rate	94% 92%	94% 91%
Validation Percentage of applications valid upon receipt	26%	32%
Case Officers – see Note 1 *Number of applications per case officer - Major - Local - Householder	21	19
Decision-making timescales Average number of weeks to decision: - Major developments - Local developments (non-householder) - Householder developments	77.8 9.9 6.7	86.3 14.1 6.8
Legacy Cases - Number cleared during reporting period - Number remaining	61 43	86 43
Enforcement Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed (months) Requirement: <i>review every 2 years</i>	March 2017	February 2015

Text box: short contextual statement – focus on reasons/factors which have influenced performance and any increase/decrease

Note 1 – this is the average number of applications per case officer. [Refer to Chapter 3A Efficient and Effective Decision Making – Effective Workload Distribution.](#)

PART 5:

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A: DECISION-MAKING TIMESCALES (BASED ON 'ALL APPLICATIONS' TIMESCALES)

CATEGORY	TOTAL NUMBER OF DECISIONS 2016-2017	AVERAGE TIMESCALE (WEEKS)	
		2016-2017	2015-2016
Major developments	6	77.8	86.3
Local developments (non-householder)			
• Local: less than 2 months	945	7.2	7.2
• Local: more than 2 months	168	25.3	27.4
Householder developments			
• Local: less than 2 months	761	6.4	6.3
• Local: more than 2 months	31	14.1	14.4
Housing developments			
Major	1	40.9	142.2
Local housing developments			
• Local: less than 2 months	384	7.5	7.4
• Local: more than 2 months	104	29.2	26.0
Business and industry			
Major	3	102.3	62.6
Local business and industry			
• Local: less than 2 months	94	6.8	7.0
• Local: more than 2 months	15	21.8	30.2
EIA developments	1	6.6	55.5
Other consents*	241	7.8	8.3
Planning/legal agreements**			
• Major: average time	3	125.0	160.2
• Local: average time	222	15.0	55.7
Local reviews	42	13.1	15.3

* Consents and certificates: Listed buildings and Conservation area consents, Control of Advertisement consents, Hazardous Substances consents, Established Use Certificates, certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development, notification on overhead electricity lines, notifications and directions under GPDO Parts 6 & relating to agricultural and forestry development and applications for prior approval by Coal Authority or licensed operator under classes 60 & 62 of the GPDO.

** Legal obligations associated with a planning permission; concluded under section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 or section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973

B: DECISION-MAKING: LOCAL REVIEWS AND APPEALS

TYPE	TOTAL NUMBER OF DECISIONS	ORIGINAL DECISION UPHELD			
		2016-2017		2015-2016	
		NO. %	2015-2016	No.	%
Local reviews	42	30	71.4	51	81%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	23	12	52	23	46%

C: ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

	2016-2017	2015-2016
Complaints lodged		
Cases taken up	486	674
Breaches identified	-	-
Cases resolved	436	1050
Notices served***	51	53
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

*** Enforcement notices; breach of condition notices; planning contravention notices; stop notices; temporary stop notices; fixed penalty notices, and Section 33 notices.

D: CONTEXT

Performance, the reasons, factors and influences for increase/decrease is embodied and is identified throughout the PPF 2016-17.

PART 6: WORKFORCE INFORMATION

The information requested in this section is an integral part of providing the context for the information in parts 1-5. Staffing information should be a snapshot of the position on 31 March.

	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3	TIER 4
Head of Planning Service	1	1	1	2.8 + 7

Note: Tier 1 = Chief Executive, Tier 2 = Directors, Tier 3 = Heads of Service, Tier 4 = Managers

		DM	DP	ENFORCEMENT	OTHER
Managers	No. Posts	1 + 4	1 + 2	1	1 + 2
	Vacant	0	0	0	1
Main Grade Posts	No. Posts	34.5	13.9	6	32
	Vacant	1	2	0	0
Technician	No. Posts	18	0	0	0
	Vacant	0	0	0	0
Office Support/ Clerical	No. Posts	18.6	3	3	1.6
	Vacant	2.4	0	0	0.7
TOTAL		79.5	21.9	8	38.3

Note: Managers are those staff responsible for the operational management of a team/division. They are not necessarily line managers.

STAFF AGE PROFILE	NUMBER	COMMITTEE & SITE VISITS*	NUMBER PER YEAR
Under 30	26	Full council meetings	10
30-39	31	Infrastructure Services Committee (ISC)*	8
40-49	35	Area committees (where relevant)**	83
50 and over	57	Committee site visits***	48 (Area) + 1 (ISC)
		Pre- Determination Hearing (PDH)	2
		LRB****	13
		LRB site visits	5

Notes:

* Aberdeenshire Council have an Infrastructure Service Committee which deals with matters of policy. Some planning applications (significant departures from policy) are considered at that committee.

**Aberdeenshire Council have 6 Area Committees. These deal with area business including planning matters.

*** Committee site visits also include visits associated with Pre Determination Hearings

***This relates to the number of meetings of the LRB. The numbers of applications going to LRB are reported elsewhere.

COSTS

	ACTUAL	DIRECT*	INDIRECT	INCOME
Development Management	3,400	2,535	865	2,108
Development Planning	667	498	169	
Enforcement	221	165	56	
	4,288	3,198	1,090	2,108

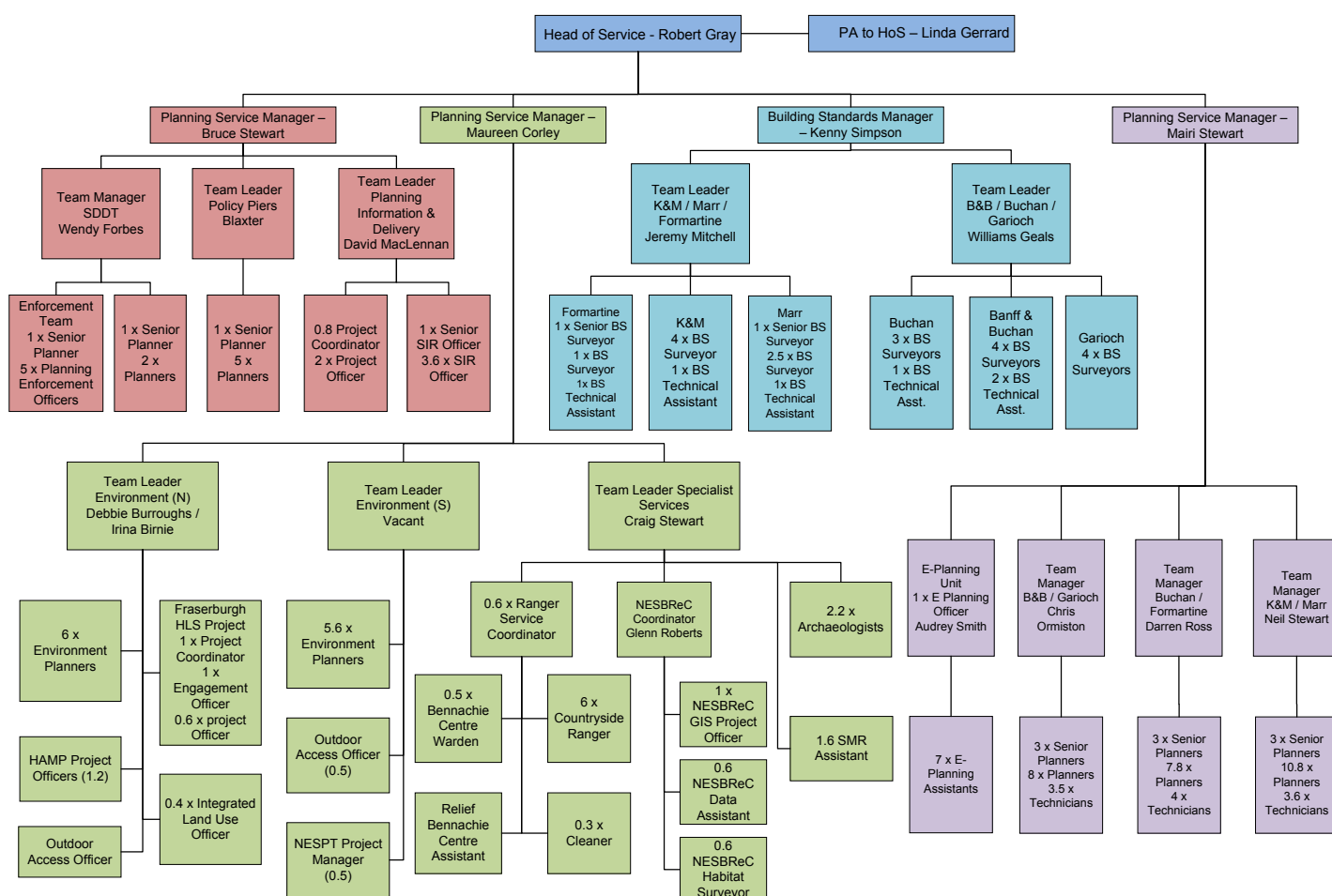


APPENDIX 1:

ORGANOGRAM

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

- PLANNING & BUILDING STANDARDS





www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk