

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

2014/2015



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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"

FORWARD

Welcome to our Planning Performance Framework which reports on a year of significant improvement following the transformational changes that occurred during 2013/14 within the Planning Service. This involved a particular focus within the Development Management function. A new staffing structure in parallel with an updated business system and the advent of a fully integrated system approach to e planning has quickly reaped benefits in both performance and service delivery.



STEPHEN ARCHER –
DIRECTOR OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

The buoyant economic climate within the north east of Scotland continued throughout this period and was again reflected in the volume of planning applications received and subsequently determined, being amongst the highest in Scotland. Similarly a significant increase in the effective housing land supply reflects the continued progress in the delivery of the Local Development Plan (LDP) allocations and the successful implementation of the growth strategy of the Strategic Development Plan (SDP).

Aberdeenshire remains robust and open for business as the Energetica programme continues to attract businesses to a high quality natural and built coastline. Similarly Aberdeenshire continues to attract national and major projects covering business, industry and energy in and around the Peterhead area.

Continuous improvement has been recorded through implementation of the key service objectives of the Service Plan and the Improving Performance Strategy. Although overall timescales for determination of applications have improved there is no room to be complacent. There is still significant room for improvement in the decision making timescales for major applications and associated legal agreements. Improvements in the delivery of local applications continue and the focus remains on retaining the climate of certainty and confidence for the customers of Aberdeenshire's planning service. I am also happy to report that the legacy strategy is proving to be successful as legacy cases reduce. Prevention has to be built in to ensure backlogs do not return and this is reliant on the increased use of Processing Agreements, quicker legal

timescales and the continuation of the all-round improvement of decision making.

Improvement and change however can only be successfully delivered and sustained with the right people. Our staff provide a high quality of skill and professionalism within what is now a modern and agile service considered fit for purpose for the future.

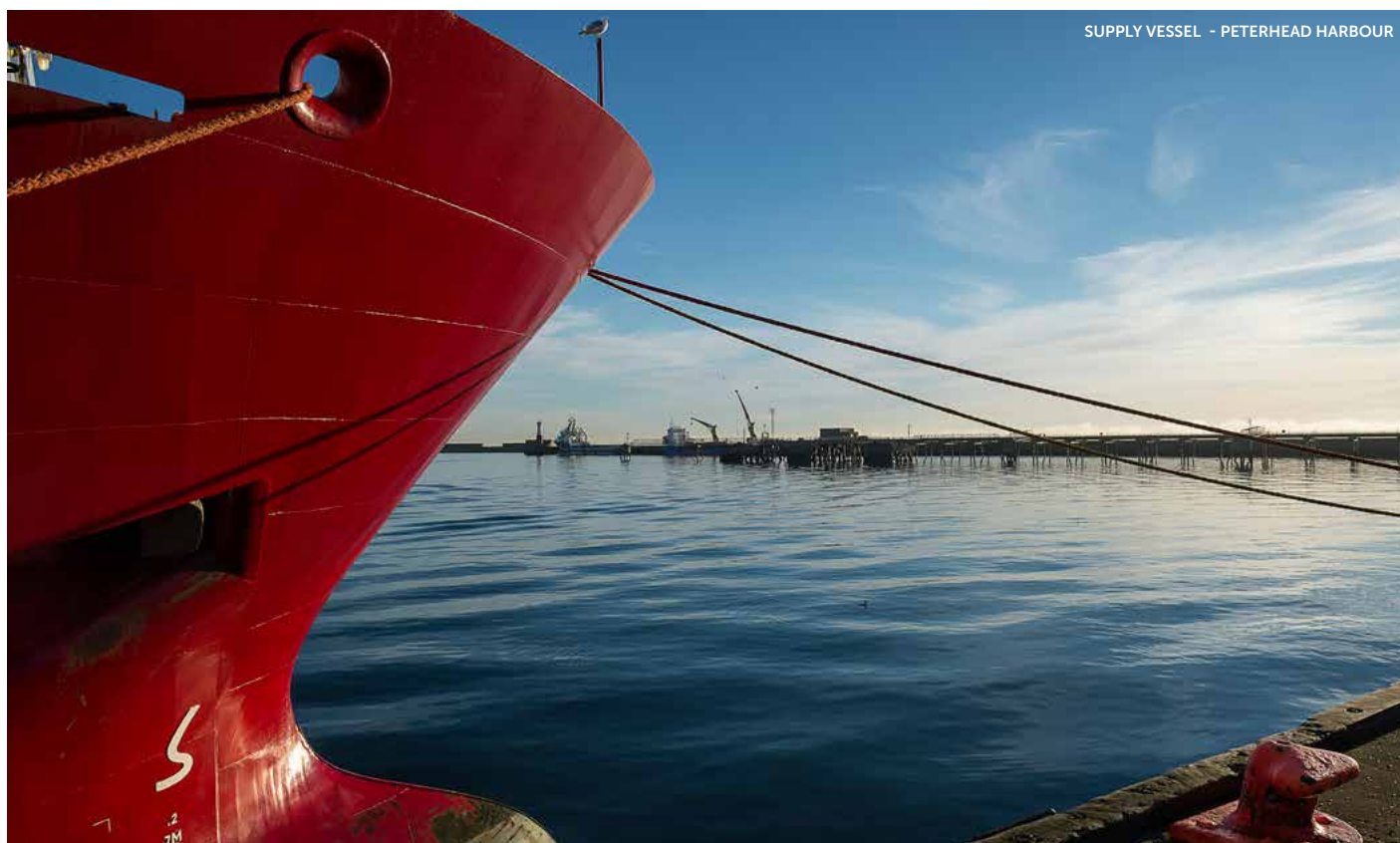
Engagement with key stakeholders continues in all aspects through survey work with customers, improvement projects with our key consultees and close working and training with our Community Councils, agents, developers and the Planning Focus Group.

Challenges continue through the regeneration and investment of our important built heritage assets and historical areas, whilst important partnership work continues to support other built and natural heritage projects. Commitment to Portsoy CARS* is secured to 2016 with £700,000 of funding, likewise Banff CARS has funding of £500,000 supported by a dedicated project officer which will enable continuation until 2019. (*Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme)

Performance improvement continues at pace through the suite of improvement strategies, key actions and delivery plans. Striving to improve forms the core of what we aim to achieve. The vision to be the best informs all our outcomes. The Planning Performance Framework records our achievements but more importantly enables us to continually improve and perform at the best possible level.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

INTRODUCTION



This Planning Performance Framework document should be read in conjunction with the suite of high level documents identified in bold below.

[The Aberdeenshire Council Plan](#) identifies the Council's priorities for the period 2013 – 2017 and sets out how the Council aims to achieve its goal of making Aberdeenshire the best area and best Council in Scotland. The future direction of the Council is guided by the three pillars of Early Intervention, Demography and Economic Development:

Growing the economy is key to the future prosperity of the north east of Scotland. The Planning Service, as part of Infrastructure Services, has an important role to play in supporting the business community and helping this area meet current and future economic challenges.

Supporting the delivery of the **Council's Strategic Priorities** are the **Key Service Objectives** within **Service Plans**. These set the context by which the Planning Service will play a major role in creating the conditions for sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration within Aberdeenshire and the wider region by attracting and supporting businesses and industries and developing

communities. The Planning Service falls within the **Infrastructure Services Service Plan, 2014-2017** and now **2015-2018**.

Planning outcomes feed into the [Economic Development Strategy](#) of the Council. The aim of the current Strategy is to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration within Aberdeenshire and the wider region by attracting and supporting businesses and industries and developing communities. As such, one of the key priorities to achieve the strategic objectives of encouraging enterprise within Aberdeenshire is to assist with the delivery of a modern planning system.

The [Local Development Plan](#) and [Strategic Development Plan](#) are similarly a major tool in delivering the **Service Objectives** to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration within Aberdeenshire and the wider region by attracting and supporting businesses and industries and developing communities.

PLANNING AND ECONOMY

Focus continues on Planning providing the conditions for a sustainable economy as a more challenging climate is prevalent in the north east.

Existing policies promoting sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration remain in place, and remain appropriate. Rural development policies maintain opportunity for economic development proposals in intermediate rural areas. Tourism policies safeguard important tourist infrastructure, such as hotels, from damaging change of use. Existing business land is protected and substantial new allocations are provided as opportunities for future business development. Delivery of new employment sites remains challenging within the current economic climate, with strong

demand but low tolerance to risk and in many cases a hope for residential land values from landowners. When new business land is serviced, take up is often very rapid.

Challenges between physical, economic and social regeneration in some of Aberdeenshire's most deprived towns have been evaluated and a conclusion reached that policies of promoting physical regeneration without also providing the opportunity of greenfield development may stifle investment. This complements actions being taken to achieve deficit funding in the historic centres of these towns and to undertake physical and social regeneration that are being led by our Economic Development and Community Planning colleagues. The framework provided by the

Energetica brand also continues to provide an important tool for regeneration and sustainable economic growth.

Overall the Service objective for sustainable economic growth is being delivered. This is through a balance between accommodating market demand in areas where this is acute, but without compromising the success of existing sites through impact on infrastructure or oversupply, and by providing clear land opportunities in areas where demand is suppressed to meet local growth.

The Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan gives the most up to date expression of these principles.

PROGRESS AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE PLANNING SERVICE IN 2014/15

The Scottish Government Feedback for Aberdeenshire on the PPF 2013-2014 recognised that the Planning Authority had been undergoing a process of transformational change which had caused some delays in committed improvements. Highlighted also was the need to have the ability to record applications that have been subject to **pre application advice**. This was dependent on having the appropriate data recording system in place (Uniform) which had not been implemented in time for reporting fully in 2013/14. Recognition was given that the data recording system was being rolled out in addition to a more formal and comprehensive pre application service.

Decision-making performance indicated as an area of concern previously was recognised as having improved overall. There were still concerns regarding the performance of **major applications** and timescales associated with **legal agreements** in particular and further evidence of improvement was required. Similarly the use of **processing agreements** still require to significantly improve and work that was being carried out to enable this was recognised.

The need to reduce existing **legacy** cases was further identified as was the ongoing strategy activity. The Legacy Strategy is acknowledged but evidence of outputs and reduction in numbers is expected in the next PPF.

High quality design, the coordinating function of the dedicated Delivery Team, customer and stakeholder communication and engagement, joint working and collaboration have been positively commented upon. Evidence of performance improvement as a result is requested. A particular focus on Community Council engagement was highlighted in the year and progress and benefits need to be evidenced.

It was accepted that it would be premature to report outputs and impacts of the introduction and implementation of a new electronic business system and e planning unit in late 2014. This should obviously form part of the evidence base in the next PPF. Similarly the reporting of the effectiveness of the new staffing structure should also be included.

In general the next PPF reporting period should evidence the progress, benefits and improvements generated from the significant

activity instigated to improve performance particularly in the elements highlighted as still being of concern.

The stated Performance Markers (Section 41 Regulatory Act) are referenced and evidenced throughout the PPF report. As with the previous year and following Feedback a priority system has been used to highlight those markers which require the greatest attention through the Feedback. The Feedback for the 2013/14 PPF produced no red ratings for the markers. The aim therefore is to ensure the amber ratings become green and no red ratings make a re-appearance. These markers are a main focus in improving performance and run through the Improving Performance Strategy.

The priority performance markers are illustrated in table format before appearing in more detail throughout Part 2. Other markers although not highlighted for urgent attention (green) also appear in terms of updates, further progress and on-going improvement throughout Part 2. It is recognised that although some markers are rated as green, although signifying improvement, it does not negate further significant improvement required in some areas.

PERFORMANCE MARKERS - PRIORITY FOCUS FOR 2013/14: SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES FOR 2014/15

The priority focus under the relevant Performance Markers (that initially resulted from the 2012/13 Feedback) are summarised/reported back with outcomes. These outcomes will be further detailed throughout the PPF.

PERFORMANCE MARKER	PRIORITY - RED 2013/14	OUTCOME 2014/15	AMBER 2013/14	OUTCOME 2014/15	GREEN 2013/14	OUTCOME 2014/15
Driving Improved Performance	Reduction of average timescales Formal Pre application promotion Validation Checklist LRB Review towards improved performance	Overall reduction in average timescales. Improving major application timescales still a priority Pre application link on website with formal process. Checklists reviewed and on line Outcomes of Review of LRB evidences Improved performance	Developer Contributions advice & proportionality Set up & implement 'Enterprise' monitoring facility	Implementation of Developer Obligation improvement programme. Evidence of benefits and improvements and use of protocols Implementation complete and use as monitoring tool in place	Further benchmarking	Benchmarking carried out – evidence in PPF
Promoting the Plan-Led System	Early MIR Member engagement Proportionate policy advice – Developer Obligations	Evidence of engagement carried out at all stages in LDP process. Additional and enhanced engagement in place			LDP progress on target	Process on going as per Project Plan
Delivering Development	Reduce/control Legacy Cases Pre 2009 & Plus 1 year Developer Obligations – clear expectations Processing Agreement procedure & Use Significantly improve Legal Agreement timescales	Legacy strategy continued and Legacy Team created. Reductions in legacy cases successful. Work ongoing	Set up/ Implement 'Stop the Clock' facility	Benchmarking exercise – Stop the Clock fully implemented and evidenced	Continue protocols to ensure timeous responses	Existing and new protocols in place. Evidence of application of protocols in PPF

PERFORMANCE MARKERS - PRIORITY FOCUS FOR 2014/15

PERFORMANCE MARKER	PRIORITY - AMBER	PRIORITY - GREEN
Decision Making	Reduction of average timescales for major development. Further significant improvements required Average timescales for non-householder developments to improve/ to meet better national standards	Processing Agreement's – Consistent use for all major applications and Locals where appropriate Certain Section 75 applications with Processing Agreements
Early Collaboration	Pre application data recording	
Legal Agreements	Continue focus on Legacy cases – meet target reductions Priority to improve timescales for Section 75 conclusions	
Continuous Improvement	Continue to work to improve decision making timescales	
Regular and proportionate policy advice		Formal roll out of Developer Obligations in March 2013 – to be implemented in the coming year Expand/improve/review Checklists
Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge		Examples of outcomes should be included to highlight benefits of benchmarking work
Stalled Sites/Legacy cases	On-going work to review and conclude legacy cases and clear outstanding cases	
Developer Contributions		Pre application discussions – case studies to help provide how developer contributions are clear and proportionate



PART 1:

NATIONAL HEADLINE INDICATORS (NHIS)

KEY OUTCOMES	2014 - 2015	2013 - 2014	
Development Planning:			
Age of local/strategic development plan(s) (years and months) at end of reporting period <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i>	LDP 3 years 3 months SDP 1 Year	LDP 2 years 3 Months SDP 3 days	Note 1
Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Y/N)	LDP Yes SDP Yes	LDP Yes SDP Yes	
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? (Y- earlier/Y-later/N)	LDP Y-later		
Were development plan scheme engagement/ consultation commitments met during the year? (Y/N)	Yes		

Note 1 :

The publication of the Proposed Plan was delayed by 3 months in order to ensure that it took into account the advice provided by the Chief Planner concerning "Development Plans – Supplementary Evidence". This resulted in significant change to the draft and format of the Proposed Plan to incorporate much of the material that is contained in Supplementary Guidance within the current Local Development Plan (including settlement statements and revised draft policies).

This change, advised above, came at a late stage in the Plan production process, and required the Plan to be discussed at an additional 6 Committee meetings to ensure the settlement statements represented the settled view of the Council.

The change has also caused the Proposed Plan to increase from 77 pages (the length of the adopted LDP2012) to over 600 pages, all of which is now subject to examination, and a proportionate increase in the activity required to service the Examination. However, Aberdeenshire Council is still committed to submitting the Plan in December 2015.

Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs	AHMA	RHMA	Aberdeen HMA	Rural HMA	
Established housing land supply	34,731 units	13,569 units			Note 1 Note 2 Note 2
5-year effective housing land supply	12,091 units	3,686 units			
5-year housing supply target	7,827 units	3,336 units			
5-year effective housing land supply (to one decimal place)	7.7 yrs	5.5 yrs	6.2 yrs	6.6 yrs	Note 2
Housing approvals	2,654 units		5,248 units	3,786 units	Note 3
Housing completions over the last 5 years	5,733 units		6,133 units	907 units	Note 4
Marketable employment land supply	360 ha		375 ha		Note 5
Employment land take-up during reporting year	14.1 ha		17.4 ha		Note 5

Development Management			
Project Planning			Note 6
› Percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice	0%		
› Number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	6		
› Percentage planned timescales met	100%		
Decision-making			
› Application approval rate	92%	93%	
› Delegation rate	90%	89%	
Decision-making timescales			
Average number of weeks to decision:	107.8	115.9	
› Major developments	15.8	18.9	
› Local developments (non-householder)	7.3	7.4	
› Householder developments	6.4	6.6	
Legacy Cases			
› Number cleared during reporting period	138	199	
› Number remaining	98	146	
Enforcement			
› time since enforcement charter published / reviewed (months) <i>requirement: review every 2 years</i>	408 / 297	405 / 250	
› number of breaches identified / resolved *			

All decision making timescales have recorded improvement. Major Applications timescales have improved although focus remains on seeking further improvement closer to the national average. Reduction in legacy cases has been achieved for a further year and a team put in place to ensure the numbers reduce further in addition to ensuring prevention of legacy cases in the future. The establishment of a new staffing structure and electronic business system has been mainly responsible for the performance improvements.



Note 1

Housing land supply figures are not available for Aberdeenshire, only for Housing Market Areas (HMAs) as required by the Strategic Development Plan. The Aberdeen Housing Market Area includes Aberdeen City.

Note 2

There has been a significant increase in the effective housing land supply in the Aberdeen HMA over the last year and the supply now stands at 7.7 years, the highest level since local government reorganisation in 1996. This is the result of continued progress in the delivery of Local Development Plan allocations throughout the area and clearly demonstrates the successful implementation of the growth strategy of the Strategic Development Plan.

In the Rural HMA the effective supply has decreased since 2014 to 5.5 yrs. This is mainly due to revised expectations of the likely build rate on a number of sites which has meant fewer units likely to come forward within the five year period in question. The extent of the effective supply in the Rural HMA is primarily limited by low demand in parts of the area which affects what can realistically be expected to come forward within five years. There are an additional 3,762 units on effective sites programmed for the post five year period.

Source: Housing Land Audit 2015

Note 3

There has been a decrease in the number of housing approvals in Aberdeenshire since 2013/2014 but this was expected as last year's totals included approvals on some very large sites including 4,045 units for the new settlement at Chapelton.

Source: Uniform Housing Approvals 2014/15

Note 4

This is a new indicator for 2014/15. Average completions in Aberdeenshire have been around 1150 per annum in recent years. There was a 22% increase from 1,054 units in 2013 to 1,286 units in 2014 with the upward trend expected to continue.

Source: Housing Land Audit 2015

Note 5

The marketable employment land supply has decreased slightly since the previous year as sites have been taken up but remains well in excess of Strategic Development Plan targets. Of this marketable land, 40 ha is classed as being immediately available. In addition, a further 11 ha of land is currently under construction.

Take-up of employment land was 14.1 ha, slightly less than the previous year

but in line with average take up for the area.

*Source: Employment Land Audit 2014
Figures are for the year 2013/14*

Note 6

Our Uniform system went live with new applications and pre-application enquiries in March 2014. All application data was transferred from our old system, along with two years of pre-application advice enquiries. Given that this figure reports on applications determined in the reporting year, not all records have a full site history held in the system. In some cases it is not possible to hold the pre-application advice reference depending on the age of the record. This will obviously now begin to develop and already the system has recorded pre application enquires that equate with applications submitted this reporting period.



THE APPLE HOUSE, FASQUE



STONEHAVEN
CLOCKTOWER

PART 2: DEFINING AND MEASURING A HIGH-QUALITY PLANNING SERVICE



CHAPTER 1 OPEN FOR BUSINESS

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.

From the Proposed LDP 2015

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Service Plan Objective - 5 Planning and Building Standards

Key Service Objectives within the Service Plan

Supporting the delivery of the Council's Strategic Priorities are the key service objectives to:-

- › Create the conditions for sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration within Aberdeenshire and the

wider region by attracting and supporting businesses and industries and developing communities.

- › Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations through the development of a framework of access strategies, land-use plans, master plans, policies and guidelines and by managing development through the planning system in accordance with the objectives of the Local Plan.

KEY SERVICE OBJECTIVE 5.1 :

5.1 PROGRESS THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2016 CONSISTENT WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2014			
Status	Progress	Due Date	Commentary
✓	100%	31-Mar-2016	In March ISC* approved the Development Plan Scheme 2015. The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 as amended by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 (Section 20b) requires Aberdeenshire Council to publish a Development Plan Scheme at least annually. The Development Plan Scheme sets out the Authority's programme for preparing and reviewing the Local Development Plan. It must contain information on proposed timetabling and details of what is likely to be required at each stage of plan preparation, along with a 'Participation Statement' setting out when and with whom consultation is likely to take place, and its likely form. The Scheme approved by the Council builds on the Scheme published in 2014 to deliver a new Local Development Plan before 2017. This timing reflects both previous experiences in the preparation of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012 and the expectation of Scottish Ministers that Local Authorities should deliver and adopt a Local Development Plan within 2 years of the approval of the relevant Strategic Development Plan.

*Infrastructure Services Committee

ABERDEENSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2016

- › The theme for the past year remains continuity as the Local Development Plan progresses with implementation of a largely unchanged Strategic Development Plan, adopted in March 2014. Work continues on the development of the 2016 Local Development Plan to promote the values within Scottish Planning Policy to facilitate sustainable economic growth within this context. This has included evaluation of the distribution and scope of business land opportunities in the emerging plan, revision of policies to reflect the town centres first principle and matters such as the approach to be taken on renewable energy projects.
- › Throughout the year considerable work has been undertaken to resolve issues of uncertainty and potential misinterpretation arising from the existing policy framework.



MAIN ISSUES

- › Responses to the Main Issues Report, published in October 2013, have informed the appropriateness of the existing Local Development Plan policies and this has allowed the Council to consider refinements to existing policies to overcome perceived weaknesses.
- › No new policy has been published. The exception to this has been with the publication of a chorus of [Planning Advice notes](#) updating existing advice on environmental topics.
- › The adoption of the [Strategic Landscape Capacity Assessment for Wind Energy](#) in Aberdeenshire, again as planning advice, provides a consistent Aberdeenshire wide assessment of landscape capacity in order to resolve specific issues arising from this form of development.



ABERDEENSHIRE IS 'OPEN FOR BUSINESS' DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

SERVICE PRIORITIES FOR 2013 - 2014

Continue to review and improve the performance of the Planning and Development Service to ensure that all planning applications are processed in an efficient and effective manner without sacrificing service quality.

A measurement of on-going business is the level of development and associated planning applications being received.

2014-2015 has seen a rise in the number of planning applications received by Aberdeenshire.

YEAR	ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL
2012-2013	3828
2013-2014	3515
2014-2015	3677

Once again Aberdeenshire Council has received the most planning applications in Scotland. The total for 2014-2015 has increased from the previous year.

Planning Fees

Planning fees have similarly increased to an all-time high.

Building Warrant Fees

Although a slight decrease in fees these remain at a consistently high level.

(Refer to **Chapter 7: Financial Management and Local Governance**.)

HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

	ABERDEEN HMA	RURAL HMA	ABERDEEN HMA	RURAL HMA
EFFECTIVE HOUSING LAND: YEARS SUPPLY	7.7 yrs	5.5 yrs	6.2 yrs	6.6 yrs
EFFECTIVE HOUSING LAND SUPPLY	12,091 units	3,686 units	5,248 units	3,786 units
HOUSING APPROVALS	2,654 units		6,133 units	907 units

There has been a significant increase in the effective housing land supply in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area (HMA) over the last year and the supply now stands at 7.7 years, the highest level since local government reorganisation in 1996. This is the result of continued progress in the delivery of Local Development Plan allocations throughout the area and clearly demonstrates the successful implementation of the growth strategy of the Strategic Development Plan.

There has been a decrease in the number of housing approvals in Aberdeenshire since 2013/2014 but this was expected as last year's totals included approvals on some very large sites including 4,045 units for the new settlement at Chapelton.

Average completions in Aberdeenshire have been around 1150 per annum in recent years. There was a 22% increase from 1,054 units in 2013 to 1,286 units in 2014 with the upward trend expected to continue.

MASTERPLANS

The responsibility within the Council for the progression of Masterplans still lies with the Strategic Delivery Development Team (SDDT). A most recent update on the position of all required Masterplans for Aberdeenshire is shown below, which shows that 75% of the Masterplans which were required since their initial allocation in 2012 have either been approved or are currently being worked on by the SDDT in conjunction with the developer and other services.

AREA	TOTAL	APPROVED	ONGOING	NO CONTACT
BANFF & BUCHAN	11	3	0	8
BUCHAN	10	3	5	2
FORMARTINE	12	5	6	1
GARIOCH	9	6	2	1
K & M	8	5	3	0
MARR	7	4	2	1
ABERDEENSHIRE	58	26	18	13



ENERGETICA

Energetica is a 25-year programme to create an exemplar, low carbon, sustainable development corridor that will attract energy organisations and individuals to a high quality natural and built coastal environment. The programme is a partnership between Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council and Scottish Enterprise. Energetica covers a 30-mile long area extending from the north of Aberdeen to Peterhead.

The 2014-15 Energetica programme continues to be headed by a dedicated Development Manager to drive the project forward, encourage investment and co-ordinate knowledge and expertise from a variety of services to deliver the individual elements which will make the Energetica vision come to fruition as set out within the Energetica Strategic Delivery Framework.



PLANNING UPDATE FOR ENERGETICA

- › National Planning Framework 3 refers to Energetica, in particular in relation to the Aberdeen to Peterhead and Aberdeen City strategic growth areas.
- › Energetica is included in the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan, with specific references under these two strategic growth areas.
- › The Local Development Plans for both Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City designate the Energetica area on maps, and include policies, supplementary guidance and planning advice specific to Energetica. Proposed Plans in preparation in reviews of these Local Development Plans carry forward this coverage of Energetica.
- › At Blackdog, a Planning Permission in Principle application for the early release of 48 of the 1000 houses was approved in 2014. The Planning Service is currently assessing a further application for Full Planning Permission with a view to delivering an exemplar Energetica development.
- › At the Trump International Golf Course, development is continuing. The Council have recently received two Proposal of Application Notice's (POAN) one for a further 18 hole championship golf course and the second for 850 No. Residential Units, 1900 No. Leisure Accommodation Units with Ancillary Commercial Development.
- › Development Framework has recently been approved at Cromleybank, Ellon for an allocated site of 980 houses 2 hectares of Employment Land and Community Facilities. The approval of the Development Framework involved a high degree of input from both the Delivery Team and the Strategic Delivery Development Team. This now allows the developers to progress towards the submission of a Masterplan for the site which will facilitate the development of the rest of the site following the opening of the new Ellon Academy in June 2015.
(Refer to Case Study no 4)
- › An application for the first phase (50 houses) of a mixed use site at Foveran has been approved pending a legal agreement following the approval of a Masterplan in 2013. A Processing Agreement has been utilised to aid the delivery of a scheme of modern, innovative house designs in a timeous manner.
- › The first unit of the flagship "Enerfield" Business Park has been approved and erected on a site to the north of Foveran Village.



ENERGETICA CORRIDOR – MENIE



PETERHEAD MARINA

ONGOING NATIONAL AND MAJOR PROJECTS AT PETERHEAD:

Peterhead continues to act as an important focal point for Energetica with many large scale projects covering business, industry, energy and housing. An overview of ongoing projects are listed below:

LOCATION	PROJECT	CURRENT PROJECT	IMPACT/BENEFITS
Peterhead Port	Upgrade of Harbour, creation of new fish market, new quayside facilities and deepening of harbour	Harbour revision Order approved	Major contribution to the energy sector of the local economy
North Connect Interconnector Fourfields Site Boddam, Peterhead	Onshore elements of an electricity interconnector between Scotland and Norway	Application under consideration after pre application discussions, Screening, Scoping and PAC events. Application on schedule as per Processing Agreement and expected determination at Full Council 27 August	Key to an enhanced high voltage transmission network and delivering the international Interconnector Station as identified in NPF3
Peterhead Power Station	Carbon Capture and Storage proposals	Application under consideration following pre application discussions, Screening, Scoping and PAC events. Scheduled for determination in June in accordance with Processing Agreement	Key component in meeting national targets for carbon reduction
Longside Airfield	Re-use of largely disused airfield to create a specialist pipe storage and energy sector business hub	Application under consideration following pre application discussions, and PAC events. Scheduled for determination in June as a departure from the Local Development Plan in accordance with Processing Agreement	Major contribution to the energy sector of the local economy.
Buchan Gateway	Development of hotel, supermarket, large scale retail and restaurant at gateway site on edge of Peterhead	Application under consideration	Economic and commercial benefits to area and local economy

OPEN FOR BUSINESS – DELIVERY....

The Council continues to promote a welcoming approach to development on their website where both the mission statement on [Delivering Development](#) in Aberdeenshire and a most recent copy of the [Council's Action Programme](#) can be found.

By keeping a live and continually updated Programme this helps to provide up to date and accurate information which will help to provide a level of certainty to both the Council and the Development Industry.



BUILT HERITAGE OF ABERDEENSHIRE – REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT

PARTNERSHIP WORK

- › Work with the [Northeast Scotland Preservation Trust](#) (NESPT) in running a materials store.
- › [The North East Scotland Biological Records Centre](#) (NESBReC), Aberdeenshire Council, works with a number of partners to collate, manage and disseminate biological records through Aberdeenshire.
- › Completed restoration of [Kindrochit Castle](#), Braemar with [Cairngorms National Park](#), and setting up of 'Friends Group'.
- › Continued support to coastal partnerships ([Moray Firth Partnership](#) and [East Grampian Coastal Partnership](#)) in anticipation of further developments in marine planning.
- › Work with [James Hutton Institute](#) to deliver Land Use Strategy Pilot for Scottish Government March 2013-March 2015.
- › Continued work with [Forestry Commission Scotland](#), [National Trust for Scotland](#) and [University of Aberdeen](#) to develop an Archaeological Land Management Strategy for Upper Deeside.

BUILT HERITAGE AND REGENERATION

- › Continuation of [Portsoy Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme \(CARS\)](#) (2011-2016), with funding of £700,000 distributed to various projects, including four priority projects and numerous small grants. One priority project complete, one on site nearing completion and two due to complete December 2015.
- › Continuation of [Banff CARS](#) (2014-2019), with funding of £500,000 supported by a dedicated Project Officer. Five major projects are envisaged and a grant scheme to support small projects has been established.
- › Proposed [Townscape Heritage \(TH\) scheme and CARS at Fraserburgh](#): recent appointment of full time Project Officer to work on development stage of proposed HLF project (2016-2021).

HISTORIC ASSETS MANAGEMENT PROJECT (HAMP)

- › On-going Review and prioritisation of management of Listed and Scheduled Council owned buildings and structures.
- › Collating data on assets: phase 1 survey complete, further surveys to take place this summer. Programme of minor maintenance to be established, minor and major projects identified.
- › Full time post and match funding secured to progress project till October 2016.

INDIVIDUAL BUILT HERITAGE PROJECTS

- › Major projects designed to protect and enhance the built and archaeological heritage of Aberdeenshire are underway or completed at:

1. Stonehaven Clock Tower	£245,000 (+ Friends Group set up)
2. Kindrochit Castle, Braemar	£200,000 (+ Friends Group set up)
3. Haddo Country Park	Part of £1.8 million HLF project
4. Tullich Kirk and Kirkyard	£200,000 (estimated)
5. Macduff Cross	£60,000 (estimated)
6. Tarlair Pool, Macduff	£200,000 (est.) + match funding



DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE PLAN PRIORITIES – 2014-15

Continue to review and improve the performance of the Planning and Development Service to ensure that all planning applications are processed in an efficient and effective manner without sacrificing service quality.

FROM REVIEW AND CHANGE TO IMPLEMENTATION AND ESTABLISHMENT

Implementation of the transformational changes occurred towards the latter part of the PPF period 2013/14. Although some evidence of the changes were able to be reported, much was considered premature.

Now embedded, three **Area Planning Teams** operate across Aberdeenshire based in five of the six administrative areas.

Team Managers are able to operate with a greater strategic overview of team performance, continuous improvement and

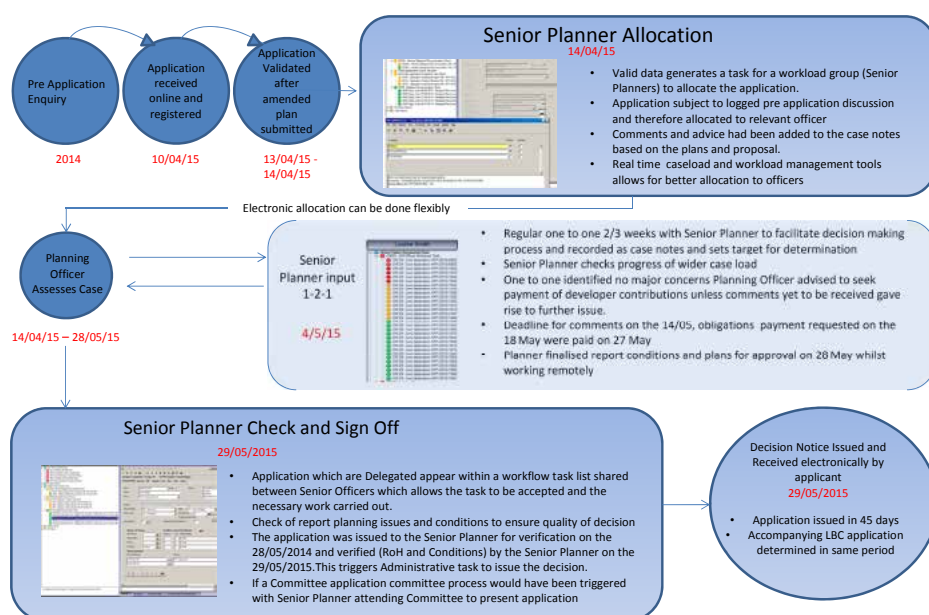
consistency assurance in Aberdeenshire wide process and procedures. A greater focus on staff performance and improvement projects along with a wider customer engagement remit has been enabled. The use of the Enterprise module ensures real time monitoring and early intervention to assess and push on performance, identify area team needs and individual officer performance.

Dedicated team **Senior Planners** have become established in their roles in servicing committees and monitoring operational,

day to day activity of the teams. Each team has 3 Senior Planners; one each servicing their respective Area Committees (2 Area Committees per team), while one 'delegated' Senior per team ensures delegated applications are on schedule and determined within statutory timescales. Electronic work flow between the teams split between areas has proven invaluable and evidence of performance improvement highlights this.

EVIDENCE INPUT – SENIOR ROLE IN APPLICATION PROCESS

Senior Planner Role - example conversion of B listed Church to Dwelling (APP/2015/1094)



The increase in **Planning Officer** numbers (35 posts) in tandem with the Uniform system has allowed greater flexibility in cross team working, allowing focus on the busiest teams, to allocate more resources when required, allow cover and allow flexible working in all areas (hot desk working, home working).

The resulting structure has enabled a significant decrease of average caseloads of approximately 20-30 applications per Planning Officer.

CASE STUDY ONE : PLANNING OFFICER – FLEXIBLE WORKING

"I am based in Stonehaven, but live in Edinburgh. The Council's 'Worksmart' programme enables me to have a flexible working programme to efficiently manage my work-life balance. In a typical week I work three days in the Stonehaven office, and two from home.

When at home, I can carry out my role effectively using ICT equipment, remotely accessing the planning Idox/uniform systems in the same way as if I was in the office. The use of technology allows me to have the means to be contacted by colleagues and members of the public at any time and by a range of methods. When in the office, my typical working hours are slightly shorter, but by commuting by train, this gives me the ability to extend my day and productively use this time for tasks such as report checking/ writing or responding to emails.

Essentially, the ability to work at home and reduce my travel time, allows me to be more productive in my work schedule and maintain a high level of performance."

Joshua McLean, Planner

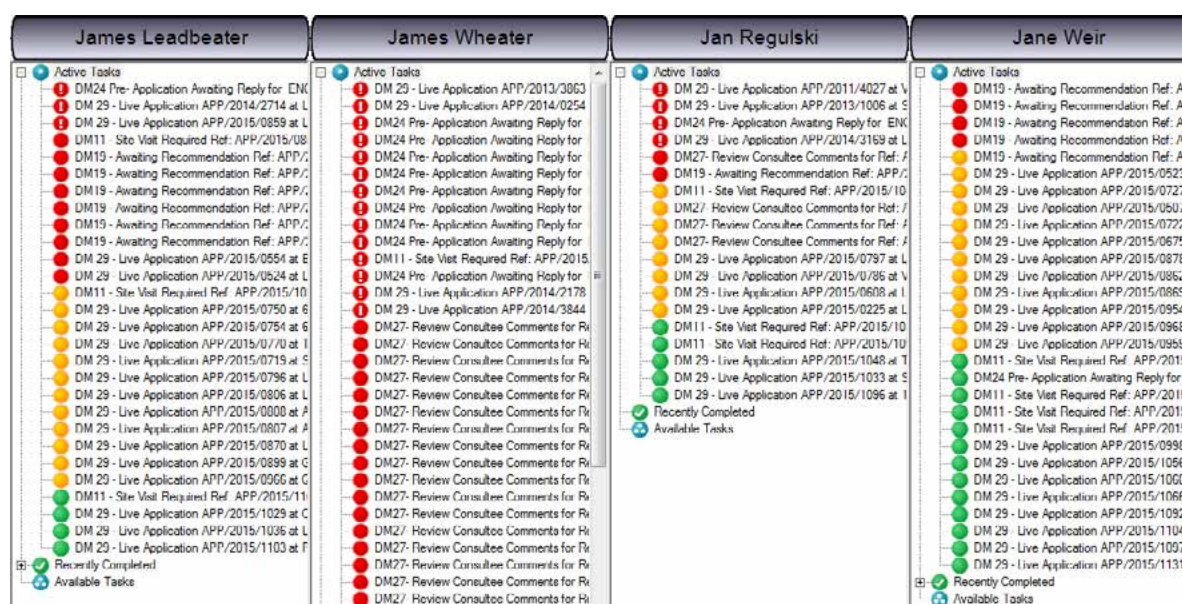
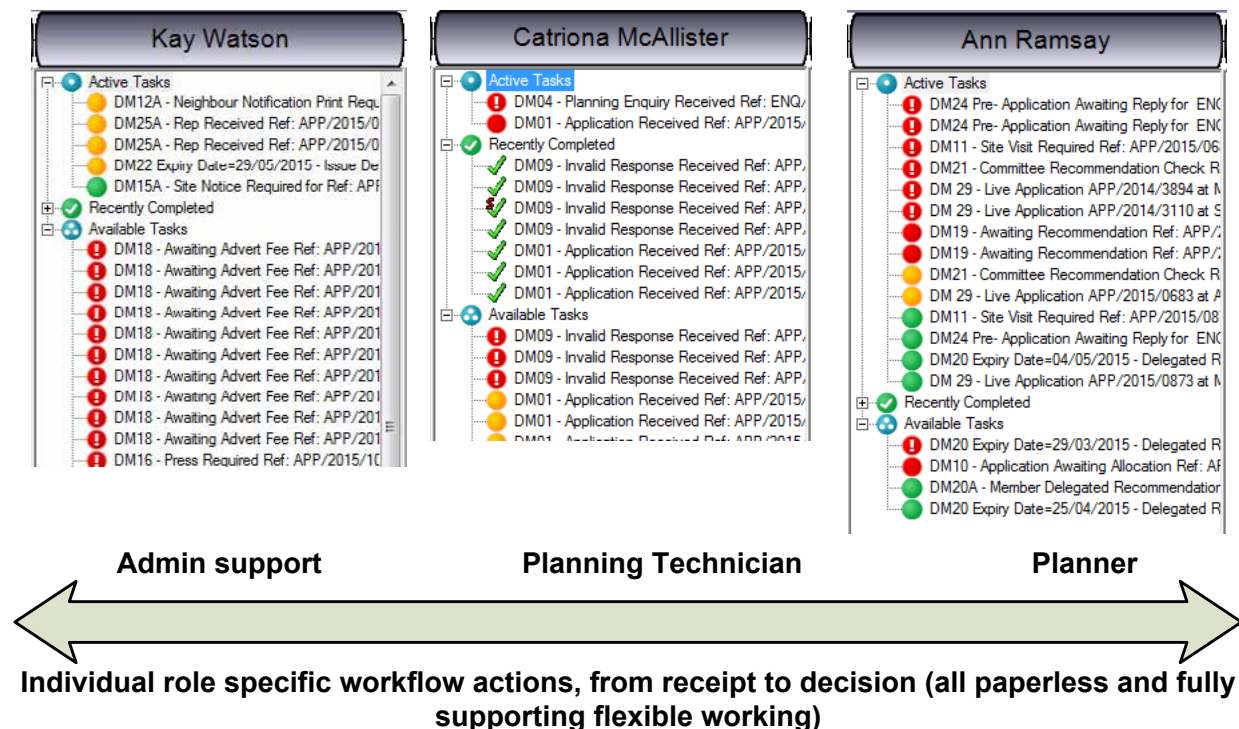


Planning Technicians (2 per team) have adopted a 'pool working' approach due to the ability of electronically work flowing applications via the Uniform system for all the areas. This again has helped direct cover and assistance where the need is greatest and maintain a consistency in throughput (for validation) on a daily basis. Changes to work processes through the implementation of Uniform has allowed greater scope for Planning Technicians to deal with basic planning enquiries in addition to daily public queries and requests.



EVIDENCE – OUTCOMES

INTEGRATED WORK FLOW FROM END TO END



**Team and role based visual workload management including drag and drop reallocation
(all paperless and fully supporting flexible working)**

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT DELIVERY TEAM (SDDT)

The Strategic Development Delivery Team continues to deal with strategic and major development matters – focusing on a tailored service to allow developers to engage and interact at all stages on the planning process. This includes masterplans, major pre-application and major application processing. Also to ensure pre and post application work on major and significant sites within strategic areas are co-ordinated and prioritised.

The key focus in the last year has been enabling the SDDT to reduce the timescales for determining major applications. Although this has been achieved to a degree the figure is still well above the national average. This focus will continue to further reduce timescales parallel with reducing legal timescales for Section 75's. Continuing aims :

- › Applications can be successfully project managed,
- › Techniques and understanding of the processes and steps involved require to be further developed, and enhanced both internally and externally with developers and consultees.
- › Buy in from all stakeholders will enable the entire process to become as efficient and proactive as possible, allowing for clear and concise pre application advice, which in turn would lead to quick consultee turnaround times and, importantly, reduced timescales for legal agreements or developer obligations.

Workshops with developers as well as consultees are to be set up with the aim of increasing the understanding of Processing

Agreements through all stakeholders to promote "buy in" and increase the likelihood of timeous decisions.

The team's work to date has involved National Developments including the onshore cable and substations associated with the Moray Offshore Windfarm (MORL), a Carbon Capture and Storage Project (CCS) and the North Connect Interconnector Station – both at Peterhead.

All of the National Developments are and have been subject to Processing Agreements, which have allowed the applications to be appropriately project managed.

CASE STUDY TWO : MORAY OFFSHORE RENEWABLES (MORL)

The Processing Agreement and focus of the team and officers allowed this National application to be assessed, presented to 3 Area Committees and Full Council well within a 4 month period to allow the applicants to progress to the next stage. The benefit of the Processing Agreement, project management and knowledge of the team and officers was cited by the developer in a letter to the Scottish Government as fundamental reasons behind the timeous determination of this application. This helps to demonstrate the advantages of this team in terms of fulfilling the Service wide aim of being "Open for Business".



NATIONAL PROJECT - MORL OFFSHORE

The Applicant appreciated the project management approach to the progressing of this application which had very tight and specific deadlines and was dealt within 4 months despite a round of 3 Area Committees and ending up at Full Council.

"Once again MORL would like to pass on its thanks to the Council for managing an efficient process which has significantly de-risked delivery of this infrastructure and our next CfD bid. Having a clear and predictable process I hope has also assisted members and we appreciate the resource and time that has been dedicated to this development."

PROCESSING AGREEMENTS

With the help of guidance, user guides and process maps (prepared by the SDDT), the use of Processing Agreements in a widening variety of applications continues to be encouraged throughout the Service. In many cases the promotion of Processing Agreements starts at the pre application stage, including the formal "Major Application"

and "Masterplan" meetings facilitated by the SDDT, which establishes a formal forum and platform for larger developments to be openly discussed with relevant stakeholders at pre application stage. In promoting Processing Agreements at this stage, the SDDT hope to establish a solid working practice which will ultimately result in timescales for all larger,

Major or National applications reducing by virtue of more efficient working practices and processes that have been established.

Refer to: **Performance Priorities and Processing Agreements in Chapter 3 - Certainty.**

ENFORCEMENT TEAM

The Team have been fully staffed since September 2014. The Team is based in Gordon House, Inverurie and consists of a Senior Planning Enforcement Officer and four Planning Enforcement Officers. Administrative support is provided by two staff which is shared with the Development Management Team. Management of the Enforcement Team alongside the Strategic Development Delivery Team rests with the Team Manager.

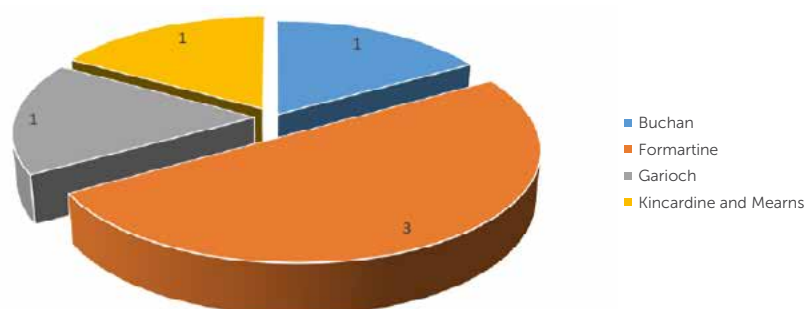
Staff have started to build up new skills and knowledge of planning enforcement

which they previously did not have. The staff have expertise and skills related to enforcement from previous employment and have excellent investigative skills and people skills. The Team are making progress given the demands on them and the Service is now seeing the benefits in terms of fewer complaints about delays.

In Aberdeenshire, planning enforcement involves a great deal of time persuading and negotiating with parties to try to achieve a positive outcomes. The general approach

has been to use formal action as the last resort. Prior to the establishment of the centralised Enforcement Team, the taking of formal action was inconsistent between the six areas with some areas using this tool very infrequently and others more often. This was seen as one of the benefits of a new centralised team to ensure consistent ways of working across Aberdeenshire. Improvement in consistency of serving notices is already evidenced through the team approach.

NUMBER OF ENFORCEMENT NOTICES SERVED 2014 – 2015 PER AREA



Source: Aberdeenshire Council, Uniform

It is acknowledged that if the Council is to build an effective Enforcement Team and make the Planning Service more credible in the eyes of the public, further improvements are essential.

An **Action Plan** for 2015 has been approved.

EXAMPLES OF IMPROVEMENTS IN PLACE :

- › As of January 2015, all enquires related to Planning Enforcement matters are encouraged to use the new email address: planningenforcement@aberdeenshire.gov.uk. This email box is checked regularly throughout the day and enquiries are managed and dealt with more efficiently than before.
- › Enforcement Team have been using the new Uniform system as the single data information system. Work has still to be done to improve the use and capability of the system to fit the needs of the Service. Results for the 2015 – 2016 period will be more accurate, and show more comprehensively, the work and outcomes of the Enforcement Team.
- › Process Map in place for dealing with Enforcement complaints. Enforcement Charter has been reviewed and updated. A further and more detailed review of Service standards and priorities is proposed and as a consequence the Charter will require to be updated more fully.

EXAMPLES OF WORK TO BE DONE (AS PER THE ACTION PLAN) :

- › **Prepare a Member and Area Committee Briefing Protocol:** this is a Briefing Protocol setting out how and when Members and Area Committees, as appropriate, will be briefed on cases within their Wards or Areas, particularly with regard to high profile cases. Area Mangers will be involved in the Briefing Protocol.
- › **On-line Planning Enforcement Register:**
- › **Website development:** this involves looking at ways to improve the Council's website in terms of Enforcement information. This links in with improving the profile/promotion of the function.



E PLANNING TEAM

The e Planning team set up in tandem with the new system comprises a Supervisor and 5 staff. This has changed from external to in-house scanning with associated costs and process timescale savings. Additional planning fees has enabled this team to develop and expand. Future proofing is very much the focus for the e Planning Team given the increasing reliance on the fully integrated paperless approach, the use of the national ePlanning portal and "digital by default" cost efficiency principles. Added to this is the upcoming e Building Standards project and a potential 'go live' date in 2016.



E PLANNING TEAM AT WORK

OVERALL SUMMARY OF CHANGE BENEFITS

- › Planning Officers dealing with a manageable level of approximately 20-30 applications per Officer.
- › Greater focus on pre application work and more time for better applicant/developer/public engagement.
- › Recording pre application numbers on the Uniform system. *
- › Electronic workflow between teams and between areas.
- › Electronic workflow creating a 'pool' of Planning Technician tasks
- › More scope for flexible location working/cover for absence and cross team working to resource busiest teams.
- › Scope to focus on improvement initiatives eg Benchmarking, Legacy Strategy etc
- › Improved performance post Quarter 1(following implementation of new structure and processes)
- › Improved performance – 1 day and 3 day validation
- › Increased take up of e Planning facilities and users
- › On line payment

*Refer to **Note 6 - Part 1 – National Headline Indicators**

CASE STUDY THREE : REVIEW OF THE REVIEW

REVIEW OF THE REVIEW

The Review of Development Management was one of the projects that contributed to the delivery of the key objectives and priorities of the Service Plan. Part of this as a key action and fundamental to the success of the review process and its implementation was a commitment to 'review the review'.

PROCESS

This Review took place during the months of January to February 2015. Individual team Sessions took place with the Head of Service and Planning Manager with Planning Officers, Planning Technicians and Administrative support. Further sessions took place with Seniors and Team Managers.

Further to that a staff survey was undertaken.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Following on from the restructuring of the planning service in Aberdeenshire Council last year we undertook a survey of our staff to understand how they felt about the new structure now that it had been in place for a year. The results were very encouraging with the highlights being that:

1. Staff felt they were now able to give a better service to applicants.
2. That their work load was about right.
3. That the majority of staff were satisfied with their job
4. That as a team they worked well together.

We did, however, learn that we could do better and it was highlighted that:

1. There was a lack of clarity between some roles in the Service.
2. We should have given more training when introducing new systems.
3. That some staff were not aware of the team's performance.

Overall the exercise was very worthwhile and a reminder that we need to take into account the views of our people who work for us as much as we do the customers we provide a service to.

Development Management Service Review

***6. Since the review do you feel your team should be larger than it is, smaller than it is, or is it about right?**

- ☐ Much larger
- ☐ Somewhat larger
- ☐ Slightly larger
- ☐ About right
- ☐ Slightly smaller
- ☐ Somewhat smaller
- ☐ Much smaller

***7. Considering your customers what level of service do you feel they receive since the review?**

- ☐ Much better
- ☐ Somewhat better
- ☐ Slightly better
- ☐ About the same
- ☐ Slightly worse
- ☐ Somewhat worse
- ☐ Much worse

***8. As part of the review the Idox Uniform system was introduced into the service as a result of this do you feel your job has become**

- ☐ Much easier
- ☐ Slightly easier
- ☐ About the same
- ☐ Slightly harder
- ☐ Much harder

***9. Considering the training you received on Idox Uniform do you feel you received**

- ☐ Too much
- ☐ Too little
- ☐ About the right amount

OUTCOMES

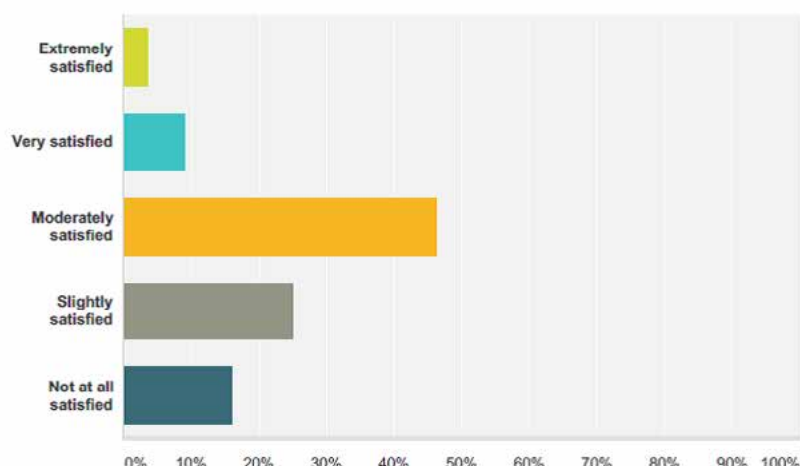
The staff were given the feedback from surveys in team sessions by their respective Team Managers.

STAFF SURVEY RESULTS - EXTRACT

Development Management Service Review

Q10 During the review how satisfied were you that your views and those of your colleagues were considered in creating the new structure?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 2



REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Based on the staff sessions and staff surveys an Action Plan was devised to capture the main issues that arose with a view to addressing and taking appropriate action.

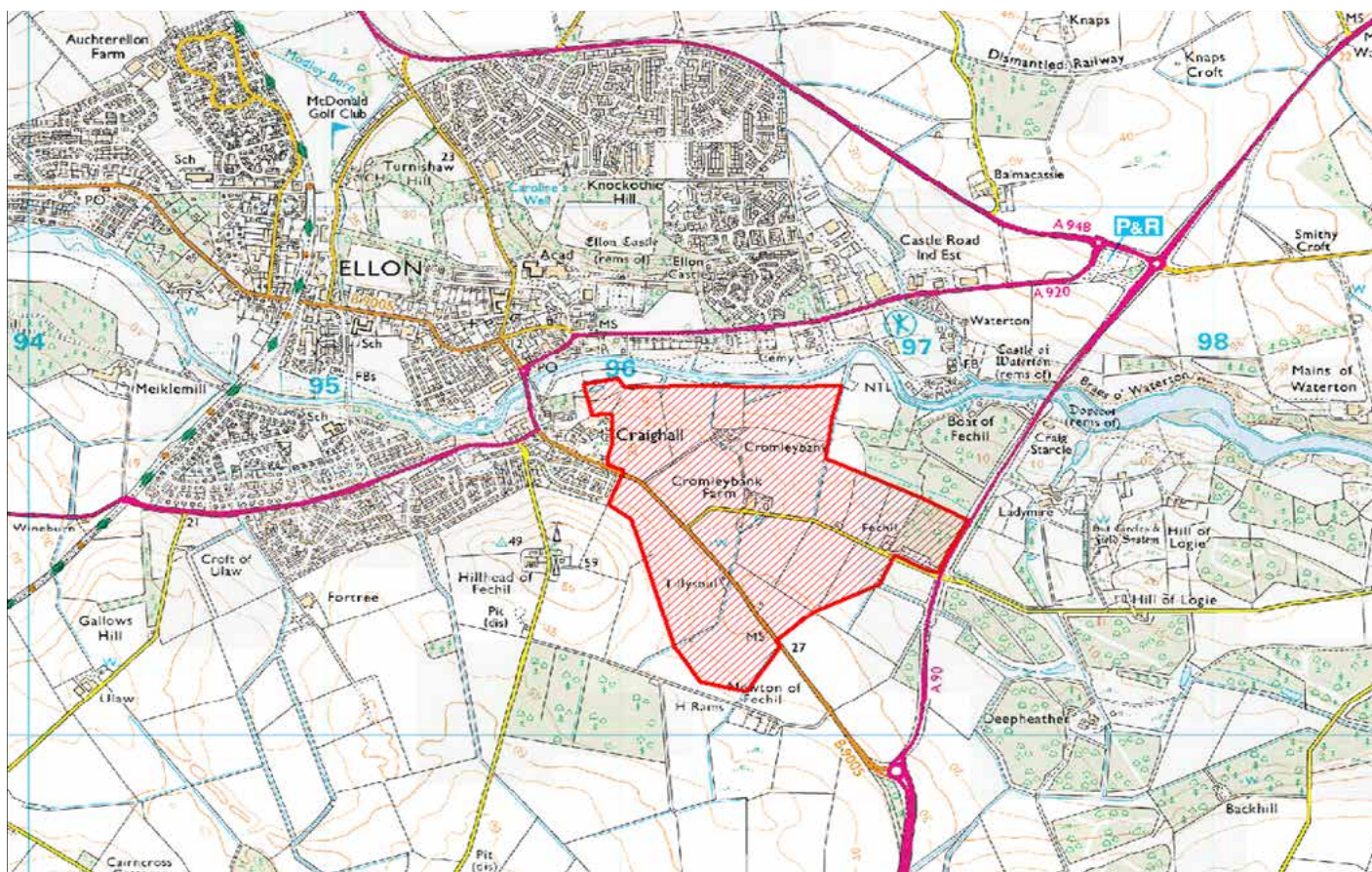
PROJECTS/INITIATIVES

Part of the outcomes of the Review have fed into the Improvement Project and Initiative Strategy. This has cumulated in new projects/initiatives in addition to those completed, ongoing and being refreshed. Team Managers are responsible for heading up the majority of these projects. Examples of these are : Finalise and publish Model Conditions, update staff role process maps, website improvements, update approach and add to survey work.

PRE APPLICATION SERVICES

MAJOR AND MASTERPLAN PRE APPLICATION

CASE STUDY FOUR: PRE-APPLICATION COLLABORATIVE WORKING CROMLEYBANK DEVELOPMENT- ELLON



Development Framework for Mixed use development including 980 residential units, 2 hectares of Employment Land and Community Facilities.

Both the Council's Delivery Team and the Strategic Development Team (SDDT) are involved in on-going pre-application discussion and consultation regarding this development which remains as one of the largest allocated sites in the Local Development Plan acting as a major expansion to the town of Ellon with a population of around 9,000 people.

Early and regular engagement between the Council and the developer/relevant stakeholders has been key to initiating the early stages of delivering of this development, which is found within the Energetica strategic growth corridor running from Aberdeen to Peterhead.

The aim of this mixed use development is 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 upon the same site as the recently built

secondary school (built under a separate planning consent). The site comes with significant infrastructure issues that need to be addressed.

This required a co-ordinated approach with the developer and a number of bodies to provide the required Development Framework which represented the first stage in the delivery of this development, scheduled to be delivered over the next 7 years.

Framework

CROMLEYBANK
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OCTOBER 2014

1 - Landscape Buffer

2 - Neighbourhood Centre

separating neighbourhoods but linked to open space, walkways and cycleways

shops and community facilities at the heart of the development

SCOTIA

Michael Gilchrist Associates
ARCHITECTS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

LAND USE

A B C D M

benton scott-simmons

CROMLEYBANK FARMS

Following this collaboration and associated community consultation, the Development Framework was reported to the Local Area Committee in March 2015 by the Delivery Team and was subsequently approved. This now allows the development to progress to a detailed Masterplan stage. This will continue to be aided by on-going monthly project meetings between Council Services and the Developer Project Team to ensure that the development remains on schedule to deliver the allocation and ensure the early identification and timeous resolution of any issues which may impact upon the development.

This serves as an example of the Delivery Team and the SDDT working in tandem and engaging with the development industry and other stakeholders/services at an early stage to progress a large scale development, building up a knowledge base and developing effective relationships between the industry and Aberdeenshire Council.

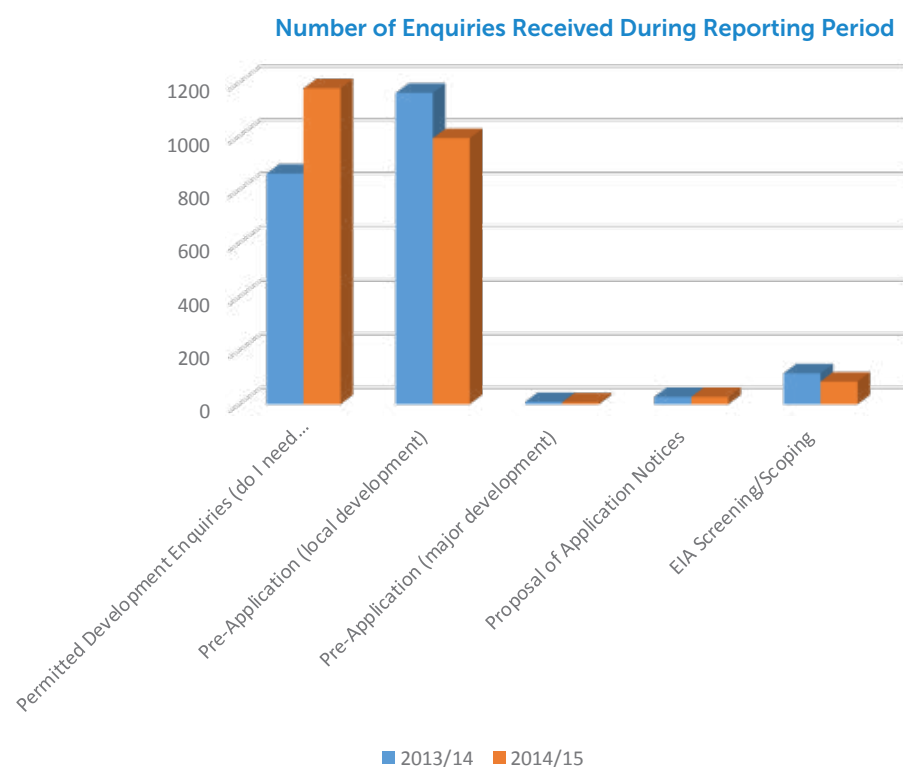


FORMAL LOCAL PRE APPLICATION

Our Uniform system went live with new applications and pre-application enquiries in March 2014. All application data (from 2005) was transferred from our old system, along with two years of pre-application advice enquiries. Given that this figure reports on applications determined in the reporting year, not all records have a full site history held in the system. In some cases it is not possible to hold the pre-application advice reference depending on the age of the record. This time lapse will reduce and the system will develop over time as the site histories will build up in the system.

NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES RECEIVED DURING REPORTING PERIOD

	2013/14	2014/15
Permitted Development Enquiries (do I need planning permission?)	861	1179
Pre-Application (local development)	1162	993
Pre-Application (major development)	9	7
Proposal of Application Notices	28	28
EIA Screening/Scoping	116	85



PRE APPLICATION – 2014-2015

EVIDENCE – OUTCOMES

CASE STUDY FIVE : REDEVELOPMENT OF PETERHEAD PRISON

The former prison is a large, prominent and focal point of Peterhead. The site operated as a prison until late 2013 when transfers were made to the new HMP & YOI Grampian that lies immediately to the south east of the site. The existing prison has since lain derelict.

Pre application discussions were held in relation to the proposal for a change of use to a mixed use development which would include a training centre, storage facility, industrial use and a visitor centre. An application was submitted but there were issues relating to the application causing it to subsequently be withdrawn.

Resolution was made through further pre application discussions and the application was resubmitted. Given the previous use of the building, the proposed mixed use development would bring a redundant building/site back in to use for the economic and employment benefit of the local area. Furthermore, the development complied with the aspirations set out in the Energetica Framework and the application was approved.



CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

In 2015 a further Customer Survey was carried out.

It is evident that the implementation of Team Action Plans has resulted in an improvement in the level of satisfaction to the level of customer engagement standards by tackling customer concerns. The resulting Team Action Plans continue to be used to address specific customer concerns to highlight and improve customer engagements standards and focus remains on training and best practice

EXTRACT OF AREA TEAM ACTION PLANS

AREA	ISSUE	SOLUTION	YES/NO OR DATE
Banff & Buchan	Improve contact in informing of refusals	Promote standard practice	
	Improve explanation of why application is being refused	Promote standard practice	
	Applicants/Agents are not being kept up to date during determination process	Discuss with Planners on a regular basis at 1-2-1s and team meetings and monitor files if required.	
	Planners not returning calls within agreed timescales	When diverting phones Planners to confirm with admin when callers can expect to be called back	
	Inconsistent advice being provided	Discuss with Planners on a regular basis at 1-2-1s and team meetings	
Kincardine & Mearns	Improve availability of staff	Better co-ordinate working patterns and time management	
	Improve standard of explanation		

EVIDENCE OF A GOOD CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION CUSTOMER TESTAMENT :

An example of positive feedback is shown in this testament from an agent which demonstrates that the measures that the Service have put in place can secure the provision of high level of customer service notwithstanding the recommendation.

James – thank you for the update.

It is useful to be kept informed of events and very refreshing to be presented with your recommendation. You would not believe how infrequently that happens!

I recognise it is not a decision and I understand all too well that there remains a risk of referral to Committee...However you should know that it can be very helpful to receive such feedback at the end of your appraisal phase and, in the case, the Client can now weigh up, in a more informed way, whether they commit to more detailed design work (grid infrastructure & contractor discussions) in order to meet a very tight development 'window' that is available.

RM Energy

Being 'Open for Business' includes engagement with our customers, stakeholders and partners, listening to what they tell us, understand what they think of us, what they require and act upon feedback to modify and improve the service we provide. A further report on customer engagement activity forms part of **Chapter 4 'Communications, Engagement and Customer Service'**.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW BUSINESS SYSTEM

CASE STUDY SIX : A NEW BUSINESS SYSTEM

Aberdeenshire Council's Planning Service has now introduced a fully integrated, paperless, workflow based, end-to-end approach to planning application processing.

The fully integrated approach has built upon the potential benefits of the national ePlanning portal and "digital by default" cost efficiency principles.

The new system is a key component in our modernised, resilient, fit for purpose Development Management Service.

Our paperless approach maximises our ability to be responsive to changes in workloads, and enables us to support flexible working arrangements.

The introduction of the improved technologies is helping us to deliver a high

level of customer service from application submission through to determination, e.g., 97% of applications are available for public viewing within 3 days of receiving the application.

BACKGROUND

A challenge was created by the Scottish Government through requirements to modernise the planning system. Aberdeenshire Council had been at the forefront of online access to planning applications 10 years previous. Time and technology had however superseded process and procedure in terms of the most efficient and current way of delivering the Development Management function.

Aberdeenshire Council's Development Management function and its systems were not capable of embracing the ePlanning agenda and required modernisation.

Incompatibility with recognised technology created an inability to operate an integrated planning system, reduce paper and scan efficiently. The Service outsourced scanning at great cost and time delays. With no workflow system and an approach largely dependent on paper files, the geographical spread of the council through 5 area planning offices was a problem.

Validation response times and the issuing of decisions were particular concerns and thought to be areas that would benefit from improved technology. Workload and performance management were other areas of concern that required to be improved.

AIMS:

- › Implement a modern and effective Development Management Service which can deliver an efficient and effective Service in line with Government and Council aspirations.
- › Deliver continued improvements across Planning Performance Framework indicators which include both speed of delivery in validation and determination of applications and customer satisfaction.
- › Achieve integrated efficiencies within core processes through parallel change through simultaneous restructuring and the delivery of a new Business Support System to change processes and working practices.

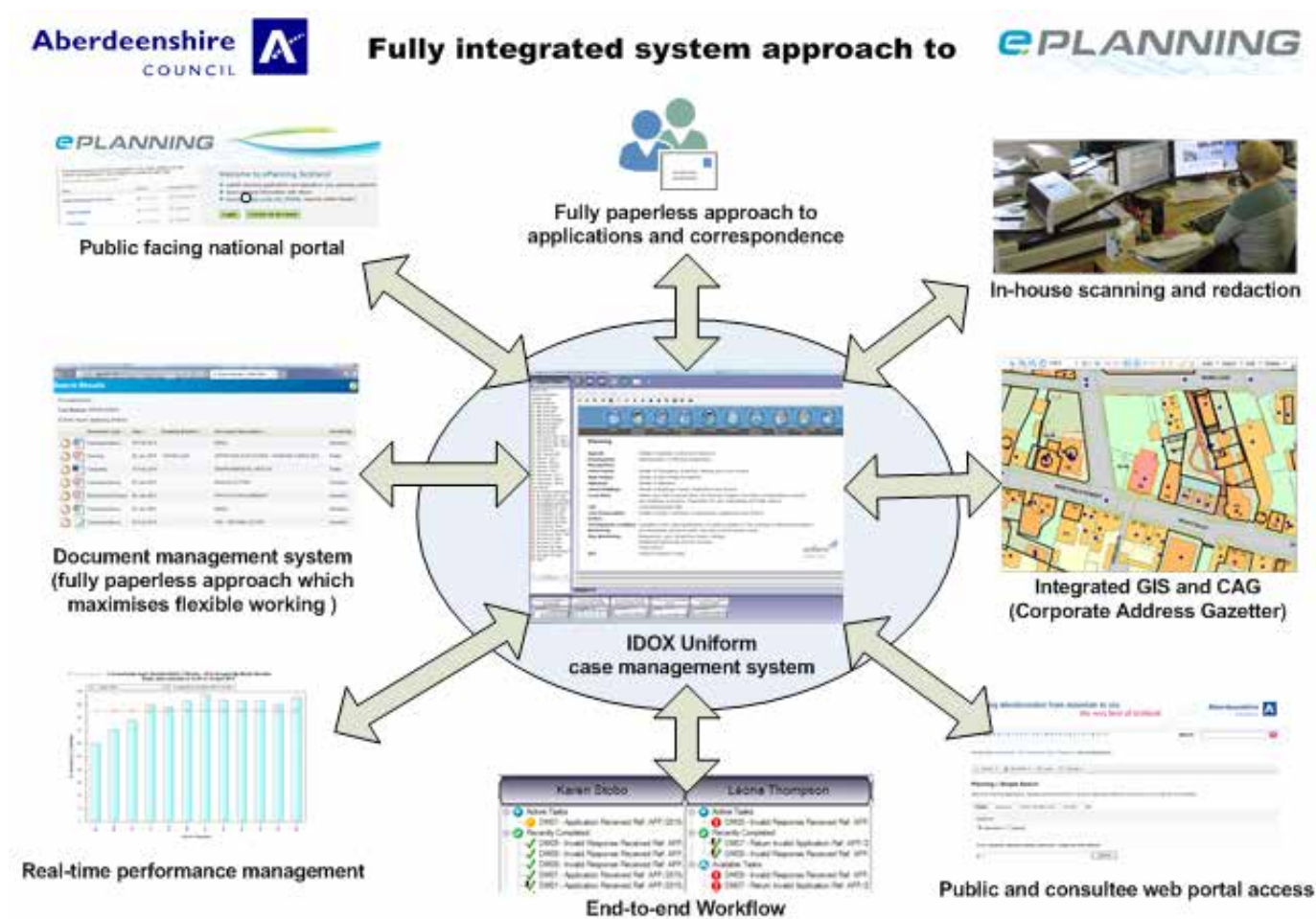
KEY OBJECTIVES:

- › A short term simultaneous delivery of a robust service structured around its core businesses and staffed at appropriate levels.
- › Deliver clear processes which are efficient and minimise duplication of effort.
- › Ensure that customers' needs are identified and supported through improved levels of customer service in line with the Improving Performance Strategy.
- › Maximise the use of technology to ensure that Development Management can fully embrace the ePlanning agenda. Ensure that systems and processes throughout the planning process, including specifically validation and the issuing of decisions, are efficient, timely and well integrated with electronic applications and workflow.
- › To provide timely and cost effective in-house scanning of paper applications working towards a paperless environment.
- › Enable Development Management to improve its average time for dealing with all applications.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED AND IMPLEMENTED?

- › A fully integrated system – reduced number of computer systems and costs, installed, configured, implemented and embedded within 17 months. The total timescale for the project was 17 months (6 months software procurement, 4 months hardware procurement and 7 months for everything else).
- › End-to-end workflow – most advanced approach to workflow in UK according to software supplier (IDOX)
- › A fully paperless approach to case management which maximises flexible working and standardises procedures
- › Doubled on-line submissions within a year: from 28% to 56% in one year and resultant significant cost savings.
- › e Planning unit set up – Supervisor and 5 staff. Changed from external to in-house scanning with associated costs and process timescale savings.
- › Electronic workflow across 5 area offices within Aberdeenshire, including increased standardisation and workload monitoring.

NEW BUSINESS SYSTEM – IDOX UNIFORM



PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENTS

Our new integrated system has achieved 2 major operational advantages:

- › The Planning application process is now virtually paperless from end-to-end
- › The integrated Workflow system has helped us to improve and monitor workload and performance.

Real-time performance management and improvements, e.g.:

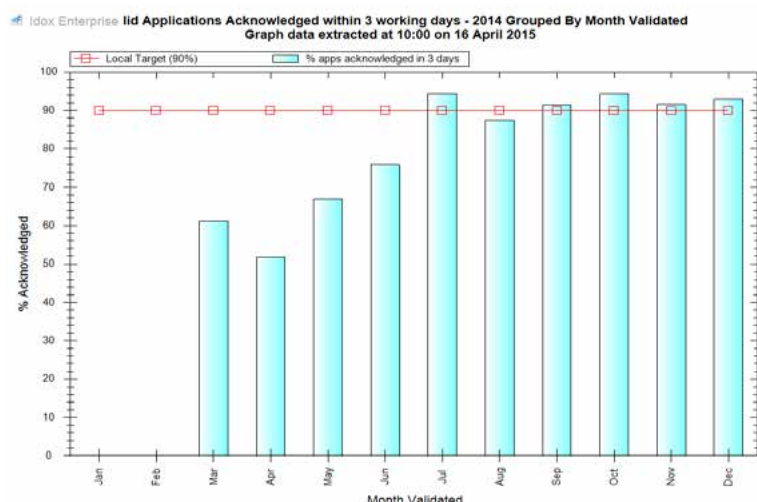
- › Improved 1 Day validation: 58%
- › Improved 3 Day validation: 97%
- › Improved speed in householder performance, now at 97%.
- › Replaced disparate collection of IT systems with an integrated solution that significantly reduced duplication of effort and associated costs.

EVIDENCE OUTCOMES

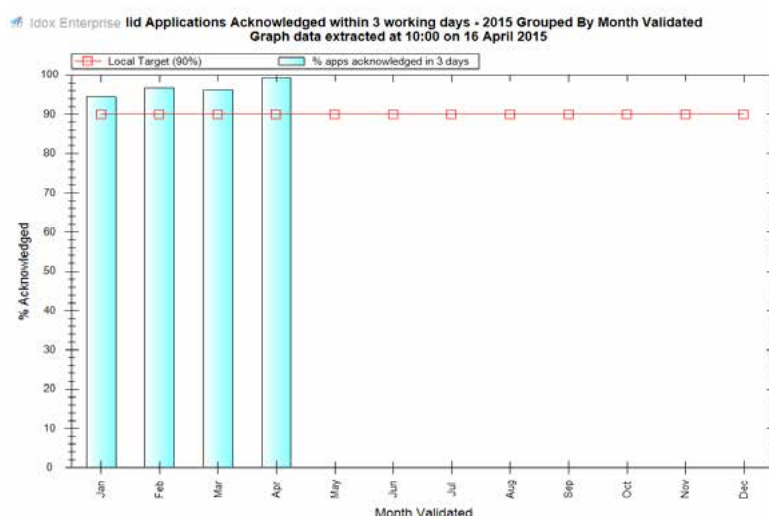
REAL-TIME PERFORMANCE MONITORING – VALIDATION



3 day validation improvement graphs



Significant improvement in 3 day validation (including full customer website availability)



Whilst most Scottish Local Authorities are operating with the Idox Uniform Case Management System, Aberdeenshire Council has gone much further in terms of utilising the product suite to the maximum potential. Aberdeenshire Council now has the most integrated ePlanning system in Scotland. In a 17 month period the Council transformed from no ePlanning to a fully integrated, paperless system.

Public service delivery improvements:

- › Earlier awareness of valid applications on line – up to 6 days earlier than previous.
- › More scope for public to self-serve – automatically emailed notification of applications, case status updates, added documents, weekly lists.
- › Availability for public to access 'real time' information and provide on-line comments.

CUSTOMERS/COMMUNITY COUNCILS

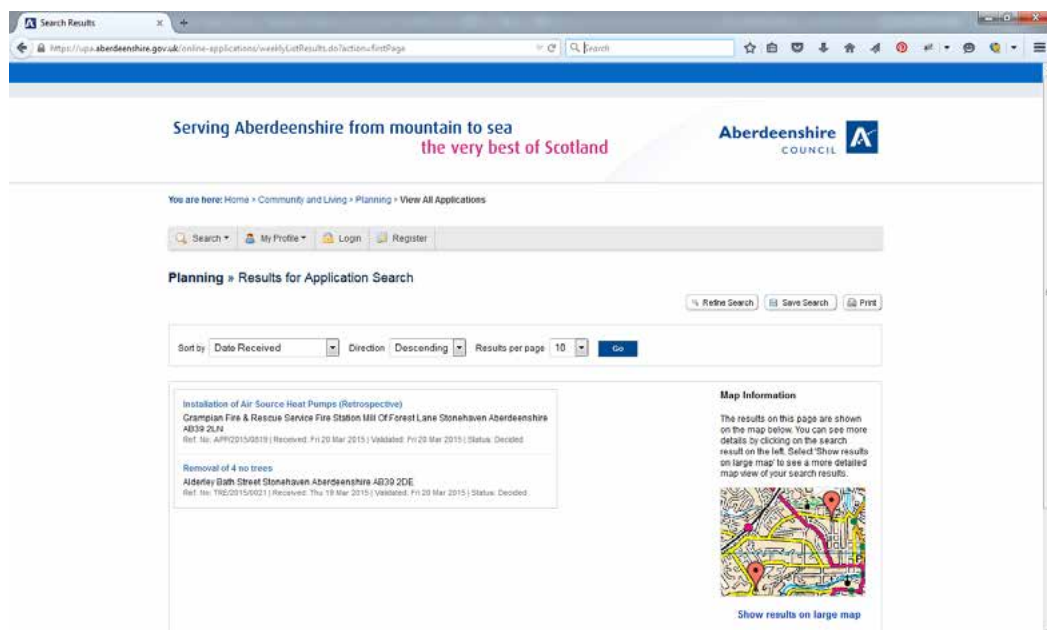
As reported in the previous PPF the website page announced the changes and the implementation of the Public Access Register. [Guidance notes](#) and a [FAQ document](#) were made available. Advice and training was offered. To compensate for the paperless approach public access large screen facilities have been installed in the main area offices. Attendance at [Community Council](#) events and individual training events with Community Councils

demonstrated the new system (refer to **Community Council & Community Council Engagement and Training Events in Chapter 4: Communications, engagement and customer services**). A real-time demonstration to 80 agents took place to promote the ePlanning approach. Communication with Community Councils and the public indicated a dissatisfaction with the removal of the Weekly List. This was taken on board and the [Weekly list](#) has been

restored on to the website and also e-mailed as a link to all Community Councils and those who have requested this service. Some Community Councils have, following training, started to use the self-serve functions of Uniform to access automatically emailed notification of applications, case status updates, added documents and 'self-made' weekly lists, etc.

WEEKLY LIST SEARCH

Also the availability for the public to access 'real time' information and provide on-line comments.



TRAINING EVENTS FOR COMMUNITY COUNCIL AND THE PUBLIC ACCESS REGISTER

Community Council as Consultees

- › Uniform Consultation Module
- › Community Councils will be included
- › This will assist in the submission of comments
- › Give access to information
- › Pilot Module with Community Councils

Some Community Councils have taken up the offer to pilot the specific Consultee Module in Uniform to enable them to provide on line integrated comments within the system.



A Strategic Priority in the Service Plan is to 'Promote and support sustainable development'. The associated Actions and Milestone is as follows:

ACTION	MILESTONE
E-Planning. Carry out development of the website to further the promotion of on-line applications	Increased levels of applications being submitted electronically

A committed Service improvement and target for 2013-2014 in the last PPF was to increase the number of application submitted on-line. Prematurity at that time rendered that target incomplete although some evidence of improvement was filtering through. This

reporting period can demonstrate significant improvement.

Measurable targets will be introduced to meet this Strategic Priority and this is set out in Part 4: A Under Service Improvements 2015-2016.

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT :

Jump in on-line applications 07/11/2014

"The first quarter of 2014-15 has seen an impressive increase in applications submitted online. Compared to the first quarter last year, our online submissions have jumped from 48.9% to a milestone smashing 59.3%. Of the 33 local planning authorities in Scotland, 26 have seen an increase in online submissions with six of those showing a significant increase of over 20%.

This far exceeds the original predicted percentage of online submissions (30%) for this stage in the life of the portal."

Promotion of the use of e Planning and submission through the Scottish Government Portal has continued.

there were early signs that the submission rate had improved since March into April 2014 (Single Point of submission/e Planning Team)

In 2012-2013 Aberdeenshire Council had a 19% use of on line submissions through the Scottish Government Portal. In the last PPF

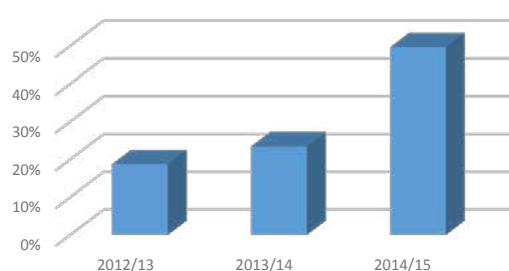
A year on and this improvement has grown significantly to an average of just over 50% online submissions for 2014-2015.

ONLINE APPLICATIONS UPTAKE	
2012/13:	19%
2013/14:	23%
2014/15:	50%

PERCENTAGE OF APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE DURING THE REPORTING PERIOD

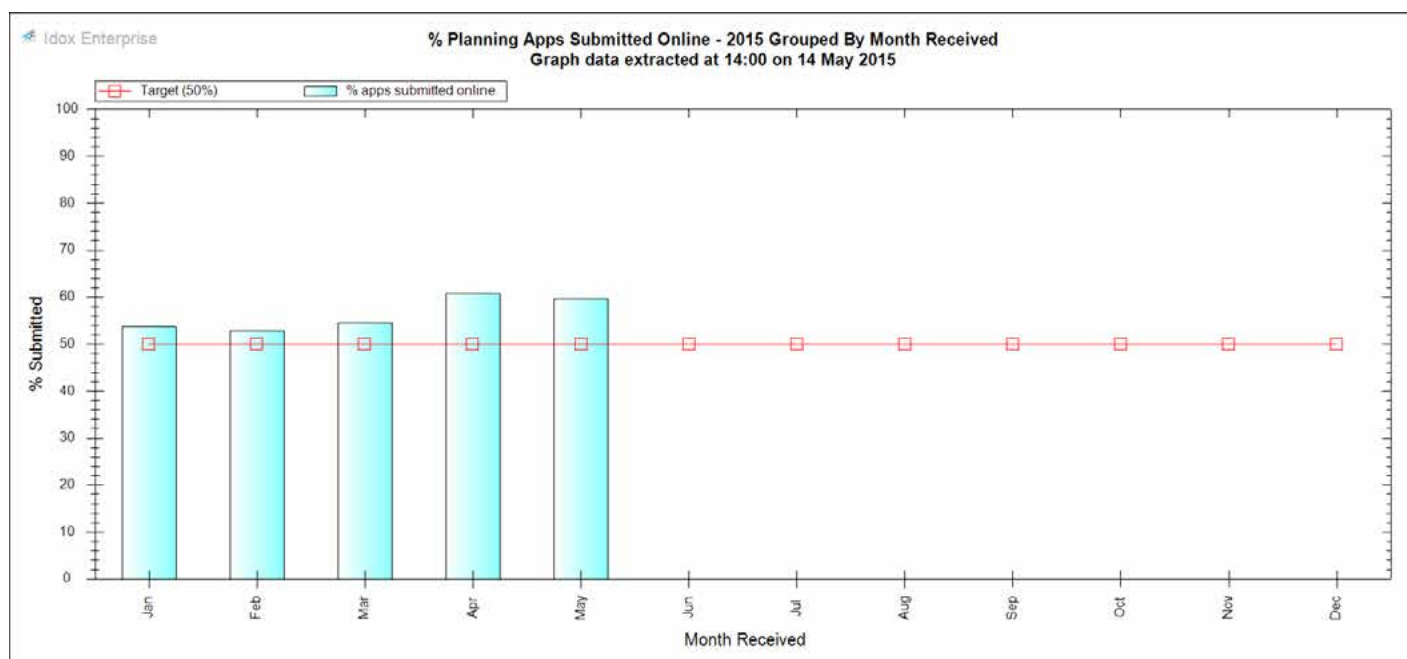
	% SUBMITTED ONLINE	TOTAL NUMBER SUBMITTED	TOTAL NUMBER SUBMITTED ONLINE
2012/13	19%	4043	755
2013/14	23%	3986	933
2014/15	50%	3975	1971

Percentage of Applications Submitted Online During the Reporting Period



ENTERPRISE GRAPHS ARE USED TO MONITOR THE ONLINE ACTIVITY

% APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE MARCH 2014 TO MARCH 2015



2014 – % ON- LINE SUBMISSIONS

Month	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
%	28	31	40	38	40	51	49	54	48	51	51	56

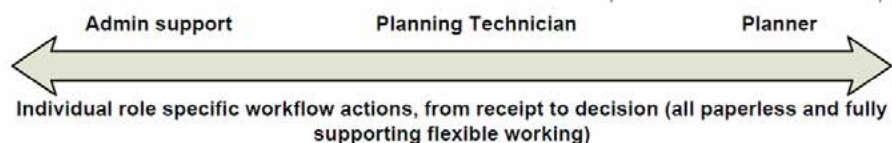
2015 – % ON- LINE SUBMISSIONS

Month	J	F	M									
%	54	53	54									

In addition on line payment and telephone payments are actively encouraged.

PAPERLESS ENVIRONMENT

The recently implemented Integrated Workflow system manages a **paperless** case management process. This has created savings in paper usage and duplication of effort, as well as related flexible working benefits.



PAPER VERSUS ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS – 2012-2014

An exercise was done to evidence both the uptake of on-line submissions and also the increasing move to a paperless office environment. It is clear that the move to paperless is in the right direction by both agents and applicants with no agent. This trend needs to be continued and will be further promoted.

SUBMISSIONS NO AGENT				
	PAPER	ELECTRONIC	TOTAL	% ONLINE
2014	370	261	631	41%
2013	384	68	452	15%
2012	443	31	474	7%

SUBMISSIONS BY AGENT				
	PAPER	ELECTRONIC	TOTAL	% ONLINE
2014	1783	1498	3281	46%
2013	2848	760	3608	21%
2012	3009	675	3684	18%

TOTAL SUBMISSIONS				
	PAPER	ELECTRONIC	TOTAL	% ONLINE
2014	2153	1759	3912	45%
2013	3232	828	4060	20%
2012	3452	706	4158	17%

CHAPTER 2

HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND

Continue to review and improve the performance of the Planning and Development service to ensure that all planning applications are processed in an efficient and effective manner without sacrificing service quality.

From the Proposed LDP 2015

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

High quality development remains a key objective for the Development Plan and in the light of a critical review of policy and analysis of Scottish Planning Policy the policy content of the plan is undergoing substantial change. Aberdeenshire Council remains persuaded of the merits of the twin track approach adopted by the current Local Development Plan of requiring the clarity of a masterplan or other design statements to articulate principles of design to be adopted in major developments, and the application of policies designed to ensure that appropriate solutions are presented to key design issues, rather than falling back on stylised or a “pattern book” approach within the LDP.

Review of our design approach was undertaken and the position advanced that very little change was required to the policy other than providing clarity in the language used. The Proposed Plan was published with a policy framework that reflects and gives local substance to the six qualities of successful places. Should this policy be taken forward into the Local Development Plan 2016, planning advice will be revised to reflect this amended approach.

Likewise, review of the Plan has resulted in proposals for development management policies that maintain the balance of open space within developments and improve the environmental performance of buildings



BRIDGE OF DYE STEADINGS



LITTLE ENNOCHIE MILL FINZEAN

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

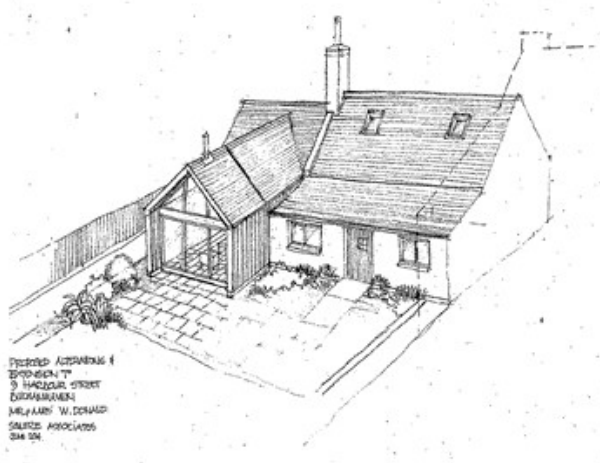
CASE STUDY SEVEN (A) TOWARDS HIGH QUALITY THROUGH PRE APPLICATION

An example of where even on the smallest of scale proposals pre application adds value.

TOWARDS HIGH QUALITY THROUGH PRE APPLICATION



The subject is a category C listed traditional fisherman's cottage within the Roanheads Conservation Area of Peterhead. This was subject to pre-application consultation that guided the development towards a positive design solution.



Initially, the applicant had proposed an extension that was not subordinate in scale to the existing building, and did not respect the historic fabric of the listed building. In particular the scale and choice of materials were deemed as inappropriate, and a subsequent amendment addressed some of the concerns.



Further negotiations brought forward a substantially altered and amended proposal. This included the removal of a lean to extension and render, and the exposure of the original stonework underneath.

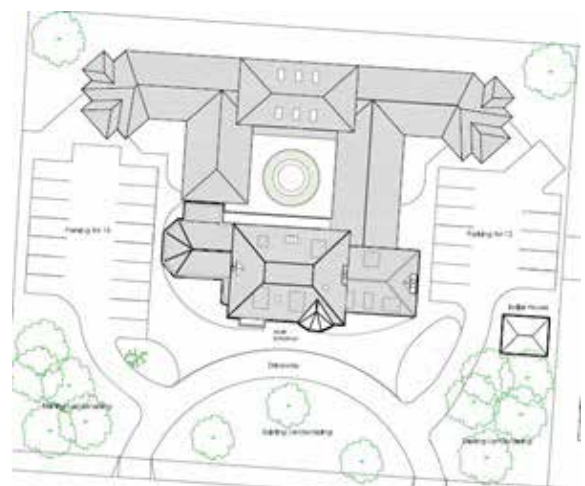
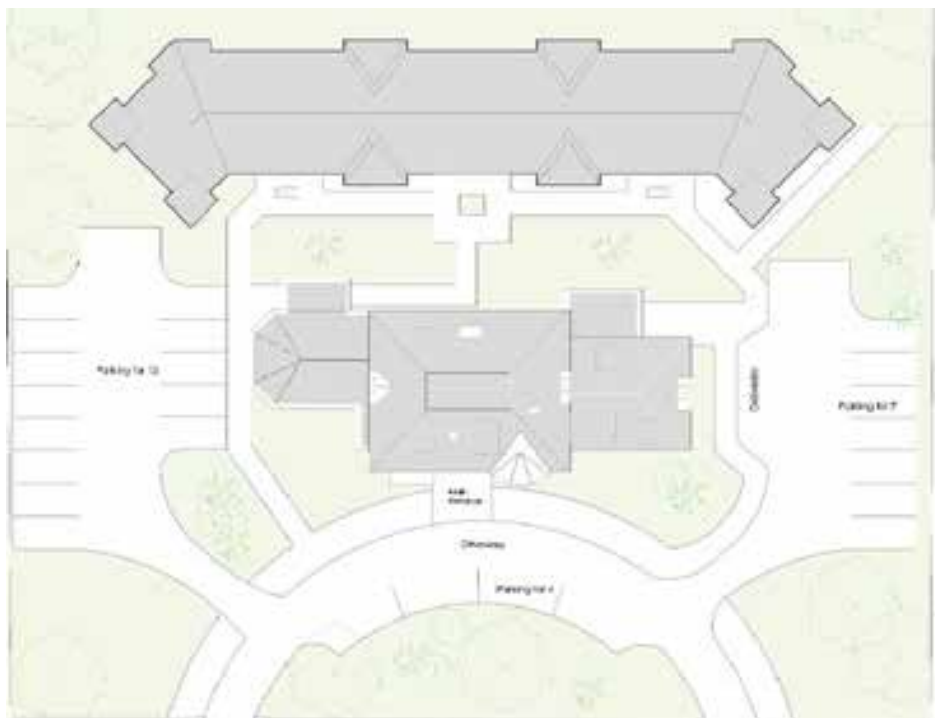
The use of a pitched roof link also reduced the impact of the extension, and placed it in a subordinate role to the original dwelling. Traditional materials were proposed of slate, timber linings and sash and case timber windows.

CASE STUDY SEVEN (B) TOWARDS HIGH QUALITY THROUGH PRE APPLICATION

More complex pre application advice involving a change of use and refurbishment and extension of a listed building.

EDENHOLME CASE STUDY

- › C Listed building located on prominent thoroughfare in Stonehaven Conservation Area
- › Former use as Care Home, now redundant
- › Proposal to redevelop site, demolish more recent rear additions and erection of annex building to create B&B facility and self-catering apartments
- › Agent submitted pre-application enquiry
- › Retention of front listed building with 2 storey detached modern annex to rear
- › While supportive of principle, issues surrounding urban nature of design and scale in context of impact on listed building, conservation area and neighbouring amenity
- › Reiteration of concerns regarding listed building and conservation area from Environmental Planner (Built Heritage)
- › Further pre-application discussions with amended design
- › Reduced footprint and height – submissive to listed building, replicated design features on listed building in new annex
- › FPP and LBC submitted and assessed concurrently
- › Applications approved within local application timescales – no representations received



ABERDEENSHIRE DESIGN AWARDS 2014



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:

- › Raising profile of high-quality design and examples of best practice across all scales of development, from single homes to volume house- builders.
- › Total number of 2014 entries 153 (an increase of over 40%) based on revised categories as described in PPF 2013
- › Next bi-ennial awards to be held September 2016

AWARD WINNERS - 2014



THE COLOUR BOTHY

An inspirational but simple studio designed to make maximum use of natural daylight and create a bright working space.

This project has been awarded a **Highly Commended**



THE BOAT HOUSE, BOURTIE

A simple honest structure that sits comfortably at the side of a small loch within a designed landscape to meet the demands of the client.

This project has been awarded a **Highly Commended**



Sustainability

REEKITLANE, COULL

This contemporary property demonstrates a strong emphasis on sustainable principles with a combination of energy saving measures and locally sourced materials.

This project has been awarded a **Commended**



PRE-APPLICATION COLLABORATION

- › Ongoing revision of process for efficiency and integration with new e planning software.

PLACEMAKING

- › Work carried out by both the Environment Team and the Specialist Services Team makes an ongoing contribution to placemaking across Aberdeenshire, through e.g.

1. Project work (as described earlier)
2. CARS, TH scheme (as described earlier)
3. An ongoing programme of Conservation Area reviews
4. Provision of open space, landscaping, and historic character advice in support of planning applications.
5. Access work relating to upholding access rights, core paths and long distance trails e.g. Deeside Way, Formartine and Buchan Way.
6. Ranger Service sessions enabling communities to have the skills and knowledge to make decisions to sustainably develop their local areas for biodiversity. See below :



ALFORD SCOUTS IN MURRAY PARK – TREE PLANTING WITH ABERDEENSHIRE RANGERS

PARTNERSHIP WORK

- › To deliver high quality development e.g. with **Haddo Estate** and the **National Trust** at Haddo House and Country Park.
- › With **Northeast Scotland Preservation Trust**, to promote recycling of materials and re-use of indigenous materials within new development and re-development e.g. Materials Store
- › With **NESBReC**, to provide targeted biodiversity information and advice in new developments.



CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS

The Council has a rolling programme of identifying, preserving and enhancing areas of outstanding built heritage and historic character across Aberdeenshire. New Conservation Area designations in the last year included **Fraserburgh Central** which was a significant factor in the Council's successful bid for TH and CARS funding. Other new designations were **Auchenblae**, **Benholm** and **Kirktown of Fetteresso**. The conservation area appraisals for these areas help to inform residents about the area's special character and help developers identify and formulate proposals. This coming year the programme includes completing reviews at Broadsea and Old Deer and a new designation at Kennethmont. Future reviews/designations include Crovie, Pennan, Port Errol and Dunecht.

BUILT HERITAGE – REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT

Various strands of project work as described above (Kandrochit Castle, Tarlair, Haddo), as well as **TH/CARS**, all contributing to high quality development, potentially attracting inward investment.



CHAPTER 3 CERTAINTY



DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The continuity provided by the approval of the [Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan](#) has been continued throughout the year by development of the proposed plan according, as far as possible, to the timetable published in the [Development Plan Scheme](#). We recognise that certainty and early forewarning of potential change assist the business decisions of local enterprises and reduce anxiety in communities.

Submissions to the [2013 Main Issues Report](#) were initially reported to the devolved [Area Committees](#) in May and June 2014, and open debate within the Infrastructure Services Committee in July 2014 provided transparency as to the content of the forthcoming proposed plan.

The work relating to the publication of the [Proposed Plan](#) on 27 March 2015 was essentially carried out in accordance with the

Development Plan Scheme and this included adapting to and responding to the publication of Scottish Planning Policy. The only real deviation relates to the impact of the Chief Planner's letter concerning Supplementary Guidance which resulted in the Proposed Plan in terms of text and format being amended to reflect the guidance provided. Aberdeenshire Council however remains on track to submit the Plan in December 2015.

CASE STUDY EIGHT : LDP SOLUTIONS

Internal project planning difficulties arose from the receipt of the letter from the Chief Planner. A phased approach to the release of information relating to the Proposed Plan was adopted with the revised policy and the "Shaping" spatial strategy sections, being published and agreed by Aberdeenshire Council in January 2015. Again the principle adopted was to be clear on the scale of change being promoted as early as possible to allow affected parties to have as much time as possible to consider the implications.

Specific issues that arose due to the foreshortened time available to prepare the settlement statements for inclusion within the Proposed Plan included problems associated with identifying and specifying developer obligations for community facilities with stakeholders.

Solution: As a pragmatic response, general statements were included in the Plan on these subjects rather than delaying the Plan further for other partners to discuss and agree the

exact contributions that would be sought.

This reflects the Council's commitment to delivering the best Plan possible without compromising the programme. The Council's view remains that the submission of the Plan for examination in line, as far as possible, with our programme, best serves business and communities across the whole of Aberdeenshire.

CERTAINTY BY THE DELIVERY TEAM

The Delivery Team have ongoing engagement/liason with Council Services to progress development and ensure the required infrastructure is in place to facilitate it. Examples include:

- › The Delivery Team have been liaising with Education and Property colleagues to ensure resolution for education constraints on allocated sites. As education provision is often a constraint to development, there is on-going work undertaken by the Delivery Team and Education colleagues to ensure strategies are put in place to alleviate capacity issues in pressured areas and ensure early identification of future capacity issues in terms of the build out rates of ongoing development.
- › The team are also assisting Education colleagues with providing responses to planning applications, and chasing up responses where needed.
- › The team have on-going dialogue with the 3 Development Management teams in order to ascertain the latest position on planning applications, receive updates or provide assistance where a development relating to an allocated site may have stalled.
- › The team also work closely with the Strategic Development Delivery Team (SDDT) and in many cases the Delivery Team ensures the project is kept to a programme/ framework to meet deadlines. The Delivery Team can offer support to the SDDT, much in a similar way to the relationship with Development Management, in terms of liaising with other services and agencies to ensure all are kept up to speed on infrastructure issues across the strategic locations.
- › The Delivery Team work closely with Developer Obligations and regularly share information so that both teams have the most up to date information at their disposal.
- › The Team also liaise regularly with colleagues from Transportation and Roads Development to overcome issues and chase progress where required in order to identify solutions to deliver necessary infrastructure and identify issues which may be a barrier to development.

CERTAINTY IN DELIVERY

DELIVERY ON-SITE: CHAPELTON DEVELOPMENT

In the last PPF under 'Open for Business' the Chapleton new settlement was the subject of a case study to evidence rapid delivery of a large scale allocation, project work, collaboration, partnership work and engagement. One year on it is felt appropriate to evidence the effectiveness of this delivery as a good example of certainty within planning.

A significant level of joint working had already been undertaken for this project between the developers, landowners and the Council in the build-up to planning permission and the application itself being granted for this development of regional significance. The production and subsequent approval of both a Development Framework and Masterplan by Aberdeenshire Council in 2012 allowed the developers to then apply for formal planning permission.



PROGRESS

Having since gained Planning Permission in October 2013, construction is now fully underway to build Scotland's largest new town containing over 4000 new homes, up to 3 new schools, 11.5 hectares of employment land and associated infrastructure with the aim of becoming an exemplar of high quality mixed use sustainable development. It is both unique as it is significant that a project of this scale has taken a mere 5 years from Masterplan to development on the ground.

Requiring a total investment of over £2 billion, it is anticipated the project will largely supply the Aberdeen to Laurencekirk Strategic growth corridor, which follows the route of the A90, with required housing and business land for the next 30 years.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & CO-OPERATION

The spirit of co-operation between stakeholders, which was established at the pre-application stage, continues to the present day, mainly in the form of monthly project meetings.

The monthly project meetings, led by the Delivery Team in conjunction with the local Area Manager, bring the landowner, developer and other relevant stakeholders together to address and solve, where necessary, issues which are all critical in the successful delivery of this pioneering development.



CHAPELTON PROJECT MEETING

Overall the Chapelton Development remains as one of the best examples of cross-sector collaboration throughout the planning process which the Council has been involved with to date to deliver a significant high quality mixed use development in Aberdeenshire. It is also an unprecedented project in terms of moving a new town proposal from concept to development on the ground within 5 years. All partners have engaged in the process highlighted to date,

creating a mutually beneficial process which has ensured the development is progressing on schedule and will continue to do so into the future.

DELIVERING MORE EFFICIENTLY

There is close joint working between the Information & Research Team and the Delivery Team to share information which informs both the Action Programme and Housing Land Audit. This improves consistency between the two documents.

It also cuts down on the number of times developers and agents are approached for information which saves time and helps to maintain good relationships with stakeholders.

Good communication between the teams has also identified areas where there was duplication of tasks such as monitoring planning applications. This is now done once by Information & Research and shared with Delivery, saving time and improving efficiency.

ENVIRONMENT

Consistency and reliability of officer advice

- › Internal advice on built, archaeological, and natural heritage is standardised across the teams by liaising through various regular cross-team working groups. These provide a forum to review emerging legislation, protocols and key issues.
- › Policy advice, as well as pre-application and application advice, is set within this context.
- › Environment surgeries with Development Management staff take place on a regular basis in the area offices providing a further opportunity to provide specialist advice and support to decision making.
- › Internal PIs are in place for archaeology and NESBReC responses.
- › We have reviewed and updated a number of [Planning Advice Notes](#) which provide best practice guidance for applicants and staff and have published new Advice on Protected Trees and Landscaping Design.



ARCHAEOLOGISTS AT WORK



EASTER AQUHORTIES STONE CIRCLE

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT – CERTAINTY

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT CERTAINTY IN DECISION MAKING

In considering the overall decision making performance for 2014/15 it is important to firstly look at the first Quarter (**Quarter 1**) of the reporting period which coincided with the implementation of the new electronic planning application system – 'Uniform'. Unfortunately, this downside was a predictable initial hit on first quarter performance indicators. One of the main reasons for this was the down-time caused by the data transfer process. Over fifty thousand planning applications and two million documents were transferred to the new system. Performance, as is now evidenced, rapidly improved in each of the first three months and by the fourth month was exceeding previous performance in most measures.

Quarter 1 (2014/15) was as follows comparing with the previous Quarter 4 of the previous reporting period (2013/14):

HOUSEHOLDER

Performance fell from 85% in Quarter 4 to 68.4% for householder applications determined within 2 months in Quarter 1. Average Weeks increased from 7.8 weeks to 8.6 weeks.

NON HOUSEHOLDER

Performance fell from 46.4% in Quarter 4 to 35.9% for non-householder applications determined within 2 months in Quarter 1. Average Weeks increased from 15.7 in Quarter 1 from 18.3 in Quarter 4.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Overall performance fell from 61.4% in Quarter 4 to 51% in Quarter 1 for all applications determined in 2 months. This was acknowledged as being significantly below the 70% Aberdeenshire target. Average weeks however improved from 14.1 in Quarter 4 to 12.1 in Quarter 1.

This significant fall in performance was most certainly as a result of the Planning Service preparing for and going live with a new electronic application system 'Uniform'. This occurred between March and April 2014 with

the 'go live' being at the start of April. For operational and contractual reasons the 'go live' date had to be brought forward, thus was earlier than was anticipated. As such this meant that the full suite of testing usually associated with the implementation of a new system did not take place timeously. This unfortunately caused some major delays in applications being validated and thus determined.

In addition, before the 'go live' date the system was shut down for around 10 days to enable the transfer of a substantial amount of data from the old system to the new system. This was necessary but had a significant impact on performance. It was estimated that the 10 day close down of the system equated to approximately 20% of applications that would have normally been put through the system. Staff also required training on the new system and the success of this and the ability of all staff to comprehend and use the new system also took an understandable period of time to settle in and in many cases replace a system used by the majority of staff for up to 10+ years.

In staffing terms, in this quarter, following the review and the implementation of the new structure, not all positions had been filled and thus some teams were not up to full

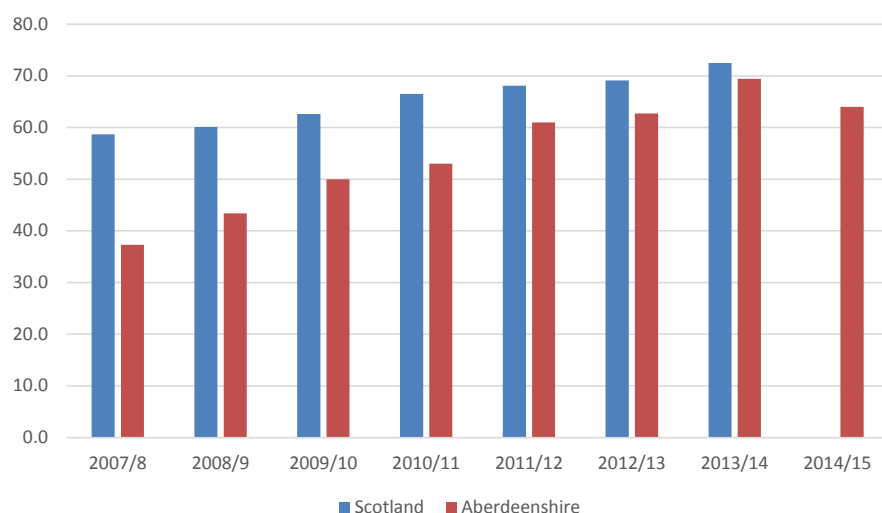
compliment. In the interim period between the new structure and the new system being implemented vacancies occurred with staff both retiring and moving on to new posts outwith the Council. A new e planning team, vital to the start of the planning application process, was created to enable in house scanning of applications. This a new team, with new methods of working, new equipment and time to train staff also impacted on performance.

It is felt important to highlight Quarter 1 performance as the immediate aftermath of significant change. What followed in the next three Quarters equates to the result of that significant change.

Quarter 2 was seen as the **improvement phase** following the Quarter 1 performance. This was followed by a rapid **upturn in performance through Quarters 3 and 4**. Thus although overall the yearly figure reports a fall in performance, the evidence clearly justifies that fall and thereafter immediately evidences a clear upward trend to the year end. In the absence of the 10 day time loss during the data transfer (~20% approx.) and the associated, albeit necessary, transformational changes it is estimated that performance for 2014/15 would have exceeded that of the previous year.

2014/2015	QUARTER 1 %/AVERAGE WEEKS	QUARTER 2 %/AVERAGE WEEKS	QUARTER 3 %/AVERAGE WEEKS	QUARTER 4 %/AVERAGE WEEKS	2014/2015 %/AVERAGE WEEKS
HH	68.4/8.6	90.2/7.2	94.5/6.6	93.5/6.6	85.7/7.3
NH	35.9/15.7	49.7/17.5	58.2/14.8	60.6/14.8	51.5/15.8
ALL 2014/15	51/12.4	66.8/13.2	70.6/12.0	73.4/11.6	65.4/12.4
2013/14	72%	74%	68%	61%	70%

% of Applications Determined in 2 months



PERFORMANCE TO 2014/15

YEAR	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Scotland (%)	58.7	60.1	62.6	66.5	68.1	69.1	72.5	
Aberdeenshire (%)	37.3	43.4	50	53	61	62.7	69.4	65

PERFORMANCE 2014/2015:

Evidence of an upward trend in performance following the transformational period in 2013/2014.

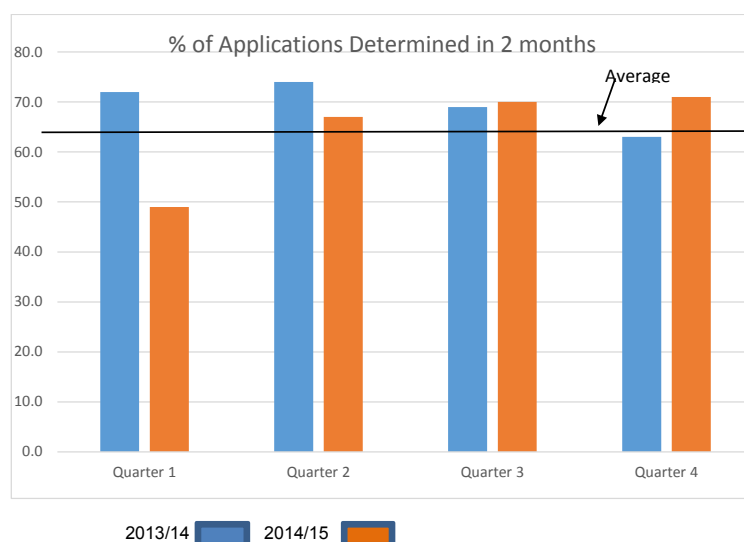
Quarter 1 – Dip in performance

Quarter 2 – Evidence of recovery

Quarter 3 – Improvement

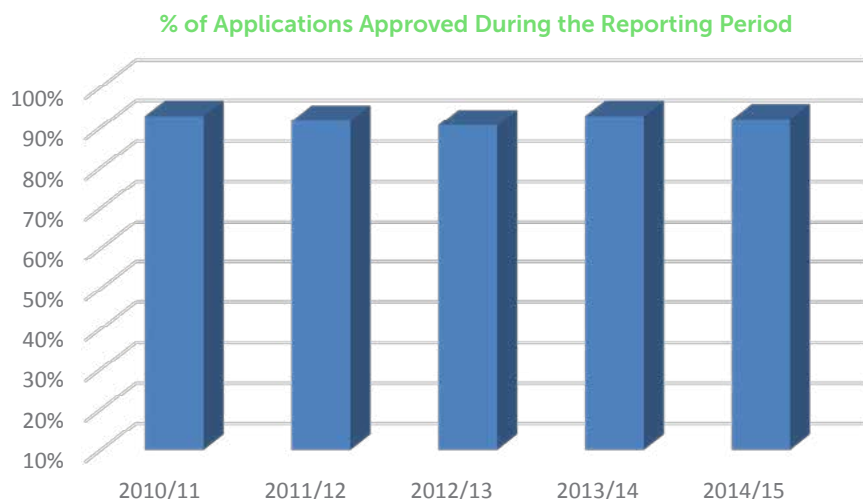
Quarter 4 – Improvement

Overall – Upward trend following period of transformation, implementation and embedding of systems, processes and structures.



APPROVAL RATES

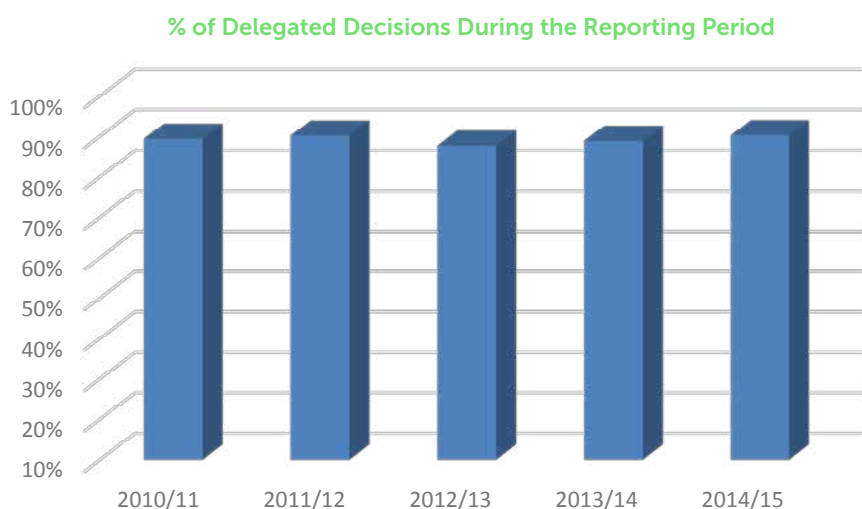
Approval rates have remained largely consistent with only a small reduction (0.8%) from last year. This does remain below the national average, however Aberdeenshire has had the highest number of decisions taken in Scotland within the reporting period. The focus remains on promoting certainty within the planning system and consistent approval rates in line with approved policy and allocations will give confidence and certainty to communities and developers alike.



YEAR	APPROVED
2010/11	92.8%
2011/12	91.6%
2012/13	90.5%
2013/14	92.8%
2014/15	92.0%

DELEGATED RATES

Delegation rates have risen this year. The determination of Council applications is now part of the Scheme of Delegation. The Corporate Review continues on the Scheme of Delegation. The Planning part of this was scheduled to have been completed by 2014. Work has continued on this although delays through the prioritisation of the Social Work and NHS integration has occurred. It is proposed that a planning-only review will be considered to enable the proposed changes. The Scheme of Delegation is also reported in more detail within **Chapter 5 Efficient and Effective Decision Making**.



YEAR	DELEGATED
2010/11	89.4%
2011/12	90.2%
2012/13	87.7%
2013/14	88.9%
2014/15	90.3%

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Improvement has been recorded in all areas of decision making. Although decision making timescales for major applications have reduced, it is still recognised that this remains above the national average. Also acknowledged is that within that major decision making category the timescales for major housing developments and major business and industry have increased. Focus remains on further mitigation to achieve more significant major decision making timescale reductions. These are largely linked to the following performance priorities.

Performance Priorities – How they have been addressed

There are **5 main areas of priority** that have been identified through feedback and have remained the focus throughout the reporting year 2014/2015.

5 Areas :

- › **Legacy Cases**
- › **Major Application Timescales**
- › **Legal Agreement Timescales**
- › **Processing Agreements**
Progress on Processing Agreements has also been covered in **Chapter 1 Open for Business**
- › **Developer Obligations**

LEGACY CASES

One of the priorities has been to reduce legacy cases. This in line with the government's desire to reduce all legacy cases nationally. The Feedback from 2013/14 acknowledged that legacy cases had reduced but that there was a further need to reduce the current numbers and continue the ongoing strategy activity. The legacy strategy was recognised but evidence of outputs and reduction in numbers was the clear expectation.

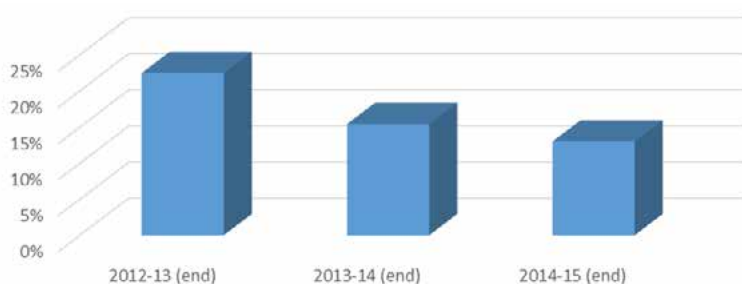
Legacy cases have reduced overall. Both the pre 2009 applications and those over one year old have been reduced. Later on in 2015 the Legacy Strategy became more focused and a dedicated team was brought together. This team categorised the remaining legacy cases and working closely with the Legal Service and the intensity of the task was raised significantly. Although the official legacy figures below record further

reductions, a case study on the Legacy Team and the outcomes demonstrates a rapid level of improvement.

Legacy Team Case Study no 11 – refer to **Chapter 5 – Efficient and Effective Decision Making**.

NUMBER OF PENDING APPLICATIONS AT END OF REPORTING PERIOD								
NO. PENDING	TOTAL	PRE AUG 09	AUG 09 - MAR 10	APR 10 - MAR 11	APR 11 - MAR 12	APR 12 - MAR 13	APR 13 - MAR 14	APR 14 –
31/03/2015	761	19		4	5	22	45	661
31/03/2014	943	34	7	12	29	59	802	
31/03/2013	1028	83	14	34	98	799		

% of Pending Legacy Cases



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

	PENDING	LEGACY CASES	LEGACY
2012-13 (end)	1033	232	22%
2013-14 (end)	947	146	15%
2014-15 (end)	761	98	13%

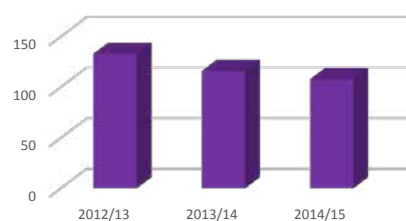
MAJOR APPLICATION TIMESCALES

Refer to 'Overall Performance' above.

Decision Timescales - Major Applications

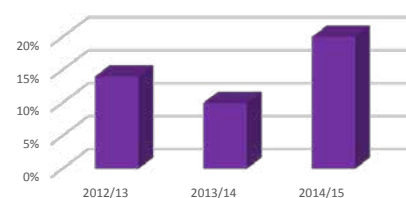
AVERAGE WEEKS	
2012/13	132.9
2013/14	115.9
2014/15	107.8

Decision Timescale - Average Weeks



% IN 4 MONTHS	
2012/13	14%
2013/14	10%
2014/15	20%

Decision Timescale - % in 4 Months



LEGAL AGREEMENT TIMESCALES

IMPROVEMENT FOCUS FROM 2013/2014	EVIDENCE / IMPROVEMENT	
Speed of decision making	› To resolve perceived inconsistencies in Section 75 instruction a standardised instruction sheet was implemented and a dedicated s75 email address was established. This is actively being used by Legal and Planning	
The average time taken to conclude legal agreements has risen to 151.4 weeks.	› Average times have reduced although still above the national average. › Implementation of the Heads of Terms process has ensured that any issues are resolved at an early stage and reduces ongoing discussion and negotiation at the drafting stage. › Agreed Head of Terms has created a proactive approach from Services and applicants and greater proportionality of the final level of developer obligations. › Further work is ongoing in the implementation of the recommendations posted by the Section 75 workshop and the Scottish Government. › The reporting back to Committee has been tested in two legacy cases and, as a result, further work is required to ensure appropriate governance and decision making measures are in place and to allow for Elected Member briefings before full rollout. › Standardised instruction sheets have been implemented. This has resulted in clear and concise instructions being received by Legal Services from the Planning Service at the outset. The number of points of clarification being requested by Legal has reduced and it is considered that the instruction sheet better aids drafting of legal agreements.	› A dedicated Section75@ email account has been established and is actively being used by Legal and Planning. This has resulted in one point of contact for Planning for the submission of instructions and has developed clearer lines of communication between Legal and Planning. › A standardised template for legal agreements has been in use for some time and has been developed on a transactional basis with the leading local firms and is widely accepted. Redrafting and negotiating of terms has been encountered to a greater extent with national legal firms and this often increases the time taken to conclude a legal agreement. › The Council is now looking to formally publish its templates as adopted styles and these will be the Council's model templates to be used at a local Aberdeenshire level. The two main style templates produced are for (i) payments only; and (ii) for smaller developments with affordable housing › Major applications often require bespoke drafting and specifically tailored clauses. Additionally, the emergence of new housing initiatives (e.g. NHT) has resulted in close working with the Council's Housing Service to update the template affordable housing clauses. This will be undertaken at an early date to ensure effective delivery of these new schemes. This demonstrates the Council's need and ability to respond and adapt to change quickly.
Dedicated Legal Planning resource	› During the course of the last year, the Council encountered particular difficulties in recruiting to this post due to a lack of qualified conveyancers at national level. A dedicated resource is now in place. An external legal framework agreement is now in place following a lengthy joint procurement exercise with Aberdeen City Council. This appointment coincides with additional in-house resource should it be required in the future.	
Developer Forum - engagement with developers on the use of processing agreements and s75 agreements.	› Legal Services and Developer Obligations are keen to take forward a meeting with developers for major applications to discuss issues. An additional meeting with Legal Agents would also be considered beneficial.	› Developer obligation information bulletins are produced and sent directly to agents. The bulletins guide and inform agents of any procedural changes, payment information and policy changes which impact on developer obligations

PROCESSING AGREEMENTS

A number of Processing Agreements have been entered into covering local, major and national applications. Twenty nine Processing Agreements have been entered into. Of these 6 were determined within the 2014/15 time period. All met their intended timescales.

The use of Processing Agreements have been promoted to agents and developers alike. Staff training has taken place and both staff and [developer guidance notes](#) have been prepared. The developer guidance notes and [templates](#) are available on the website.

Aberdeenshire Council Processing Agreements

Status - Local / Major / National	Status - Approved / Refused etc	Date of Approval / Refusal etc
NA	NA	
Major	Delegated grant - awaiting S75	
Local	Pending	NA
Major	App Approved	03.06.2015
Local	App Approved	03.06.2015
Local	Pending	NA
Local	App Approved	21.04.2014
Local	Pending	NA
Local	Pending	NA
Major	Pending	NA
Local	Pending	NA
MSC - Approval of Matters	App Approved	03.12.2014
Local	Pending	NA
NA	NA	NA
Local	Pending	NA
Major	Pending - S75 instruction sent 10/06/2015	NA
Major	Pending	NA
Major	App Approved	26.09.2014
Major	Pending	NA
Major	App Approved	20.05.2014
Local	App Approved	17.04.2014
Major	Pending	NA
Major	Pending	NA
Major	Pending	NA
Major	Pending	NA
Local	Pending - S75 instruction sent 10/06/2015	NA
Major	Pending	NA
Major	Withdrawn	09.06.2015
Major	Pending	NA
Major	App Approved	17.12.2014

Refer to **Processing Agreements - Chapter 1 - Open for Business**

DEVELOPER OBLIGATIONS

IMPROVEMENT FOCUS FROM 2013/2014	EVIDENCE / IMPROVEMENT
Rapid Review of working practices – to address the specific challenges of openness, proportionality and effective delivery of development within Aberdeenshire.	The Developer Obligations (DO) team has undertaken a significant volume of work in the review of the supplementary guidance on methodologies for the Local Development Plan. Detailed costings have been included within the methodologies to provide further information to developers. This is the result of extensive benchmarking exercises and workshops. In addition they have been working on improving the evidence base and engaging various Council services in developer contributions to improve efficiency and link more closely to the Capital Plans.
The formal roll out of both the Developer Obligations and Legal review of practices.	The DO team has developed a mailing list with all agent and developer contacts issuing information bulletins advising of any key changes. Further information will be included within dedicated website pages later in 2014/15... We have a detailed in house recording system in place for the monitoring and management of all developer contributions received and spent. This system provides detailed reports and assists with invoicing of Section 75's.
Recruitment Resources	There have been difficulties in recruiting solicitors in Aberdeenshire (particularly to the Conveyancing team). The impact of significant resourcing issues and staffing constraints within Legal Services has had a negative impact on the time taken to process instructions and conclude legal agreements. This was despite the recognised and substantial need for a dedicated resource and a budget having been identified. The most recent recruitment exercise was successful and a dedicated resource is now in place.

PROTOCOLS/LIAISON GROUPS

Protocol reviews and monitoring continues to ensure existing protocols are kept relevant and up to date. New protocols are identified as necessary. Work with consultees and key agencies also continues to retain awareness of requirements and obligations with regard to pre application and application advice and timeous consultation responses. Awareness of consultee timescales and performance has led to further improvement projects with key consultees/agencies with an aim to improve/reduce consultation timescales and streamline and create consistency within response inputs. A Case Study on the improvement project with Environmental Health service is outlined in **Chapter 5: Efficient and effective decision-making.**

PLANNING/LEGAL GOVERNANCE

A regular programme of liaison meetings has been established to facilitate joint working between the Planning Service and the Legal and Governance Service. This has resulted in the following-

- › A strategy being developed for dealing with certain types of legacy cases
- › Templates being produced for use in planning reports to Area Committees

where the application has to be referred to the Infrastructure Services Committee

- › Performance Indicators being put in place in respect of the service that Legal provides to Planning
- › Bespoke Equalities training being provided for Development Management staff
- › A change being made to the Council's governance documents to reflect a change in legislation concerning planning applications made on or on behalf of the Council

In addition the meeting has provided a conduit through which legal advice has been requested and provided in relation to a range of matters which have included data protection and the Planning Register and the content of the on-line Enforcement Register.

A representative from Legal and Governance attends the steering group that is overseeing the introduction of the new Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan.

PLANNING/LEGAL CONVEYANCING

Focus from 2013/14 has been on decision making, taking forward measures to speed up Section 75 agreements, reducing legacy

cases and ensuring proportionality and speed in response times from the Developer Obligations Team. The Liaison Group continues to enable discussion between Planning, Legal and Developer Obligations to address decision making, timescales and ensure proportionality. Legal and the Legacy Team are working closely to identify and progress outstanding legacy cases where legal agreements are required.

PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION/ROADS LIAISON

Close working relationships between Planning and Transportation/Roads Service has always been the key to a good understanding of the specific issues within any future development. Work on common issues and processes continues with a regular Planning/Roads Liaison Group.

Early intervention includes Transportation presence at, or input, to both major and non major pre application discussions and meetings as well as at master plan meetings. Key to the success of the implementation of Designing Streets and ahead of roads construction consent is this early intervention through collaborative working between Planning and Roads Services and developers.

CERTAINTY WITHIN PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION

Aberdeenshire has for some time now been working in accordance with the National Planning Policy document Designing Streets. This has a strong emphasis on creating streets and places and requires early intervention of the Council's Transportation team in the Planning process to ensure that a balance is achieved in the design between place and movement. The Planning and Transportation teams work collaboratively, convening developer meetings at the outset of a new proposal coming forward so that the streetscape can be considered as a key

element of the master plan. Once this plan is in place, it becomes a primary element in informing both planning and roads construction consent processes. Key to the success of this is to ensure that the master plan is accompanied by a quality audit and a street engineering review in accordance with Designing Street requirements. There is a substantial investment in Council and developer time in following this process but that investment then ensures that the best possible street layout and quality of design can be achieved.

CASE STUDY NINE – TRANSPORTATION /PLANNING COLLABORATION

There are a number of high profile projects in Aberdeenshire which have followed this process including the new developments now being built at Chapleton (new town) and Riverside of Blairs (enabling residential development). The resulting developments are radically different in appearance and from the outset have created attractive and pleasant environments for new residents and for visitors by all modes of transport.



CHAPLETON NEW TOWN – DESIGNING STREETS



USE OF WIDE VERGES FOR SERVICES, SWALES, LANDSCAPING, TREE LINED ROADS



RIVERSIDE OF BLAIRS - ENCOURAGING USE OF BUS AS AN ALTERNATIVE MODE OF TRANSPORT



APPROPRIATE BOUNDARY WALLS AND STREET LIGHTING

INPUT TOWARDS NATIONAL ROADS DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

In respect of technical standards, Aberdeenshire Council is moving towards using the new National Roads Development Guide which will provide a consistent platform across Scotland so simplifying for developers the process of gaining technical approvals in each Council area. Aberdeenshire Council has established a working group which has carried out a line by line review of the new standards and is preparing an Aberdeenshire document which adopts the best practice given in the national document whilst also accommodating local circumstances and providing a smooth transition from the current local standards. It is anticipated that the new document will come into full use in Aberdeenshire in the autumn of 2015. The new document fully supports the principles of Designing Streets and will work well with the master planning process for new developments.

CERTAINTY IN PROCESS AND PROCEDURES

STANDARD CONDITIONS

The Model Conditions group had completed their review of Planning Conditions and a set of conditions, including a set of renewable conditions are being used. This gives greater consistency and certainty to all stakeholders.

The group will continue to review, monitor and update the set of conditions in liaison with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the Development Management Section are continuing to implement the most relevant conditions. The continuation of this group will enable a more flexible and organised approach. The Council are aware that work is ongoing in relation to national standard renewable energy conditions and once agreed this information will be incorporated into the list of Council conditions and made available on the website.

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

MODEL PLANNING CONDITIONS, AND INFORMATIVES

Date: December 2013

BEST PRACTICE MANUAL

The Best Practice Manual was delayed to after the review of the development management service. This document remains in a draft format, but the reinstatement of the working group intend to finalise the document for the end of 2015.



FYVIE CASTLE

CHAPTER 4

COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Significant communication and engagement activity has been undertaken on the Proposed Plan in accordance with the published participation statement. All statutory requirements in relation to publication of the Proposed Plan have been addressed:

- › Publishing the Proposed Plan on the Council's website;
- › Placing copies of the Plan in all local libraries;
- › Publishing notices in local newspapers;
- › Copies of the notice of publication were also sent to all statutory bodies along with some 1,385 people who had responded at the earlier Main Issues Report stage.
- › In addition, around 9,000 statutory notices were sent to all properties within a 40m distance of sites that are identified for development within the plan.

NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE

In addition to meeting statutory requirements, significant effort has been made to utilise new and innovative approaches to communicating and securing engagement on the Proposed Plan.

[@shireldp](#)

Twitter was used extensively during the preparation of the Proposed Plan, and this continued to be utilised to communicate with potential stakeholders during the consultation period. A total of 41 tweets were sent from the official Aberdeenshire Council LDP twitter account ([@shireldp](#)) during this period. Topics included the LDP's progress through committees, advance notice of publication dates and publicity for the consultation process. Tweets were specifically scheduled to ensure that information was released at peak viewing times to maximise exposure.

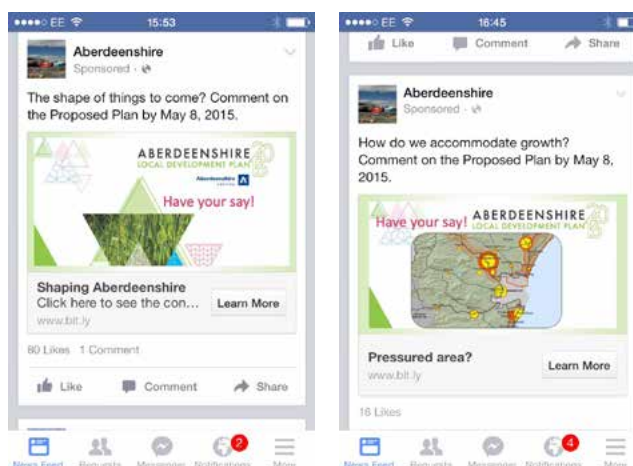
DROP IN SESSIONS

- › A total of 13 public drop-in events were held across Aberdeenshire during the consultation period on the Proposed Plan.
- › Events took place in all of the larger settlements in Aberdeenshire.
- › Most sessions were held between 1-7pm to allow people an opportunity to attend at times outwith normal working hours.
- › The drop-in format encouraged a welcoming informality to the events. Due to the drop in times and officer numbers present, attendees were able to gain more time with Planning Officers to have richer discussions on issues that would not have been possible in the more traditional town-hall meeting formats.
- › The events were advertised via press releases, Twitter and on the Council's website. Other services within the Council also shared information about the events on Facebook, Twitter and relevant websites such as community council planning pages.
- › A total of 427 people attended the drop in sessions and included interested members of the public, Community Councillors, landowners, journalists and developers. A number of Councillors also attended.



FACEBOOK

A suite of adverts were also bought for Facebook, and these ran throughout the consultation period on the Proposed Plan. This included adverts aimed at particular key groups. Overall the adverts reached 90,587 website clicks from 5,500 people. 1,505 came from the youth market target adverts, with a further 1,345 clicking from the Aberdeen Housing Market Area and 2,650 from the adverts targeting the Rural Housing Market Area.



MINI MOVIES

Finally, seven short online videos were produced by officers within the Planning Policy Team in order to communicate key messages about the Proposed Plan and to encourage engagement. These were added to the [Aberdeenshire Council YouTube](#) channel, with links provided on Twitter and the Aberdeenshire Council website. Themes covered the function of the LDP, development in the countryside, neighbour notification, natural heritage protection, historic environment protection, developer obligations and a trailer video. The videos secured a very high level of public interest, and resulted in 831, 331, 929, 86, 216, 268 and 655 views respectively. They were a particularly successful component of the overall engagement process on the Proposed Plan and have subsequently been shortlisted for the 2015 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning.



0:53

- › Play next
- › Play now

[Trailer - Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan](#)
by [Aberdeenshire Council](#)

- › 2 months ago
- › 714 views

A trailer of the six short films produced by the Planning Policy Team on the Proposed Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (2015). For further information on the Proposed Plan please visit www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp

INFORMATION AND RESEARCH TEAM

Information and Research Team
Consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of the annual [Housing Land Audit](#) process undertaken by the Information and Research Team. Much of the site programming information contained in the audit is obtained directly from developers and agents. The draft audit is published on the Aberdeenshire website for consultation with a search facility and mapping to make it easier for individuals or companies to find the sites

relevant to them. Additional analysis of the data is also available on request.

Stakeholders are also given the opportunity to discuss responses to the consultation and raise any outstanding issues at an open meeting held annually with an independent chairperson.

Feedback from stakeholders on the consultation process continues to be

positive. It is unrealistic to think we can reach agreement on every site but the process is seen to be fair. If there is disagreement, sites are clearly listed in the final audit as disputed with reasons given. In 2015, just two sites were disputed out of a total of 355 across Aberdeenshire. The negotiation and discussion which is key to this process means the level of disagreement is kept to a minimum.

ENVIRONMENT

BENCHMARKING

- › Benchmarking is underway in relation to key areas of built, archaeological, and natural heritage: Doors Open Day, process for the maintenance of footpaths, process for the maintenance of historic assets, and organisation of the Local Outdoor Access Forum.
- › Benchmarking exercise is completed in respect of overall [Design Award](#) process, resulting in amendments to Aberdeenshire's award scheme to reflect best practise.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- › Conservation area reviews/designations: public engagement carried out as per agreed process. e.g. at Kennethmont
- › Community engagement is on-going with Friends of Tarlair pool, Kindrochit Castle and Stonehaven Clock Tower

TRAINING ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

- › Topic based workshops for staff and regular updates/training provided to DM Team meetings on natural and built heritage issues.
- › Tailored training on the historic environment provided to DM staff by the [Archaeology Service](#). This provided clarity on the consultation process, issues to be considered and the use of conditions.

Proposed Conservation Area at Ardmore Distillery, Kennethmont Public Drop-in Session



KEY SERVICE OBJECTIVES

SERVICE PLAN EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Customer Engagement, on the other hand is about understanding what our customers think of us and about the services we provide. This includes our external customers and also the many internal customers within our own organisation that we provide services to.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT

8.3 UNDERTAKE REGULAR CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT/SURVEYS IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDER NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS AND TO OBTAIN THEIR VIEWS ON THE QUALITY OF SERVICES

STATUS	PROGRESS	DUE DATE	COMMENTARY
	90%	31-Mar-2015	Various customer engagement exercises have been undertaken both with internal and external customers and work continues to embed these activities into normal business functions. The Continuous Improvement Officers support managers through the development of surveys and the collation and statistical analysis of results.

[Infrastructure Services
Service Plan 2013-2016](#)

FEEDBACK/COMPLAINTS/COMPLIMENTS

COMPLETED COMPLAINTS	COMPLETED SERVICE REQUESTS	COMPLIMENTS	WITHIN 20 DAYS	OUTWITH 20 DAYS
140*	355*	56	112 (+5%) ***	28 (-5%) ***

FRONTLINE COMPLAINTS	INVESTIGATION	NOT UPHELD	UPHELD	PARTIALLY UPHELD
140*	355*	130 (-1%) ***	6	4 (+1%) ***

*Completed complaints do not include Level 2 further clarification.

*Service Requests / Investigation are not complaints but requests for information.

*** % change from 2013/14

Frontline complaints have increased by 59 over the year, however the rate of those not upheld/upheld and partially upheld has remained consistent +/- 1%.

Complaint handling has improved in terms of timescales + & - 5%.

CUSTOMER COMPLIMENTS

Kirkwood Homes

"Just a quick note to say thanks for your excellent presentation of our application reports at committee this morning. It covered all the key points. Thanks again for your support and the positive way you put forward our applications"

McGregor Garrow Architects Ltd

"Thanks Jane,
Just over 3 weeks from the application date, that's very impressive! Sure our client will be equally pleased."

SERVICE PLAN EXPECTED OUTCOMES

It is particularly important that any information obtained by an intervention with customers is fed back to service teams so that service provision can be modified as appropriate and that those involved in the service understand the needs of their customers.

In previous years Customer Surveys were carried out bi-annually. It was decided, in order to prevent survey fatigue, that this would be reduced to an annual survey. The Survey response for 2014/15 increased from 127 to 271. Overall satisfaction rate has increased from last year.

SURVEY OUTCOMES

2014:
Satisfied/Fairly satisfied- 79.5%
Fairly/Very dissatisfied- 7.8%

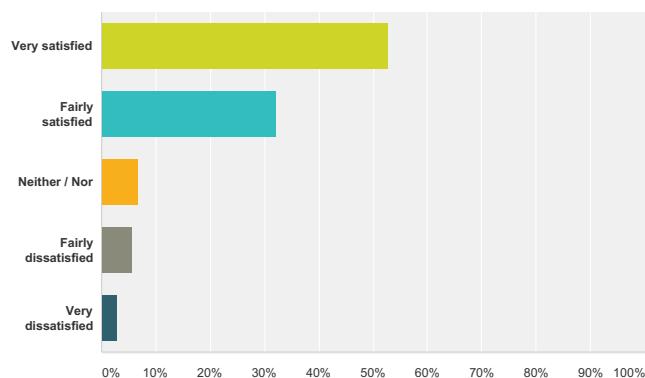
The majority of responses were from applicants/agents who had an application granted rather than refused.

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

Development Management Customer Survey April 2015

Q17 Overall how satisfied were you with the service you received from us in dealing with your application?

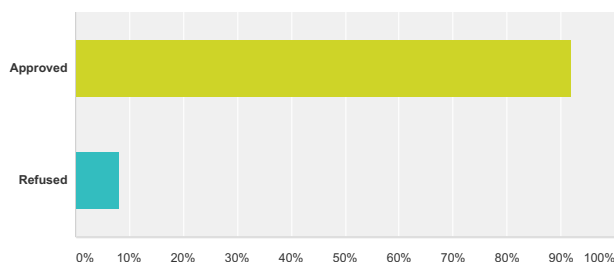
Answered: 271 Skipped: 4



Development Management Customer Survey April 2015

Q4 Please indicate below the decision on your application.

Answered: 273 Skipped: 2



ACTION PLANS

Refer to 'Customer Engagement Outcomes'
Chapter 1 Open for Business

MEASURES/MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

In cognisance of the Government feedback measurable outcome targets have been introduced to enable more meaningful outcomes from survey responses. These can be found in Part 4 A.

STAFF SURVEYS

Staff Surveys formed part of the Review of the Review (refer to **Chapter 1 Open for Business – Case Study 3 : Review of the Review**)

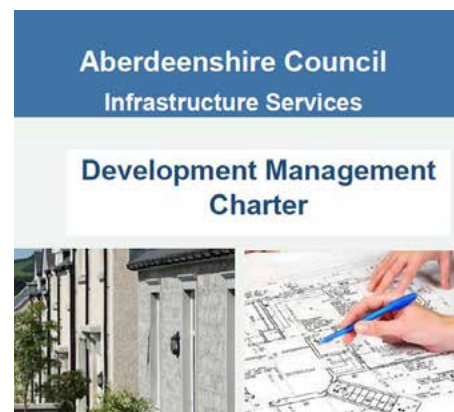
FUTURE SURVEYS

Surveys to engage and improve consultee processes and procedures are planned for the coming year.

CHARTERS

The [Development Management Charter](#) has been reviewed and updated.

The [Enforcement Charter](#) has likewise been updated.



WEEKLY LISTS

The Service listened to its customers and acknowledged that some groups and individuals did not appreciate the real time functions of the Public Access Register which allows custom made weekly lists in real time information to be set up. As such the publication of the Weekly List was reinstated as was its publication on the website.

AGENT/DEVELOPER FORUMS

Agents and Developers continue to receive mail shots on any relevant information and any changes to legislation or processes. Agents have been asked to submit topics they wish to be discussed for future forums. Due to time restrictions and LDP forums, the DM Agent/Developer Forum has been scheduled to August 2015.

PLANNING FOCUS GROUP

Planning Focus Groups have continued throughout the PPF period. Topics have included performance, Processing Agreements and Section 75 timescales.

ELECTED MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the regular Area and Policy Committee business we recognise the need for continuous training for Elected Members. In the past year training has been given to Members on proficient reasons for referral to Committees and also on competent reasons for refusal of permissions. All aimed at making the Committee process more effective. There is regular attendance at Area Committees by Team Managers when Performance Indicators are discussed.

Managers/Team Managers are responsible for updating the Council's Covalent performance system on a quarterly basis where performance is recorded.

The Service have a Member/Officer Working (MOWG). This group comprises a selection of Area Ward Members. A number of reports on topics including the LDP progress, planning advice for development management and various environment strategies have been reported to MOWG to effectively gauge the views of Members in order to inform officers of current thinking on matters. Members' Ward Pages (intranet) is used to consult Members on planning applications and also to allow updates such as enforcement issues on controversial sites, PPF work and changes to procedures etc, for information purposes.

E PLANNING AND BUSINESS SYSTEM COMMUNICATION

Seminars, workshops, training and user-guides were provided to agents, developers, Community Councils and members of the public throughout the 2014-15 period. The e Planning take-up is evidenced by our percentage of on-line submissions more than doubling from 23% in 2013/14 to 50% in 2014/15.

Our new on-line planning portal is proving popular and feedback from our customers and engagement exercises has been generally very positive.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

(also refer to **Customers/Community Councils in Chapter 1 Open for Business**)

PUBLIC ACCESS TRAINING

CASE STUDY TEN : COMMUNITY COUNCIL PUBLIC ACCESS TRAINING

Several Community Council events and forums were attended by the Planning Service Manager, Team Managers and the Uniform Project Manager where training on the system was the main topic.

We also worked in partnership with consultee groups in order to maximise the e Planning approach and minimise duplication of effort. Our new documentation includes hyperlinks to our on-line portal and mapping systems with the ability to make online comments. We are hoping to expand on and further improve our joint working efficiencies with formal consultees when we launch our new Public Access website in July 2015.

Pilot schemes have been on going with both internal and external consultees. SEPA now use the consultee module to submit consultation responses as do our Environment team. Several Community Councils have also been using the module to submit their comments.

BENNACHIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

"The system is "great". The planning spokesman indicated that he found the information "very useful" and as he is the CC spokesperson for planning for the CC he says that he has to pass on information to other Community Councillors and finds' it easy to do this"

Community Council as Consultees



- Uniform Consultation Module
- Community Councils will be included
- This will assist in the submission of comments
- Give access to information
- Pilot Module with Community Councils

Aberdeenshire Council

Weekly List Search



Aberdeenshire Council

COMMUNITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT AND TRAINING EVENTS

A series of Community Council weekend events took place where planning was a major focus.

One event hosted an interactive session where the Community Council members were taken through a full planning application process and asked to make a recommendation. This enabled a better understanding of what is involved in processing an application and at what stages the Community Council can be involved.

Further individual Community Council Forums run in each area were attended by the Planning Service to provide training and information on material considerations and the role of the Community Council in the planning process.



Material Planning Considerations



- Scottish Government Policy
- Development Plan
- Design of proposed development
- Access, provision of infrastructure, natural heritage etc



- Right to a view
- Value of property
- Land Ownership

Aberdeenshire Council

Decision Making Process

Circular 4/1998

Conditions

- necessary
- relevant to planning
- relevant to the development to be permitted
- enforceable
- precise
- reasonable in all other respects.

THE USE OF CONDITIONS IN PLANNING PERMISSIONS

Aberdeenshire Council

CHAPTER 5

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Strict project planning has allowed dates for Committees to consider Local Development Plan issues to be set in advance of their need. The use of staff resources from other teams on occasions has assisted and allowed the production of the plan to remain on track during periods of particularly heavy workload, such as during the analysis of comments on the Main Issues Report. Through effective project management the

Council remains committed to submitting the Local Development Plan for examination in December 2015.

Early engagement with the DPEA will be undertaken ahead of the submission of the Local Development Plan in order to ensure the efficient planning and management of the subsequent examination process.

ENVIRONMENT

SHARED BEST PRACTICE

The Archaeology Team currently provides specialist archaeology advice and assistance to Moray Council and Angus Council through Service Level Agreements. Temporary arrangements are in place to provide a similar service to Aberdeen City Council and it is hoped that this arrangement will be formalised in an agreement later this year. This sharing of service provides an opportunity to develop a resilient specialist team which is beneficial to all Councils and ensures consistent archaeological advice is provided across the north east of Scotland to the development industry.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICE PRIORITIES FOR 2014-2015

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE STRATEGY

The Improving Performance Strategy (IPS) which has been the key performance tool has been integrated within the PPF. Whilst still very much relevant as a strategy it is the PPF that is the key focus as a strategic document.

COMMITTEE PROCESSES/STRUCTURES

The six administrative areas continue to have 3 weekly committee cycles. These committees deal with all business including planning application determinations.

Five of the areas carry out a Pre Committee Chair's Brief which informs the Chair/Vice Chair of likely issues that may arise and allows clarification of any elements within reports. Senior Planners attend these briefings.

The Infrastructure Services Committee sits 7 times in a year. Certain significant applications will be referred to this Committee for decision. Full Council similarly sits 7 times in a year. Only rarely when legislation dictates do planning applications require referral.

SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Work has continued on the potential to change elements of the Scheme of Delegation in relation to development management. This has continued to form part of the overall Corporate review of the Council's Scheme of Delegation. Work has reached a drafted wish list in terms of potential changes. Further delay has been compounded by Corporate focus on the Social and Health Care part of the Scheme of Delegation being considered a priority.

DEALING WITH DELAYS

Legacy Cases (also refer to **Performance Priorities in Chapter 3 - Certainty**)

CASE STUDY ELEVEN – LEGACY CASES -STRATEGY

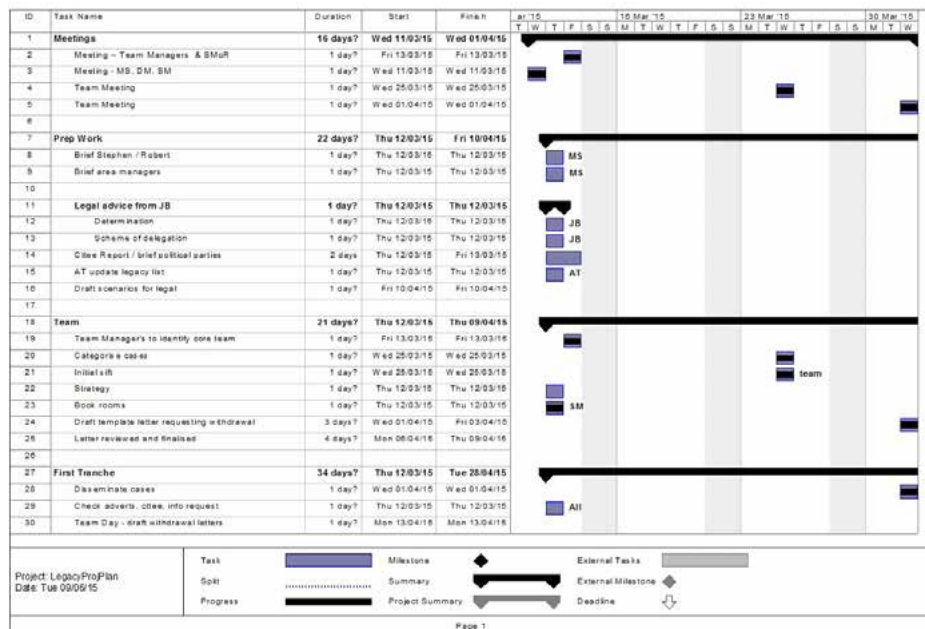
LEGACY TEAM

A team consisting of 8 planners and a co-ordinator was set up in early March 2015 to target legacy cases, in line with the performance priority. There were 101 legacy cases when the team commenced, but given cases are continually becoming 'legacy', this number is constantly changing. At present there are 63 planning applications considered legacy cases (applications which have been pending for more than one year). This is a clear reduction from the 100 cases identified as legacy in March/ April. Pre-2009 cases have reduced by 70%, pre 2014

	PRE AUG 09	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL
No. of pending legacy cases at June 2015	6	3	2	5	21	25	63

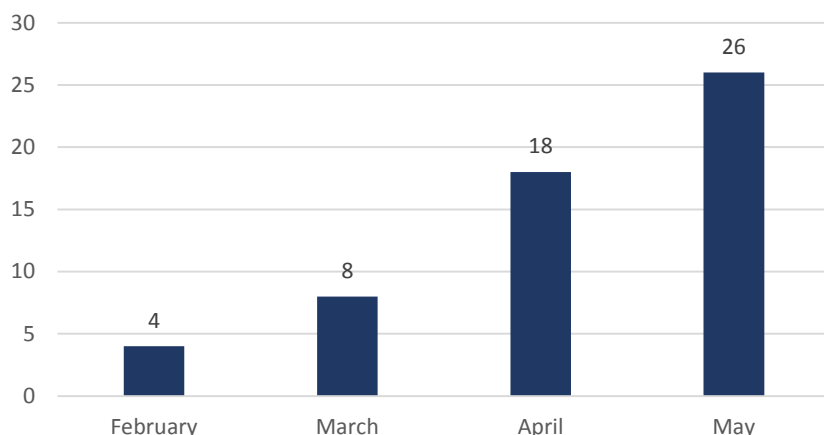
The team developed a strategy, which involved categorising the applications into three 'tranches', recognising that there were a range of different issues and factors delaying the determination of applications, and therefore a need for different approaches. There has been an awareness raising exercise to ensure that other services and elected members are aware of the project. The co-ordinator prepared a project plan to follow which allowed a clear understanding by all of timescales and actions. The co-ordinator also ensured close liaison with management, and legal colleagues.

Legacy Strategy Project Plan



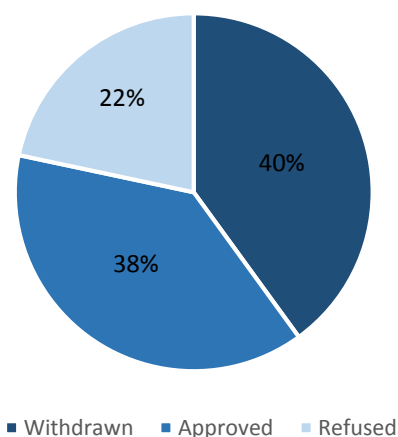
Although going beyond the PPF period the graph below shows that since the team was formed in March, the number of legacy applications issued has consistently increased.

Legacy Applications Issued by Month



The chart below shows that so far the majority of the applications have been withdrawn, closely followed by approvals.

Outcomes



LOOKING AHEAD...

The team are also considering prevention of future planning applications becoming legacy cases. One of the means in doing so is ensuring that processing agreements are in place for applications requiring a legal agreement, and this is something the service are actively pursuing. Processing agreements ensure that all parties have signed up to a timeframe for determination. There is a greater awareness across all teams of the importance of preventing planning applications becoming legacy cases. Alongside this, work is also being done by the legal service to improve the length of time taken to conclude S75 agreements.

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL - LOCAL REVIEW BODY (LRB)

In the last PPF period a review of the Local Review Body had commenced and was continuing.

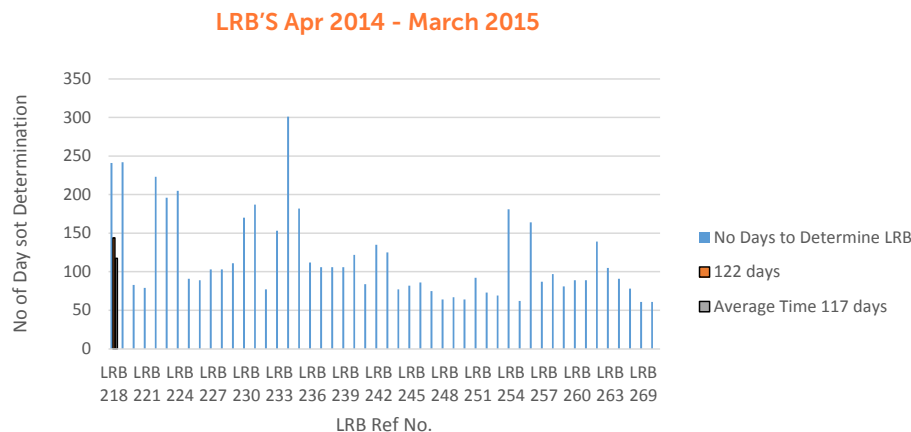
The Local Review Body (LRB) continued to receive a high volume of review applications. There were 61 applications for review in the year to 31 March 2015 compared with 51 in the previous year.

The average time taken to determine applications submitted to the LRB continues to improve. There has been a 17 % reduction in the average number of days taken to determine a review. In 2013/2014 the average time was 141 days. In 2014/15 it was 117 days.

This reduction has been achieved following a number of changes that were introduced as part of a review of the operation of the LRB. They included:-

- > Pre-scheduled dates for site visits;
- > Increasing use of unaccompanied site visits;
- > Introduction of performance indicators for the time taken to issue decision notices following the determination by the LRB;
- > Continued collection of data and the setting of a target of 122 days for determination of reviews.

The following graph shows the number of days taken to determine each of the 2014/15 review applications.



It can be seen from the graph that although the average time taken over the whole year was below the target of 122 days nevertheless of the 50 cases which have been determined 15 exceeded the target time.

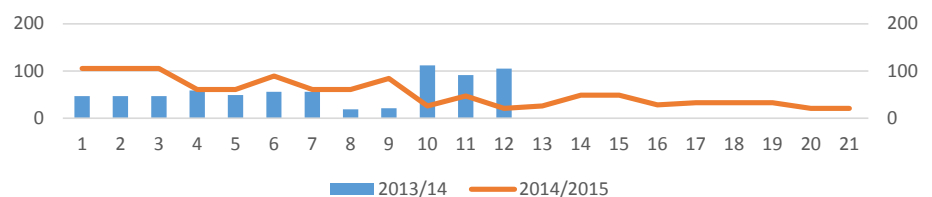
All of the cases where the target time was not met were wind turbine applications. One particular cause of delay identified was the need to await a noise assessment from the Council's Environmental Health Service (EH).

The matter has been raised with EH and they are focussing additional resources on the provision of noise assessments. Monitoring of the time taken to determine LRB cases will continue in order to see if this particular improvement can ensure that all cases are dealt with within the target time of 122 days.

For cases where site visits took place the time taken from the first meeting to site visit was monitored. The following graph shows the

figures for this for 2013/14 and 2014/15. It can be seen that there has been an improvement and this in spite of the total number of site visits having increased from 12 in 2013/14 to 20 in 2014/15. The average time has reduced from 59 days to 53 days. This will continue to be monitored.

LRB - No Days Meeting to Site Visit



In order to ensure consistency of decision making training was provided to LRB members in February 2015. An external trainer provided LRB members, as well as the staff who advise and support the LRB, with training on the procedural requirements of the LRB and also on how to take sound planning decisions.

LIAISON AND PROTOCOLS

WORKING WITH OTHERS

In the latter part of the reporting year we have also started to work closely with our internal consultees to look at the service and support they provide to us. Initially this has meant working with the Environmental Health Team to see how we can improve the way we work together. Looking further ahead we aim to do the same with other services in Aberdeenshire Council to ensure that we are receiving the best possible service from our colleagues in our pursuit of excellence in the service we provide.

We recognised in mid 2014 that consultation responses from Environmental Health had not tangibly improved with respect to responses within the 14 day target response date. As part of the Working Group a Review has commenced with regards to the number and type of consultations issued. Further and enhanced liaison between management is arranged for the coming months with the aim of improving the performance of this key consultee.

CASE STUDY TWELVE: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH LIAISON

OUTCOMES- ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH LIAISON – CASE STUDY – JOINT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Environmental Health recognises the need to improve performance and consistency in respect of responding to planning consultations. It was recognised that of 886 consultations issued in the year only 334 were responded to within the 14 days.

The high number, and complexity, of applications for wind turbine developments has created challenges for the Environmental Health Service. The sporadic nature of these developments and proximity to noise sensitive premises – and to other turbines – has created particular difficulties in undertaking noise assessments.

As a result an Improvement Project involving Planning and Environmental Health, facilitated by the Improvement Service commenced with the objective of improving performance,

improving communications between the two Services and improving consistency. This project will finally report in August 2015 and is likely to include: development of a liaison protocol, procedural changes, increased number of meetings, revised response template, training/awareness sessions.

The Environmental Health Service has already adapted its way of working to improve its performance and a number of improvements have been made in 2014 and 2015 :

- › Formerly, all Environmental Health Officers were involved in the assessment of wind turbine applications. This has now been concentrated in a team of 3 enabling the development of technical expertise and speedier and more consistent responses.
- › The Environmental Health Service has employed a consultant to assist in consultation responses.

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT – % EH RESPONSES WITHIN 14 DAYS

- › Clear the backlog of applications, and to provide technical support and staff training.
- › Guidance to wind turbine developers has been improved and is available on the Council's website, and should help improve the quality of information submitted by applicants.
- › Changes have been introduced to administrative procedures and IT systems in respect of consultation requests which will improve performance.

EVIDENCE FROM THE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT :

Environmental Health Responses with % within 14 Days



External Liaison also refer to **Protocols/ Liaison Groups Chapter 3 - Certainty**

CNPA

Regular liaison occurs with the Cairngorms National Park and Park and as a result with the other partner Authorities.

SNH

Liaison continues with SNH on various matters. The Service continue to broker communication on Bat issues between Agents and the Government.

HISTORIC SCOTLAND

Historic Scotland liaison cumulated in a presentation as part of a Development Management training day. Historic Scotland came along and did a session with the planners about the creation of Historic Environment Scotland.



INTERNAL LIAISON

REGULAR DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT AND LEGAL CONVEYANCING LIAISON CONTINUES.

Focus is on process and procedure with a view to continuous improvement.
Focus in the PPF reporting year:

- › Decision Making, taking forward measures to speed up Section 75 agreements, reducing legacy cases and ensuring proportionality and speed in response times from the Developer Obligations Team.
- › The Liaison Group continues to enable discussion between Planning, Legal and Developer Obligations to address decision making, timescales and ensure proportionality.
- › Legal and the Legacy Team are working closely to identify and progress outstanding legacy cases where legal agreements are required.

(also refer to **Protocols/Liaison Groups Chapter 3 - Certainty**)

TRANSPORTATION/ROADS – also refer to **Case Study no 9 Transportation/Planning Collaboration - Chapter 3 - Certainty**

FURTHER OUTCOMES FROM TRANSPORTATION/PLANNING LIAISON:

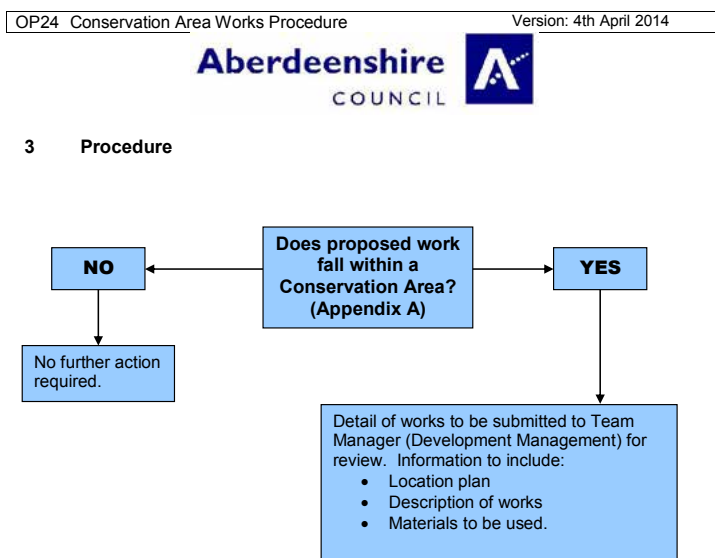
Collaboration and liaison continues with the Roads/Transportation Service to enhance close working relationships via regular meetings. This continues to improve the commitment to the implementation of Designing Streets with its widespread approach to both local and major developments and the use of SCOTS National Roads Development Guide. (See **Chapter 3 - Certainty**).

Work also remains on-going to ensure a consistent approach is applied by Area teams when dealing with enquiries regarding car parking standards and garage sizes.

This liaison group continues to provide both Services with a viable forum to discuss issues and agree a coordinated approach to deal with matters. A recent outcome of the liaison

group meetings, has been the identification of matters which will require to be reviewed and progressed via the development of protocols, these relate primarily to the clarification of roles, responsibilities and procedure for dealing with road closures, and the correlation between the level of surface water/flooding information provided at the planning application stage and RCC stages. A review has commenced with regards to both of these matters and further liaison meetings are arranged for the coming months with the aim of progressing towards the implementation of agreed protocols.

An example of simple yet effective collaboration which has resulted in the preparation of a protocol in April 2014 detailing an internal procedure for dealing with proposed works undertaken by the Roads/Transportation Service within Conservation Areas. See extract below:



CHAPTER 6

EFFECTIVE

MANAGEMENT

STRUCTURES

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The Local Development Plan continues to be managed using a PRINCE 2 structure. A board has been established of Directors within the Council. This is supported by a Steering Group chaired by a Service Manager. In addition to representation from the Policy Team there is also representation from the Delivery and Development Management functions, and following a review, there is also representation on the Steering Group by a senior officer from the Council's Legal and

Governance Service and one of the Council's Area Managers.

A working group of experienced development management staff has also been utilised to review existing Local Development Plan policies and recommend changes where necessary within the Proposed Plan. One of the positive aspects of having this group and other working groups has been to ensure ownership of the plan by planning staff.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

EXAMPLES OF IMPROVEMENTS IN PROCESS/PROCEDURE/CONSISTENCY

- › Appeal process for consistent appeal reporting to committee and consistent reporting of outcomes/lessons learnt.
- › Committee report template review with Legal Governance.
- › Planning Technician liaison to resolve inconsistencies across all areas.
- › Section 42/PPiP/MS application procedures, consultation input and staff guidance compiled.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT – TRANSFORMED STRUCTURE

At the beginning of the reporting year the reviewed staff structure was 6 months into operation. The changed roles at each level have evidenced benefits and improvements.

TEAM MANAGER ROLE

Focus is on monitoring the teams, speed and delivery. The use of Enterprise to monitor speed and quality. Regular meetings with the Seniors and staff one to ones. Team feedback meetings. Committee quality control. Working groups. Cover for Managers. Strategic work – Improvement initiatives and projects to bring forward.

Main contact regarding complaints from the public. Main contact for Elected Members. Team Manager has new areas of responsibility eg – responsibilities for surveys, Community Council training and liaison, continuous improvement work.

SENIOR PLANNER ROLE

Focus is on performance and ensuring each area team is delivering a high level of performance and continuous improvement in service delivery. Senior planners have a high level of responsibility and autonomy. They use the Enterprise system to monitor daily work patterns, timescales and particularly ensuring statutory determination times are being met. The Senior's role enables daily

contact with teams, being available to advise staff and delegate work through Uniform tasks. One of each of the three area Seniors is the consistent presence at Committee. The presence of 3 Seniors per team allows not only flexibility and cover but ensures overall consistency in work practices and a constant focus on getting decisions issued.

PLANNING OFFICERS

Within the last year, since the implementation of the new DM structure the full staff compliment is now in place. Thirty five Planning Officers are situated throughout the area teams.

The need for sustainable workloads was one of the main drivers for improved performance to result from the restructuring. Some evidence of a better spread and more manageable numbers appeared in a short space of time just at the end of the last PPF reporting period.

Benefits and improvements apparent since the change in Service structure to assist the Planning Officer role

- › Larger Planner pool within the teams.
- › Level of applications per Officer has dropped to an average of 20-30 applications per officer at any one time.
- › Promotion of cross office working and cover during staff absences to assist with workflow and Service performance levels.
- › Ability to focus on areas of most need
- › Evidence of the reduced caseload allowing

focus on performance statistics and maintaining levels of output.

- › Evidence of cover for dispersed teams and evidence of consistency in decision making.



THE DUTCH BARN WARDHOUSE - INSCH

PLANNING TECHNICIANS

Despite being based in different Area office locations, the Planning Technicians (PT) work as a team supported by the Team Manager and Senior Planners. In recognition of the importance of consistency for customers the Service undertake regular Planning Technician meetings both on a team and Service wide basis which provides an opportunity for work and procedural matters to be raised and clarification provided. The value of these meetings has been highlighted by the Planning Technicians and Team Managers will continue to hold and chair these meetings on a regular basis.

Benefits and improvements apparent since the change in Service structure assisted PT role:

- › Larger PT pool, easier for workload levels and there is always a PT in each office to discuss matters. Also less work build up during period of leave when previously in smaller areas work would be left for the other PT.
- › Additional Planners within the teams has reduced the number of calls PTs receive from applicants/agents seeking updates. Also attributable to information being available to view on website.
- › Closer working relations with other PTs –

all working with same system.

- › Planning online system register enquiries and update planning status which assists PTs
- › Team Manager- clearer reporting, regular meetings and more feedback from the same person to both parts of the team.
- › A Senior Planner is available in the office to discuss matters.
- › Beneficial having 3 Senior Planners to seek advice from, positive approach by Seniors
- › Senior Planner working between 2 offices assists in securing consistency with PD enquiries and validation.
- › Team Manager for both offices ensures teams are adopting a consistent approach.

EVIDENCE OF REVIEWED TEAM STRUCTURE CAPABLE OF DELIVERING PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

One of the main aims of the DM review and resulting management and team structure was to create a more proportionate and better balanced mix of staff, directing skills and experience to the areas of greatest performance need, ensure cover and assistance and achieve sustainable workloads for each team and individual planner.

Towards the end of the last PPF reporting period there was some initial evidence of caseloads becoming more manageable and sustainable, despite the continuing upward trend of application case work. This period has continued to evidence an overall better distribution. Caseloads per planner better meets the area team needs and gives more scope to improve output in both speed and quality.

AVERAGE CASELOAD PER PLANNER

Current No. Planners	35		
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
No. Pending (End)	1028	943	761
Average per Planner	29	27	22

Average Caseload per Planner



Planned development of staffing resource; right numbers and skills available to meet future needs:

The additional planner numbers is considered now to be at the correct number and the case load numbers reflect this.

The necessary skills require to be enhanced and nurtured and focused in the right areas.

Secondments have been used – Planning resource seconded to the Developer Obligations Team to assist in backlog work.

Legacy team – set up to reduce legacy cases **Backfills** have been appointed to assist teams where officers are working as part of Legacy Team.

Extra fees have been directed towards temporary posts to ensure teams are fully staffed.

A **Legal resource** has been funded by Development Management to deal with planning matters and in particular Section 75 work.

Consultants have been used by Environmental Health as a result of wind turbine pressure.

BUSINESS SYSTEM

Refer to **Chapter 1 - Open for Business**

IMPROVEMENT TRAINING

During 2014/2015 managers received improvement training in the form of a 1 day workshop in how to carry out a benchmarking exercise. We recognise that benchmarking is an important part of improving performance and that by comparing our performance and practice with that of others - through benchmarking we can understand how we are performing, how others are performing, understand why differences in performance might have arisen and then make improvements based on good practice.

The aim of the training and workshop was to enable us to conduct a benchmarking exercise, in order to improve internal practices, which in turn will improve service performance.

The session covered the following:

- › What Benchmarking is
- › The Benchmarking methodology
- › Assessing the need for change
- › Identifying Stakeholders
- › Identifying opportunities
- › Identifying Benchmarking partners
- › Capturing Benchmarking data

- › Preparing for and conducting a Benchmarking visit
- › Analysing the visit findings
- › Acting on the analysis and making changes to practices

We chose to undertake an exercise to understand how "stop the clock" is used in other authorities and how the process is operated and managed. Whereas we now have the ability to stop the clock through implementation of the Uniform system, we also have an understanding of best practice on how to apply stop the clock through our benchmarking exercise.

CASE STUDY THIRTEEN : BENCHMARKING FOR STOP THE CLOCK

Benchmarking training has been completed by Team Managers and the roll out of "Stop the Clock" (STC) has been implemented to bring us into line with most other authorities. A Benchmarking exercise has been instigated through questions raised via HoPS to ensure consistency of approach. A detailed guidance note has been produced for staff to ensure a consistent application of STC within our teams.

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL - PROCEDURE AND GUIDANCE ON STOPPING THE CLOCK IN PLANNING APPLICATIONS

COSTING THE PLANNING SERVICE

In September 2014 the Service undertook an exercise, in conjunction with the Improvement Service, to gather data in order to calculate how much it is costing Aberdeenshire Council to provide a planning service. The exercise involved staff in the Council whether directly employed by the service or indirectly involved such as internal consultees.

A working group was formed across the planning service to ensure that everyone understood their role in the exercise and that the wider planning team understood the

purpose of undertaking such a commitment. The exercise was managed by our service improvement team who worked closely with the Improvement Service to ensure the outcomes were robust.

As a result we were able to effectively benchmark ourselves against other local authorities and are currently utilising the training mentioned above to liaise with other like-minded authorities to understand where improvements can be made.

In addition were able to use the data to better understand our own processes, the costs involved and to examine our productivity for example in:

- › The cost of administrative support to planners and area committees.
- › Differences in Service provision across Aberdeenshire.
- › Time spent by consultees on responding to requests.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

- › Managers and Team Managers attended a Leadership Challenge two day workshop in early 2014. This was based on a need for new managers in a new structure to identify and realise their strengths and weaknesses in the leadership world.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING

Staff development continues through annual Employee Reviews (EARS). All staff through their reviews need to discuss their needs and skills requirements as well as these being identified through one to one meetings and close monitoring by Team Managers and Senior planners.

All staff have completed the following two statutory training courses :

HAVE YOU COMPLETED THE DATA PROTECTION AWARENESS COURSE?



Data Protection Act 1998

Equalities training in particular has been relevant to development management staff as part of their daily case load. All staff have completed the Council's Equalities training course and additional DM specific training was arranged with legal colleagues as part of a DM training day. A Development Management Equalities Champion has been appointed.

BENCHMARKING – SHARED BEST PRACTICE

Heads Of Planning Scotland - communication with the HOPS rural family continues as does use of the Knowledge Hub to share best practise and rural family meetings.

Similarly benchmarking best practice through Cairngorms National Park Protocol meetings attended by all the relevant authorities.

Further formal Benchmarking refer to '**Improvement training**' above and **Chapter 8 Continuous Improvement**.

COLLABORATION/ DELIVERING JOINT OBJECTIVES -

CASE STUDY FOURTEEN : SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

North Bay Pelagic fish processing factory was destroyed by fire on 17 January 2015. The site occupies a prominent position on the edge of the Peterhead Conservation Area.



In recognition of the economic development implications of the fire the Council set up a group of officials who were charged with delivering a permission for a replacement building. In addition a task force was also set up by the Scottish Government which was facilitated by Aberdeenshire Council and included bodies such as Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Pelagic Producers Associations and Peterhead Port Authority (amongst others). The first meeting of the task force took place on Friday 23rd January where a representative of Planning provided an outline of the Planning Process and identified relevant consultees. The task force was updated throughout the process.



We played a key role in delivering this permission in less than 6 weeks of the submission date. A contributing factor to this was the pre-application engagement with all stakeholders and an obviously willing applicant. Whilst no processing agreement was entered into dedicated officer contact at all points in the process were established and collaborative working with external agencies such as SEPA and Historic Scotland were key to this project being delivered. The applicant is hopeful to have his business up and running by August 2015.

TESTIMONY FROM CHAIR OF TASKFORCE :

"The company was anxious to get production restarted as soon as possible and the Planning Service was proactive in working with the company and their agent to ensure that the planning applications were comprehensive, drawings showed all necessary detail and information and the applications were lodged and put out for consultation without delay.

From a starting position of the company being concerned that time lost in the planning system would hold up reconstruction works and they would miss the summer mackerel season, a decision was delivered in the shortest possible timescale meaning that contractor and materials lead times were the main constraint.

This project demonstrated the ability of cooperative working to minimise the impacts of a major event and more particularly the excellent assistance and guidance provided by the Planning Service in assisting the applicant develop applications which were right first time – this was the hardest part, so those involved must be commended not just for what they achieved but for helping to change external perceptions of the planning service."

COLLABORATION WITH ABERDEEN CITY – UNIFORM BENCHMARKING

As part of ongoing collaborative working initiatives with neighbouring Local Authorities, the Planning Service have undertaken a short life working group comprising a number of training events and demonstrations of the Idox Enterprise Uniform system with representation from Aberdeen City Council Planning Service. The events have comprised of Q & A sessions with practical demonstrations and is part of a series of ongoing collaborative work between the Local Authorities which will continue throughout the year.

Further collaboration has taken place between Aberdeenshire/Aberdeen City and the Aberdeen [Western Peripheral Route](#) project to produce guidance on permitted development in respect of work compounds and associated development required for the new bypass.



PETERHEAD POWER STATION

CHAPTER 7 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Detailed project planning of the Local Development Plan, using a PRINCE 2 methodology, allows for effective budget planning and the alignment of resources with key stages of plan production.

Budgetary constraints continue to limit the scope of research that can be undertaken, which can lead to an over-reliance on information provided by the development industry – particularly in respect of bids to support the allocation of sites in the Local Development Plan.



DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

PLANNING FEES

2013/14	Actual £	Cumulative £	
Apr	290,159.74	290,159.74	15%
May	190,209.33	480,369.07	10%
Jun	231,795.34	712,164.41	12%
Jul	295,983.40	1,008,147.81	15%
Aug	272,838.93	1,280,986.74	14%
Sep	178,190.26	1,459,177.00	9%
Oct	250,507.78	1,709,684.78	13%
Nov	189,838.02	1,899,522.80	10%
Dec	181,588.99	2,081,111.79	9%
Jan	135,747.48	2,216,859.27	7%
Feb	188,610.07	2,405,469.34	10%
Mar	222,940.02	2,628,409.36	11%
	2,628,409.36	2,628,409.36	133%
Budget		1,970,000.00	
Forecast		2,600,000.00	

2014/15	Actual £	Cumulative £	
Apr	303,039.83	303,039.83	12%
May	287,803.88	590,843.71	11%
Jun	220,250.47	811,094.18	9%
Jul	309,599.56	1,120,693.74	12%
Aug	197,697.60	1,318,391.34	8%
Sep	205,675.68	1,524,067.02	8%
Oct	265,170.00	1,789,237.02	10%
Nov	235,878.27	2,025,115.29	9%
Dec	174,695.60	2,199,810.89	7%
Jan	113,051.51	2,312,862.40	4%
Feb	279,274.77	2,592,137.17	11%
Mar	350,573.84	2,942,711.01	14%
	2,942,711.01	2,942,711.01	114%
Budget		2,590,000.00	
Forecast		2,750,000.00	

The planning fees rose again in 2014-15 by £300K+. This was the highest fee level recorded at least post 2007.

Building Warrant decreased slightly by £44K but remained at a high level.

2013-2014
2,286,973.50

2014-2015
2,242,552.24

The high fee level enabled continued input of extra resources to further re-invest in the planning service and performance improvement.

- › **Legal Solicitor** – funding of a Legal Solicitor to concentrate on planning/ Section 75/legacy work
- › **Backfills** – to cover for officers working as part of the legacy team.
- › **Additional Planning Technicians** – to ensure full cover and throughput of rising application numbers

- › **e Planning Team** – additional staff to embed system and establish high performance and cover.

FINANCIAL RELIANCE

Regular liaison with the service accountant occurs. Monthly snapshots of budget sheets are given to Managers to consider and monitor. The Financial Regulations are clearly set out within the Council's internal 'intranet' pages. An 'easy read' guide: **Financial Regulations Lite** is for everyday reference for all financial users.

Welcome to this 'lite' version of Aberdeenshire Council's financial regulations which will provide you with a basic overview of the rules governing how we spend our money, buy-in services and manage all aspects of our financial affairs.

CHAPTER 8 CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Service Plan Expected Outcomes

Infrastructure Services is committed to continually reviewing and improving the services that it provides to ensure that they are efficient and cost effective and meet the needs of its stakeholders. Two elements of this process of continuous improvement will be benchmarking and customer engagement.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Aberdeenshire Council prides itself on having an up-to-date development plan framework, and employs robust project planning and risk analysis to ensure this situation persists. Through the use of a '**lessons learned log**', the development plan production process is **monitored** and **evaluated** in order to deliver continuous improvement. Following the publication of the Proposed Plan, a **process review exercise** has been undertaken. This identifies a number of **actions for improvement** which seek to enhance existing

procedures in respect of Member engagement and engaging with other Council services on future infrastructure requirements. These actions will help to enhance the production of future Local Development Plans.

Staff continue to receive appropriate training and development. A notable example includes policy staff receiving the [SP=EED \(Successful Planning = Effective Engagement and Delivery\)](#) training.

ENVIRONMENT

STAFF TRAINING – CPD

Environment and Specialist Services staff attend a wide variety of external specialist training courses or events to develop and grow knowledge and skills in their particular area of work.

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING

- › Two Silver 'KDI' projects ongoing – in respect of paths (as previously described) and Council owned historic assets.
- › Emerging improved strategy and action plans for the Natural and [Historic Environment](#)
- › Benchmarking in 4 key areas in respect of built and natural environment, as previously described.
- › Implementation of an [Archaeology Strategy](#) and [Ranger Strategy](#), and related Action Plans, for the Council.
- › Review of project inception and Works to Protected Trees processes.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Key Areas of Activities continue to be actioned, updated and taken forward if not completed/achieved. The majority of these Key Areas for 2013/14 that were carried forward have been actioned/completed and outcomes are set out below. Additional Key Areas continue to be identified and worked upon. Again any on-going activities not completed will be carried forward into the next PPF reporting period. The Improving Performance Strategy remains live, although in a different format now it has effectively been amalgamated within the PPF document.

Continuing from the 2013/2014 PPF Key Areas of Activities that were carried forward.

*KEY FOCUS 2013/2014 INTO 2014 - 2015	ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	IMPROVEMENT	VALUE	UPDATE
Customer areas of concern	Team Action Plans/Lessons Learnt/Training	Continue to monitor areas of concern	Customer satisfaction Specific measurable targets to be set for Action plan outcomes	Yes dissatisfaction reduced. Action Plans implemented and monitored	Customer relationships/ high quality service	Action Plans continue to form part of Team training. Refresh from new survey. Setting of measurable outcomes for future surveys.
Further Develop Applicant/ Agent Forums	Continue forums, add additional group specific forums eg › Major Project Developers › Volume Developers	Good communication ensure certainty	Customer satisfaction informed agents etc. Complaints data	In general Complaints – reduced.	Customer relationships/ high quality service, developer 'buy in'	Continue to engage with Agents. More regular electronic communication, Set up further forums and Volume developer workshops
Consultee Work to ensure more effective & efficient responses	Liaison & protocol	Quicker/ more relevant responses	Speed of decisions	Mixed – still work required	Decrease average times for decisions & certainty for customer	Work ongoing. Some outcomes – see Env Health Improvement project Chapter 5 Efficient and effective decision-making
Review Scheme of Delegation	Work with Legal Service – latter part of 2014	Less committee referrals, speed up decision process	Committee work volumes/ speed of decisions	Elements of improvements	Overall better performance	Delegated Council applications now enabled. Corporate Review delayed.

* KEY FOCUS 2014 – 2015 ONGOING & NEW	ACTIONS	OUTCOMES	MEASURES	IMPROVEMENT	VALUE	UPDATE
Review Scheme of Delegation	Continue work with Legal – focus on timescales outwith corporate timescales	Focus on less committee referrals, speed up decision making	Committee work volumes/ speed of decisions	Elements – more needed	Overall better performance	Individual Planning review required
Further Develop Applicant/ Agent Forums	Continue forums, add additional group specific forums eg Volume Developers etc	Good communication ensure certainty	Customer satisfaction informed agents etc. Complaints data	In general Complaints – reduced.	Customer relationships/ high quality service, developer 'buy in'	Continue to engage with Agents. More regular electronic communication, Set up further forums and Volume developer workshops
Consultee Work to ensure more effective & efficient responses	Liaison & protocol	Quicker/ more relevant responses	Speed of decisions	Work required – review other consultee timescales	Decrease average times for decisions & certainty for customer	Further Env Health & Legal liaison/protocol work

STAFF DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING

FURTHER COURSES ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE COUNCIL'S ALDO :

ALDO

Aberdeenshire Learning and Development Online

Effective Project Leadership	This guide provides additional information and signposts to other workshops and online programmes supporting the 1 day Effective Project Leadership Workshop. This module and Face to Face Workshop is one of the subjects offered by the Leadership and Management team.
Gateway to Management	This course is for colleagues, especially managers and supervisors, who are responsible for supporting Council policies both in terms of service delivery and employee relations and need a basic grounding in how interpersonal competence links to effective policy support. The themes and topics covered will help colleagues develop their understanding of and how to be better prepared for dealing with these as well as non-policy related encounters.
How To Carry Out A Courageous Conversation	This module delivered by the Leadership and Management team provides hints, tips and guidance on how to initiate and hold a Courageous Conversation with an employee it provides supporting information for the Face to Face workshop
How To Deliver Effective Feedback	This guide provides an overview of issues related to the important skill of delivering effective feedback. It covers a range of hints, tips and guidance when delivering effective feedback to colleagues in a variety of workplace situations. It links into many other subjects covered by the Leadership and Management team
How To Motivate Your Team	This module provides hints, tips and guidance on how to motivate both the individuals within, as well as, your team as a whole it links into many subjects covered by the Leadership and Management training team

EARS

Continuous improvement for staff continues to be embodied within personal training plans through annual EARS reviews (Employee Annual Review).

Team Managers carry out EARS for each member of staff and discuss training needs and requirements for progression. The Council's Performance Development Scheme is available for staff to seek progression of scales dependent on adequate evidencing of experience.

BENCHMARKING

Service Plan

Benchmarking is a structured and focused approach to comparing with others how services are provided and the performance levels achieved. However it is more than simply comparing numerical values across councils, it is about understanding why there are differences in performance between organisations. This involves looking in detail at the way services are delivered and managed and at the processes and activities involved in service delivery that lie behind the numerical values.

As part of the HOPS Large Rural Authority Benchmarking Family, Aberdeenshire continue to liaise and meet to benchmark operational activity and performance improvements.

The use of the HOPS Knowledge Hub both for reference, seeking and submitting advice remains a useful and informative tool.

Examples of seeking advice :

- › Fees for staff accommodation for a golf course
- › Wind turbine bonds query
- › Withdrawals of applications query

Also refer to **Improvement Training and Shared Best Practice in Chapter 6 -Effective Management Structures**

PART 3: 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 the relevant documents and websites.



OTTER SCULPTURE - ELLON

PART 4:

A: SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

2015-16

COUNCIL PLAN

Service Performance Measures and Actions

SERVICE PLAN - SERVICE OBJECTIVES

The key objective for the service is to:-

"Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations through the development of a framework of access strategies, land-use plans, master plans, policies and guidelines and by managing development through the planning system in accordance with the objectives of the Local Plan."

SERVICE PLAN PRIORITIES FOR 2014-2015

The Infrastructure Services Service Plan 2013-2016 sets out the key actions and targets for Infrastructure Services to deliver in support of the Council's strategic priorities over the period. The plan identifies anticipated challenges over the period, how we aim to meet them and what we intend to achieve based on the financial and other resources available to us. These are the high level improvements.

Whereas the Improving Performance Strategy (IPS) has been the key tool for improvement within Development Management since 2011 this has now been integrated within the Planning Performance Framework which is the Service's key improving performance document thus the following commitments become the focus of continuing improvement in the same way the IPS has over the years.

COMMITTED IMPROVEMENTS FOR 2015-2016

In the coming year we will:

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING	ENVIRONMENT PLANNING
› Review and anticipate information requirements for the Examination of the Local Development Plan 2016 to minimise delay from information requests during the examination itself. › Trial the UNIFORM Local Development Plan module as a means of standardising consultation processes associated with the development plan. › Review the effectiveness of the Online Local Development Plan as a tool for placing the Local Development Plan on-line. › Seek greater involvement with the Strategic Development Planning Authority on the identification of issues for the SDP Main Issues Report August 2016	› Complete and implement 2 Silver KDI projects in respect of Countryside Paths and Sites and Historic Asset Management › Finalise Self-Assessment Improvement Action Plan for the Environment Team › Complete and implement outcomes of on-going Benchmarking activities in 4 areas of built and natural environment › Complete 3 Conservation Area Reviews/designations › Complete Phases 1 and 2 of the Review of TPOs › Review key strategies for the historic and natural environment

In the coming year we will:

ENFORCEMENT TEAM
› Implementation of 2015-2016 Enforcement Action Plan › Further review of Enforcement Charter › Online Enforcement Register to be fully operational

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT	
OPEN FOR BUSINESS	HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND
› Continue to Increase the use of Processing Agreements. All Major Applications will be subject to a Processing Agreement. * › Certain Section 75 applications will be subject to a Processing Agreement › Continue to focus on significantly improving the performance of Major Applications * › Deliver a developer focused Major Applications/Processing Agreements and Major Pre Application 'buy in' › Set up workshops for developers to assist delivery of the improvements to use of Processing Agreements and the Section 75 process. › Continue to work with Legal Services through implementation of their Programme of Actions significantly to improve Section 75 delivery timescales	› Work with Robert Gordon's University to set up design training and seminar for planners and developers. ***
CERTAINTY	COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
› Improve overall performance in all types of applications * › Meet with/continue liaison with Historic Scotland to finalise the Joint Working Agreement (JWA) *** › Await response from with Scottish Government on potential changes to bat legislation › Finalise and Publish: Best Practice Manual, Standard templates for: Non material variations, Condition Approvals, Enforcement Complaints. *** › Prepare a Member and Area Committee Briefing Protocol for Enforcement › Finalise the on line Enforcement Register › Develop and improve the Enforcement website	› Carry out further Customer Surveys once yearly › Carry out a Community Council Survey *** › Carry out a Consultee review through Survey usage. › Work with iCE (Corporate Improving Customer Experience) to improve web pages. ***
EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING	EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES
› Review Scheme of Delegation outwith Corporate project by end of 2015 › Reduce Legacy Cases further by implementing Legacy Strategy including use of Legacy Team* › Introduce a Legacy Preventative strategy to ensure Legacy backlog does not reoccur. › Fully implement Enforcement module within Uniform/ accurately record breach of development	› Ensure Senior Planners have tailored supervisory and leadership training put in place.
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE	CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
› Make use of Costing the Planning Service outcomes in continuous improvement programme.	› Continue to Benchmark other authorities.
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 Survey to be applied **** › E Planning Online submission – 65% of customers submitting online 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 2014/15 TO 2015/16

**** Measureable Targets & Outputs

CUSTOMER SURVEY QUESTIONS AND ACTIONS:

Q8: Did you Seek pre-application advice prior to submitting your application?

Yes: 56.2%

No: 43.8%

Action: Increase the level of engagement with pre-application advice undertaken by 30 % via the promotion of the Development Management Section pre-app process by all Area teams.

Q9: Thinking specifically about the pre-application process, on your most recent application, how helpful, if at all, were we in providing guidance and support?

8.33% not very helpful

Action: Remove any dissatisfaction with the pre-application process

Q10 and 12: Issues with quality and consistency of advice and availability of staff?

Action: Improve the level of satisfied/very satisfied by 10% by ensuring that advice provided is robust and consistent and monitoring/managing availability of staff within the Area teams.

Q16: Overall how satisfied were you with time taken to process your application?

44.07% Very satisfied

37.04 fairly satisfied

7.78% fairly dissatisfied

1.85% very dissatisfied

Action: Improve the level of satisfied/very satisfied by 10% by continuing to focus on improvements to determination times.

Q17: Overall how satisfied were you with the service you received from us in dealing with your application?

52.7% Very satisfied

32.105 Fairly satisfied

5.54 Fairly dissatisfied

2.95% Very dissatisfied

Action: Improve the level of satisfied/very satisfied to meet the Aberdeenshire target of 88%



PART 4:

B: DELIVERY OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS COMMITTED FOR 2014-15:

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING	COMPLETE	
› Review Development Plan Consultation processes to ensure that effective and efficient consultation practices are employed that embrace innovative consultation methods.	Yes	Streamlining of neighbour notification associated with the development plan resulted in large manpower savings. Use of on-line media (twitter, Facebook, Facebook advertising and website) greatly increased awareness of the proposed Local Development Plan. YouTube videos reduced both enquiries and the number of submissions made.
› Coordinate joint training with the private sector on consultation techniques to facilitate cost effective common understanding and provide a route for formal accreditation.	Yes	SPE-ED training undertaken in conjunction with the private sector. Members of staff working towards formal accreditation.
› Ensure regular and active involvement by Key Agencies in development plan preparation, including providing a draft of the proposed plan for consideration as early as possible in the process.	Yes	Regular liaison undertaken with key agencies on the development plan, including sight of a draft in October 2014. Engagement not as useful as it could have been due to the dynamic nature of the preparation of the final draft of the plan and our inability to accommodate the views of key agencies informal comment late in the process
› Engage with neighbouring authorities to further meetings of the East of Scotland Development Plans Forum	Yes	One meeting of the Forum hosted by Aberdeenshire Council with responsibility for hosting the next meeting passed to Angus Council

DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS COMMITTED FOR 2014-15:

R - Red
A - Amber
G - Green

Environment Planning

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING	COMPLETE	COMMENTS	STATUS R/A/G
Complete the Two Silver Kaizen for Daily Improvement (KDI) projects – in respect of paths and Council owned assets and implement outcomes.	PARTIAL	Findings of Countryside Paths and Sites KDI have been reported to management team. To be reported to members for comment in July 2015 as part of the implementation process. Historic Assets Management Project KDI progressing well. Data collated, maintenance, minor and major projects identified.	A
Finalise and implement the emerging improved action plans for the Environment Team.	PARTIAL	Improvement activities have been identified but action plan has not been finalised.	A
Complete and implement the outcomes of the Benchmarking in 5 key areas in respect of built and natural environment.	PARTIAL	Benchmarking exercise completed for Design Award process. Benchmarking undertaken in relation to process for the maintenance of footpaths, process for the maintenance of historic assets, and organisation of the Local Outdoor Access Forum.	A
Complete Conservation Area Reviews	PARTIAL	There is an on-going programme of Reviews. Four new designations have been completed.	A
Complete Reviews of TPO's	PARTIAL	The Review is being undertaken in 5 Phases with completion in March 2017. Phase 1 will be completed by September 2015 and Phase 2 by March 2016.	A
Fully implement elements of Uniform for tree works and DM consultations	YES		G

DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS COMMITTED FOR 2014-15:

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT							
Committed Improvements and Actions				Committed Improvements and Actions			
Open for Business	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G	High Quality Development on the Ground	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G
Increase the use of Processing Agreements. Aim that all Major Applications and some local applications will be subject to a Processing Agreement. Agree a set of criteria for local applications requiring Processing Agreements. *	PARTIAL PARTIAL NO PARTIAL	Increased use of processing agreements now for all major applications Use of PA for some Section 75 applications and some local applications. Difficulty in setting criteria for local applications- will decide on case by case basis.	A	Continue the implementation of the design policies of the LDP as the main focus of development- use liaison group with Policy Team to regularly review policy use. Work with Robert Gordon's University to set up design training and seminar for planners and developers.	YES PARTIAL	On going Set up date	G A
Focus on significantly improving the performance of Major Applications *	PARTIAL	Improvement – more required.	A				
		Improvement – more required.	A				
Continue to work with Legal Services through implementation of their Programme of Actions significantly to improve Section 75 delivery timescales	PARTIAL	Improvement – more required.	A	Encourage use of Design Awards as a marker for high quality development.	YES	Continuous	G
Deliver a developer focused Major Applications/ Processing Agreements and Major Pre Application 'buy in'	NO	Still work to do to ensure total 'buy in' from agents	R				
Further promote and increase use of on line planning *	YES	Ongoing/ Continuous	G				
Implement programme of Community Council Focus and Training	YES	More focus in 2015/2016	G				

Certainty	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G	Communications, engagement and customer service	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G
Improve overall performance in all types of applications *	Yes But Ongoing	Focus still required on improvement overall and in particular on major applications.	A	Carry out further Customer Surveys twice yearly	YES	Only one per annum to avoid Survey fatigue. Continue with e mail shots	G
Implement Uniform provision to enable pre application recording	PARTIAL	This is now enabled but only in next year once data has caught - will be then able to record fully	A	Carry out a Community Council Survey	PARTIAL	To Be done as part of engagement programme with Community Councils	A
Implement Uniform provision to record Committee overturns & departure rates	YES						
Meet with/continue liaison with Historic Scotland to finalise the Joint Working Agreement (JWA)	PARTIAL	HS came to training session They acknowledge lack of progress re JWA. With HS to continue liaison	A	Progress and publish outcomes from Planning Focus Group	YES	Planning Focus Group still on going	G
Agree a revised consultation method with Environmental Health to speed up wind turbine responses.	YES	Implementation of revised process through improvement project.	G	Set up a Planning contact protocol with the Corporate Contact Centre	YES	Planning script and training provided to front desk staff	G
Feedback through Agent/Developer engagement outcomes and implement change where necessary in response to Bat Survey requirements	PARTIAL	On-going – awaiting Government response	A	Work with iCE (Corporate Improving Customer Experience) to improve web pages.	PARTIAL	Adhering to corporate timescales	A
Finalise and Publish: Best Practice Manual, Standard templates for: Non material variations, Condition Approvals, Enforcement Complaints.	PARTIAL	Draft in place, further work re started following review and change of teams.	A	Utilise Team Action Plans to improve Customer Service and Satisfaction	YES	Action Plans now part of team operations.	G
Review Development Management Charter & Enforcement Charter	YES	Charters both online for use	G				

Committed Improvements and Actions				Committed Improvements and Actions			
Efficient and Effective Decision-Making	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G	Effective management structures	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G
Review Scheme of Delegation outwith Corporate project by end of 2014	PARTIAL	Corporate timescales delaying	A	Fully staff and implement Enforcement Team by October 2014	YES	Team Of 5 – 4 +Senior Enforcement Officer	G
Finalise minor change to Scheme of Delegation for Council applications by September 2014	YES		G	Feed into Service Training Plan through staff EAR reviews by end of 2014	YES		G
Reduce Legacy Cases further by implementing Legacy Strategy*	YES	Legacy cases decreased. New focus on Legacy strategy – introduction of Legacy Team	A	Ensure Senior Planners have tailored supervisory and leadership training put in place.	PARTIAL	Training identified liaison with Improvement team	A
Fully implement Development Management Enterprise module for monitoring by end of 2014	YES	Enterprise graphs used in daily monitoring of performance	G				
Fully implement Uniform consultation module by November 2014	YES	Fully available for use.	G				
Implement Stop the Clock facility by end of 2014	YES	Stop the Clock being used where appropriate. Staff guidance done.	G				
Accurately record Validation Rates/ Invalid Rates and evidence using Enterprise *	YES	2015/16 will fully record rates.	G				
Fully implement Enforcement module within Uniform/accurately record breach of development	PARTIAL	All data transferred, Module available and operational - full training required	A				

Financial management and local governance	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G	Culture of continuous improvement	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G
Participate and complete Phase 2 of Costing the Planning Service	YES	Outcomes used in further improving performance	G	Continue to use and update the IPS as a continuous improvement tool	Yes	IPS now part of PPF as performance document to be used and kept monitored and up to date	G
				Benchmark other authorities in use of Stop the Clock, Processing Agreements, Major Application processes/Legal Agreements.	Yes		G

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT							
Planning Performance Targets	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G	Planning Performance Targets	Complete	Comments	Status R/A/G
Average Timescales:				% Within 2 Months :			
Major Applications – Achieve an average of 35 weeks	NO	Reduction but not in line with national average		All Planning Applications – Determine 70% within 2 months	NO	First Quarter impacted on all performance following review	
Local Applications - Achieve an average of 11 weeks	NO	Reduction but more to achieve		Non Householder Applications - Determine 65% within 2 months	NO		
Household Applications - Achieve an average of 6 weeks	YES			Householder Applications - Determine 95% within 2 months	NO		
Other Applications – Achieve an average of 8 weeks	YES			Processing Agreements – 100% major applications subject to a Processing Agreement	YES		
				**Legal Agreements – Achieve an average of 32 weeks	NO		
				Legacy Applications › Reduce pre 2009 to 0	NO		
				› Reduce Overall (post 2009) by 50%	YES		

*Subject to Target

**Based on Benchmarking Performance

PART 5:

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

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

CATEGORY	TOTAL NUMBER OF DECISIONS 2014 - 2015	AVERAGE TIMESCALE (WEEKS)	
		2014 - 2015	2013 - 2014
Major developments	25	107.8	115.9
Local developments (non-householder)			
› Local: less than 2 months	913	7.3	7.3
› Local: more than 2 months	861	24.9	32.9
Householder developments			
› Local: less than 2 months	1039	6.4	6.6
› Local: more than 2 months	173	13.0	15.0
Housing developments			
Major	9	185.0	139.6
Local housing developments			
› Local: less than 2 months	402	7.5	7.5
› Local: more than 2 months	510	24.2	31.9
Business and industry			
Major	2	113.4	52.7
Local business and industry			
› Local: less than 2 months	127	7.3	7.1
› Local: more than 2 months	82	24.4	34.1
EIA developments	21	68.2	74.1
Other consents*	432	8.4	8.9
Planning/legal agreements**			
› Major: average time	9	76.2	151.4
› Local: average time	90	46.2	-
Local reviews	60	19.5	26.1

* 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 & 8 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			
		2014 - 2015		2013 - 2014	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	60	46	77%	37	79%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	54	24	44%	26	41%

C: ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

	2014 - 2015	2013 - 2014
Cases taken up	408	405
Breaches identified		
Cases resolved	297	250
Notices served***	10	15
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.



PART 6: WORKFORCE AND FINANCIAL 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. Financial information should relate to the full financial year.

	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3	TIER 4
Head of Planning Service	1	1	1	2.6 + 7

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

		DM	DP	ENFORCEMENT	ENVIRONMENT
Managers	No. Posts	1 + 3	1 + 1	1	Tier 4 - 2.6
	Vacant				
Main Grade Posts	No. Posts	42*	16**	5***	34.4
	Vacant				
Technician	No. Posts	18.6****	1		2.2
	Vacant				
Office Support / Clerical	No. Posts	23.4	4	2	2
	Vacant				1
TOTAL		88	25	7	42.2

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

* Included in Main Grade Posts are Seniors and Planning Officers.

** Included in Main Grade Posts are Seniors and Planners

***Enforcement include 1 Senior and 5 Enforcement Officers

**** Included in Technicians are Planning Technicians and the E Planning assistants

STAFF AGE PROFILE	NUMBER	COMMITTEE & SITE VISITS*	NUMBER PER YEAR
Under 30	35	Full council meetings	7
30-39	32	Infrastructure Services Committee*	7
40-49	37	Area Committees (where relevant)**	14 x 6+6 Special Committees
50 and over	21	Committee Site Visits	44
		LRB***	12
		LRB Site Visits	28

* 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.

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

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK - 2014/15

PLANNING SERVICE	ACTUAL	DIRECT	INDIRECT	INCOME
Development Management	3,279	2,195	1,084	2,943
Development Planning	790	529	261	
Enforcement	263	176	87	
	4,332	2,900	1,432	2,943

Notes:

**Direct staff costs covers gross par (including overtime, national insurance and superannuation contribution). The appropriate proportion of the direct cost of any staff member within the planning authority spending 30% or more of their time on planning should be included in costs, irrespective of what department they are allocated to (for example, legal advice, administration, typing). Exclude staff spending less than 30% of their time on planning.*

***Indirect costs include all other costs attributable to the planning service. Examples (not exhaustive) include accommodation, IT, stationery, office equipment, telephone charges, printing, advertising, travel & subsistence, apportionment of support service costs.*

**** Include fees from planning applications and deemed applications, and recharges for advertising costs etc. Exclude income from property and planning searches.*



BANFF AND MACDUFF

APPENDIX 1

ORGANOGRAM

PLANNING & BUILDING STANDARDS

Planning & Building Standards Organogram

