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Annual Report April 2015 - March 2016

Foreword

An efficient and well-functioning planning service plays an important role in facilitating sustainable economic growth and delivering high quality development in the right places. Falkirk Council recognises that regular monitoring of service performance and a commitment to improve are essential to achieving this. This Planning Performance Framework report captures the key elements of our planning service:

- Speed of decision-making
- Certainty of timescales, process and advice
- Delivery of good quality development
- Project management
- Clear communications and open engagement
- An overall 'open for business' attitude

The report reviews the overall quality of Falkirk Council's planning service and sets out our successes and achievements in the period from April 2015 to March 2016.



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Introduction

01. Falkirk Council is pleased to submit its fifth annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF). This document highlights the work we have done from April 2015 to March 2016 to monitor our performance and to continue to improve the planning service provided by Falkirk Council.
02. Within this report period the Development Management Unit has maintained excellent customer satisfaction with 82.1%¹ of customers who respond to our customer survey considering the planning service to be good or excellent.
03. Our fifth annual report has been produced using the template and guidance provided to all planning authorities by Heads of Planning Scotland. The report follows on from the good work undertaken in previous years across Scotland by each planning authority to critically assess planning service and for each planning authority to review performance with reference to other planning authorities within the SOLACE benchmarking families².
04. Our fifth annual report includes a review of the national headline indicators, an assessment of our performance across four areas of activity and then a consideration of the supporting evidence. The final section refers to proposed service improvements and timescales for delivery for the next reporting period in 2016 and 2017.

¹ Development Management Customer Survey

² Family 4 – North Lanarkshire, Falkirk, East Dunbartshire, Aberdeen City, City of Edinburgh, West Dunbartshire, Dundee City, Glasgow City



Feedback from Previous Report

05. The Council's fourth PPF, covering the period April 2014 to March 2015, was submitted to the Scottish Government in July 2015. Alex Neil MSP, former Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners Rights, gave us feedback in October 2015. The feedback received was very encouraging and supportive of the work we are continuing to do to monitor and improve the Falkirk Council planning service.
06. The Cabinet Secretary noted the work done to keep planning application decision making timescales above the national average and the progress being made to determine legacy cases. With reference to the National Headline Indicators the Cabinet Secretary noted our Local Development Plan was on course for adoption in 2015. It was adopted in July 2015 and work has already commenced on Local Development Plan 2. Also, the Cabinet Secretary noted Falkirk Council's performance in a number of the National Headline Indicators relating to our core business activities has improved. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged that the planning service continues to demonstrate a strong customer focus, offering a variety of channels for contact and communication. Our delegation rate has improved and was better than the national average and our continued commitment to conclude legacy cases and to encourage developers to get involved in processing agreements were all recognised. The Cabinet Secretary acknowledged that Falkirk Council has demonstrated good evidence of early collaboration with applicants and consultees to ensure a clear understanding of what is required to support a planning application and to help us determine applications as quickly as possible.
07. Overall, the feedback from the Cabinet Secretary acknowledged the quality of the planning service Falkirk Council provides and recognised improvements in our performance. We received 10 green ratings and 3 amber ratings. None of our performance markers received a red rating. The green ratings included improvements to encourage the use of processing agreements and early collaboration with applicants and consultees. Our work to maintain an up to date Local Development Plan and Development Plan scheme and to provide regular and proportionate policy advice were also commended. The work carried out by Falkirk Council's planning service to get involved in sharing good practice, skills and knowledge not just across Falkirk Council services but with other local authorities across Scotland was also recognised. Where we received amber ratings it was noted that the work to clear legacy cases has skewed the figures for overall decision making timescales. Also, Scottish Government felt that we could have given more evidence to demonstrate how we deal with the issue of developer contributions in pre-application discussions.
08. In addition to the Cabinet Secretary's comments we reviewed our PPF with the assistance of our SOLACE benchmarking partner, Edinburgh City Council. The feedback we received from Edinburgh City Council was generally positive. Their officers considered our PPF gave a clear and concise account of our performance and the work we are doing to ensure standards of service are maintained and improved. They did comment that a wider use of case studies within the report was something that would have helped to evidence our performance improvements and this is something that where relevant we have sought to do in our fifth PPF.

Part 1: National Headline Indicators

National Headline Indicators Table

Key Outcomes	2015-2016	2014-2015
Development Planning		
Age of LDP at end of reporting period	8 months	First LDP in preparation
Will the LDP be replaced by its 5th anniversary according to current development plan scheme?	Yes	
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers changed over the past year?	No	Yes - delay of 3 months due to delayed Examination Report
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	Yes	Yes

Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs		
Established housing land supply	8842 units	9656 units
5 - year effective housing land supply	3047 units ¹	3112 units
5 - year housing supply target	3375 units	3375 units
5 - year effective housing land supply (to one decimal place)	4.5 years	4.6 years
Housing approvals	1086 units	557 units
Housing completions over the last 5 years	2320 units	2299 units
Marketable employment land supply	290 ha ²	255.4 ha
Employment land take-up during reporting year	6.3 ha	0 ha

¹ Draft Housing Land Audit 2015-2016.

² The increase in scale of supply is attributable to the inclusion of available land at Ineos, Grangemouth which is estimated at 40 hectares.

Part 1: National Headline Indicators

National Headline Indicators Table

Key Outcomes	2015-2016	2014-2015
Development Management - Project Planning		
Percentage of applications subject to pre- application advice	36.7%	37.58%
Number of major application subject to processing agreement	1	0
Number of applications subject to other project plan	0 ¹	0
Percentage planned timescales met	-	-

Development Management - Decision-making		
Application approval rate	94.9%	96.3%
Delegation rate	94.3%	94.7%

Decision-making Timescales (Average number of weeks to decision):		
Major developments	84.3	132.4
Local developments (non-householder)	12.3	11.2
Householder developments	6.9	6.9

Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	22	20
Number remaining	11	28

Enforcement		
Time since Enforcement Charter Published/reviewed (months) Requirement : review every 2 years	20 months	8 months
Number of breaches identified/resolved	174/104	240/204

¹ All applications are subject to informal project planning and regular monitoring.

Part 1: National Headline Indicators

Consideration of National Headline Indicators

Development Planning

09. The Falkirk LDP was adopted in July 2015, some 4 years and 6 months after the adoption of the previous Local Plan. During the reporting year, work on LDP2 has been commenced, and the pre-Main Issues Report (MIR) consultation phase completed in accordance with the commitments made in the Development Plan Scheme 2015 (DPS). The DPS programmes adoption of LDP2 for January 2020, and at this early stage of plan preparation we are on course to achieve this target.



Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs

10. The effective land supply has remained fairly steady from the previous year, with the supply still amounting to just less than 5 year's worth. Continued slippage in the start dates of some major housing sites is responsible for the shortfall, but there are encouraging signs of progress on some of our Strategic Growth Areas. Annual completions remain on an upward trend and housing approvals have almost doubled from the previous year.
11. After last year's hiatus in activity, take up of employment land accelerated in 2015-16 with development at various stages on 5 allocated employment sites, totalling 6.31 ha. The redevelopment of Denny Town Centre is well underway, as is the construction of a new HQ building for Ineos in Grangemouth. Construction is also well advanced on a care home and training centre at Glenbervie Business Park. Recently work on two other sites has started; the Council has started construction of 4 advance industrial units at Abbotsford Business Park and Forth Ports have made a site start on a 9,400 sq.m. distribution warehouse in Grangemouth. Apart from the Denny proposals, all of the other sites qualify to contribute to uplift in the business rate income for Tax Incremental Funding (TIF).



Part 1: National Headline Indicators

Consideration of National Headline Indicators

Development Management

Project Planning

12. The Council continues to actively encourage applicants to seek pre-application advice from the Development Management Unit, other Council Services, external statutory and non-statutory consultees. Procedures are in place to allow us to record the percentage of planning applications where applicants have sought pre-application advice. This percentage continues to be above 36%.
13. There is a continuing reluctance from applicants to enter into formal processing agreements. We continue to take a proactive stance in offering them for some complex local developments as well as for major developments. A form and guidance are available on our website. However, with all applications for major and local developments although there is no formal processing agreement in place we have an informal project plan. This includes a commitment to enter into pre-application discussions with the applicant and statutory consultees, to maintain regular contact with the applicant/agent during the processing of applications, to identify and seek to resolve any planning issues that may arise to ensure applications are determined within the statutory timescales or where appropriate extensions of time agreed. We have however had success in formalising one processing agreement and this is set out in the case study (see panel).

Case Study:

Processing Agreement Miller Homes

In 2014 Miller Homes submitted a proposal of application notice to the Council. This triggered pre-application discussions and the negotiation of a processing agreement (PA). The PA set out target dates, key contacts and information requirements. Issues to be dealt with by Legal Agreement were also included in the PA. The target recommendation date was ultimately not achieved as amended plans were required. Nonetheless, those involved considered it a useful tool in guiding the submission and determination of the application.

Part 1: National Headline Indicators

Consideration of National Headline Indicators

Decision-making and Decision-making Timescales

14. Regular caseload monitoring is an inherent part of our procedures in respect of performance management. This has resulted in timescales for local developments and householder developments remaining reasonably consistent.
15. The average number of weeks to determine major applications has improved significantly since the last reporting period but is still skewed by legacy cases and a general reluctance by applicants to enter into formal processing agreements with the Council for major and local applications. Nevertheless, the Council has made significant progress in determining legacy cases, with the number reduced from 28 to 11. Our delegation rate has remained consistently above 94%. The Council's scheme of delegation allows the determination of local and major applications that accord with the Development Plan to be determined by officers and this has helped us maintain a high clearance rate for householder development applications and with performance for some major applications. However, where applications are called in for consideration by the Planning Committee this can add a further 2 months to the determination period.
16. We have received a substantial increase in enforcement investigations. This is in part as a result of increased unauthorised flyposting and advertising in the area which is increasingly taking up officer time. Various departments deal with flyposting and there is currently no cross department process for dealing with this growing issue. It is therefore proposed that a working group be set up to deal with this issue as a service target for the next reporting period.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Outcomes

Policy

17. Design related Supplementary Guidance on Development in the Countryside (SG01); Neighbourhood Design (SG02); and Residential Extensions and Alterations (SG03), which were prepared in the previous year, are formally adopted and are now embedded in day-to-day discussions with developers and householders on applications.
18. The Council's Shopfronts guide (SG04), was prepared and approved during the year and represents a complete refresh of the previous guidance. It provides a high level of illustrative images to relay best practice on the design of shopfronts in new buildings and best conservation practice on the repair, alteration and wholesale replacement of shopfronts in existing buildings of any age or style. It was prepared following extensive research into historic shopfronts in Falkirk Town Centre, and is particularly timely given the current Falkirk Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) which is providing shopfront grants to proprietors as highlighted in the following case study (see panel).

Case Study:

SG04 Shopfronts - 6-8 Cow Wynd

6-8 Cow Wynd is one of the older buildings in Falkirk town centre and was identified as a priority project under the Townscape Heritage Initiative. Works were carried out to the roof, leadwork, rainwater goods, chimneys, render, windows, stonework and timber. The most noticeable change has been the reinstatement of the traditional shopfront. These works required significant pre-application discussions and the submission of full and listed building applications. The case officer and conservation officer worked closely with the agent to achieve compliance with the shopfront SG and best conservation practice. The completed scheme is an excellent example of what can be achieved and shows successful implementation of the Council's supplementary guidance.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Outcomes

19. For the first time, Supplementary Guidance has been prepared on Listed Buildings and Unlisted Properties in Conservation Areas (SG16). It provides helpful guidance on when to seek listed building consent, planning permission and conservation area consent and incorporates illustrated guidance and case studies on best practice in the repair, extension, alteration and demolition of listed buildings and unlisted properties in conservation areas.
20. Work has also commenced on a review of the Council's Built Heritage Strategy. The current Strategy has been operational since 2006, and has had many notable successes, not least the inscription of the Antonine Wall as a World Heritage Site, appraisals and management plans produced for all our conservation areas, and a THI completed for Bo'ness Town Centre. However, a review is needed. The process has been started with a stakeholder workshop to discuss challenges and opportunities in the local historic environment. We expect the reviewed strategy to be completed within the next reporting year.



Design and Landscape Expertise

21. The planning service continues to benefit from professional in-house expertise in urban design, conservation, landscape, outdoor access and biodiversity which can be drawn on in the processing of planning applications, and adds real value to planning outcomes. This resource is under pressure given financial stringencies. We now have only a half post covering the urban design and conservation portfolio, although once again we have been able to augment this resource through an architecture graduate secured under the Council's graduate training programme. Our part-time biodiversity officer is no longer able to provide advice routinely on applications, but the advice of our countryside rangers can be drawn on as needed. The availability of comprehensive Supplementary Guidance, in conjunction with ongoing training workshops, is intended to enable development management officers to be able to assess issues without the need to make reference to specialists in every instance.

Design Training

22. Training workshops were held during the year involving development management staff and design officers to support the introduction of several of the new Supplementary Guidance documents mentioned above. Development Management officers also attended courses on design and relayed information to colleagues on their return.

Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Outcomes

Placemaking: Policy into Practice

23. Policy guidance, in-house design expertise and training are all intended to raise the quality of development on the ground. Planning has been able to add value to a number of developments in the Council area. Ongoing development at Larbert House provides evidence of how an aspirational policy and design framework has helped to secure high quality development, including the restoration of listed buildings, in a sensitive location (see panel).

Case Study:

Development at Larbert House

The restoration and redevelopment of the former Royal Scottish National Hospital estate at Larbert has been a focus for the Council over recent years. Steered by a Development Framework and subsequent Masterplan, this sensitive designed landscape has seen the successful integration of the £300m Forth Valley Royal Hospital, and the restoration for public access of the surrounding policy woodlands. The last element is the restoration of the B-listed Larbert House and its associated stables and walled garden, with enabling development, which is now well underway. This year the restoration of the derelict stable block has been completed, setting a benchmark for quality which is being carried forward into the rehabilitation of the house itself, and the rest of the development. This development has recently been shortlisted for the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2016.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Outcomes

Greenspace

24. The Falkirk Greenspace Strategy, which is the local expression of the Central Scotland Green Network, continues to be implemented. Some key projects during the year include:
- Greenspace improvements within the Maddiston area where developer contributions from recent housing development have helped achieve improvements (see panel);
 - Access improvements to the Carron Dams Local Nature Reserve;
 - An enhancement project along Bo'ness Foreshore at Bridgeness to improve biodiversity, landscape and amenity along an important stretch of the John Muir Way;
 - The opening of café/cycle hub centre by the Bespoke Community Development Company which will support the South Falkirk access network;
 - Continuing implementation of landscape and biodiversity projects as part of the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative.
25. The Council consulted on a new Draft Open Space Strategy over winter 2015/16. The Draft Strategy has benefited from extensive elected Member involvement from the outset through a Policy Development Panel. It is underpinned by a comprehensive open space audit complemented by GIS analytical tools which allow accessibility standards to be tested (see panel). The Draft Strategy has been merged with the Parks Development Plan, giving it a much greater focus on action planning and delivery. This has been facilitated by the incorporation of the parks client function within the Planning & Environment Unit.

Case Study:

Developer Contributions and Maddiston Greenspace Improvements

A Council housing project on the site of the former Maddiston Primary School involved the loss of school playing fields which were considered to be surplus to requirements. Policy required a compensatory payment of £280k which was matched with other developer contributions and £52k of capital funding to lever in an additional £258k of partnership funding from Sustrans and Heritage Lottery Fund to deliver a co-ordinated programme of footpath creation, new playspaces, landscape and biodiversity improvements within parks, sports pitch drainage improvement and public art. The project was overseen by the Planning Obligations Monitoring Group.

Case Study:

Open Space Audit

In 2013, in preparation for a review of the Open Space Strategy, the Council carried out a comprehensive qualitative audit of 632 of its parks and open spaces. The audit was complemented by an accessibility analysis which was carried out using network analysis software. Using GIS this has allowed us to identify the parts of towns and villages which were within specified walking distances of different types and quality of open space. In turn this has allowed us to review our open space accessibility standards and identify deficits. It is also a tool that can be used in development management to ascertain accessibility to open space for any given site subject to a residential planning application, and determine how open space needs should be best be addressed.

Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Outcomes

Town Centres

26. The £5.5M Falkirk Town Centre Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), now in its third year, is enhancing the special character and appearance of the historic town centre; several priority projects have been completed together with many small building repair projects including window replacements and shop front improvements. Priority projects completed to date include external fabric repairs to the category C listed building at 9 - 11 Vicar Street and comprehensive external fabric repairs and shop front improvements to a traditional building at 6 - 8 Cow Wynd.
27. One of the key projects of the THI, the repair and restoration of the category A listed early 19th century Town Steeple, is underway, scheduled for completion in early 2017. Works include stonework repairs, restoration of historic clock and weather vane, replacement of inappropriate modern interventions including windows and doors and installation of a discreet architectural lighting scheme.
28. A major project to upgrade the Public Realm has progressed to planning application stage with programmed commencement of works in Autumn 2016; a complementary project to restore two war memorials in the THI streetscape has received grant support from the War Memorials Trust.
29. Phase 1 of the £7.6m Denny Town Centre regeneration project is well advanced. This will deliver 10 new retail units, a library, community room, improved parking and town square.
30. The Council has completed a Town Centres Health Check report covering Falkirk Town Centre and the four District Centres of Bo'ness, Denny, Grangemouth, and Stenhousemuir.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Service and Engagement

Open for Business

Contact

31. The Council continues to provide a single point of contact for all applicants from pre-application through to determination. However, on larger developments where project teams are formed within the Development Management Unit, applicants, agents, consultees and other interested parties are able to contact assisting officers in addition to the lead officer.
32. The Development Management Unit remains open for business, in person, over the phone, by email and in writing. Customers can contact the Council in the way that suits them best, We continue to operate a duty officer service which allows customers to contact an officer by phone or in person to receive free planning guidance and advice. Clear guidance is also set out on our website and this website is regularly reviewed and updated.
33. We continue to set early dates for meetings and phone calls are returned timeously. Officers endeavour to reply by email where available. This ensures issues are addressed quickly and customers do not have to wait for a postal response. This is particularly helpful where applications are invalid as it allows issues to be resolved quickly.

Case Study:

Development of new INEOS HQ , Grangemouth

In May 2015 INEOS submitted a planning application for demolition of industrial buildings and the erection of a new headquarters office building on land within their site at Grangemouth. Prior to submission there were pre-application discussions with the Development Management Unit in liaison with other Council services, including Roads, Environmental Health and Building Standards to ensure that all information necessary for the assessment of the planning application was provided and to help align the consideration of consent applications required under legislation other than planning.

Although there was no formal processing agreement there were clear lines of communication between the applicant/agent and the Council. Key contacts were established, target dates set and information requirements made clear. The case officer was shadowed by another officer who offered support and assistance with the assessment of the planning application.

Planning permission was granted for the development under delegated powers and within the targeted timescales.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Service and Engagement

Pre-application

34. We have maintained our positive approach to pre-application advice and offer a free service for all types of applications, from small scale householder developments to major and national planning submissions. Advice and guidance can be found on the Council's website and this includes links to the Scottish Government website and other websites with useful information and resources. Our website provides clear and easily accessible information on the likely additional information required with submissions. The Local Development Plan (LDP) and supplementary guidance and details of procedures are all available to the public. This is reiterated during pre-application discussions and the use of project plans and processing agreements promoted to applicants.

Flexible Team Working

38. We continue to maintain two area teams in Development Management but officers are based in the same offices and officers work across team areas as and when work levels require. We promote staff development and expertise through team working on complex planning applications. This allows sharing of information, discussion of issues, promotes staff development and provides continuity of delivery in the case of staff absences. In addition we have an officer dedicated to mostly dealing with householder applications across the Council area and this helps maintain good householder planning application performance. We will continue to review working practices to maintain and to improve performance and staff development.

Developer Contributions

35. The LDP and supplementary guidance clearly set out for developers the circumstances where contributions are likely to be sought. Contribution levels are regularly checked and updated as appropriate. In relation to education contributions for example, the school rolls and future predicted levels are assessed for each planning application. This ensures that requests for contributions are proportionate and contributions are only sought where necessary.
36. There are regular officer liaison meetings chaired by Development Services with Education, Housing and other Council Services at which contribution levels are discussed and information reviewed.
37. The Council recognises developer concerns about the potential impact of contributions on the viability of development. We encourage the submission of development viability statements where this is a concern. Guidance is provided in our supplementary guidance. Statements are assessed in consultation with the District Valuer.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Service and Engagement

Assisting Development Delivery

39. The Council's Tax Increment Finance Initiative (TIF) continues to be rolled out, with the aim of delivering major infrastructure and enabling works in the Falkirk and Grangemouth Investment Zones, and removing constraints and financial burdens which would otherwise fall on prospective developers in the area.
40. A Preliminary Development Framework for the Falkirk Gateway has been prepared to provide a context for site masterplans, and to help stimulate and steer development in this critical area. A drainage strategy has been commissioned to find a global solution to drainage and flooding issues in the area. Car parking improvements at the Falkirk Stadium/Helix were completed in the reporting year. The TIF programme has been reprioritised to bring forward improvements to M9 Junction 5 in 2016/17, which will support development in Grangemouth, with the A904 corridor improvement deferred to allow fuller consideration of development options at the Falkirk Gateway and innovative ways of creating vital pedestrian/cycle links over the Westfield Interchange.
41. Meanwhile, preliminary studies are underway to support the Grangemouth flood protection scheme, a key element of the NPF3 Grangemouth Investment Zone package. The Council is also leading on the Grangemouth Energy Project, which seeks to develop a business case for the development of an integrated heat network in the Falkirk-Grangemouth area.
42. On housing delivery, progress has been made on kickstarting development at two Strategic Growth Areas within the LDP: Denny South East, where construction of the next stage of the Denny Eastern Access Road is progressing in tandem with the start of a 307 home development at Mydub 1; and Bo'ness South East, where planning permission has been granted and development has commenced on a 167 home development at Kinglass Farm. Section 75 negotiations on two further Strategic Growth Areas at Banknock South and Dennyloanhead are progressing positively.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Service and Engagement

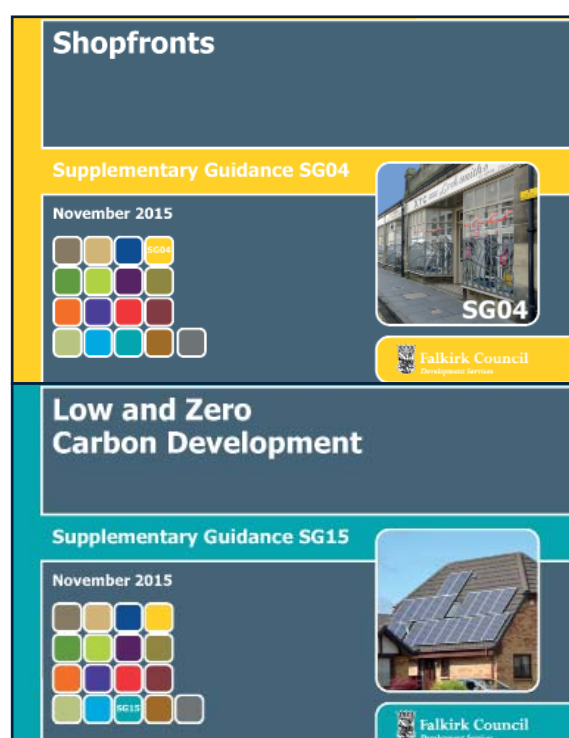
Certainty

Development Plan

43. The Falkirk Local Development Plan was adopted in July 2015, replacing the Falkirk Council Structure Plan and the Falkirk Council Local Plan, and providing an up-to-date basis for planning decisions in the area. The Council progressed timeously from receipt of the Examination Report in March 2015 through to the Intention to Adopt stage within the statutory three month timescale, with all the Reporters' recommendations accepted.
44. The Council has moved swiftly to commence work on LDP2, with project planning taking place over summer 2015, and a major pre-Main Issues Report consultation taking place through the autumn/winter 2015. The planning and content of the consultation was informed by our Communication and Engagement Review. Further details are provided under the Customer Engagement section. Project planning tools and governance/reporting arrangements which proved their effectiveness during the first Local Development Plan are largely being used again.
45. The evidence base for LDP2 is being progressed. The Housing Needs and Demand Assessment has been completed and submitted to the Centre for Housing Analysis (CHMA) during the reporting period. The Scoping Report for the Strategic Environmental Assessment has been compiled. A variety of other supporting technical reports are in preparation.

Supplementary Guidance

46. The Council continues to progress the preparation of Supplementary Guidance, as set out in the LDP. In July 2015, ten Supplementary Guidance (SG) documents were adopted along with the LDP, following approval by the Scottish Government. A further three SGs - on Shopfronts; Healthcare and New Housing Development; and Low and Zero Carbon Development – were prepared and consulted on during the reporting year, and approved by the Scottish Government in November 2015. Design Guidance on Listed Buildings and Unlisted Properties in Conservation Areas was also prepared and consulted on, although approval came in April 2016, just beyond the reporting period. The remaining three SGs are under preparation.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Service and Engagement

Development Management

47. During the reporting period more than 94% of planning applications received were granted permission and more than 98% of applications were determined in accordance with the officer recommendation.

Processing Agreements

48. We actively encourage the use of processing agreements on major applications and also more complex local applications. Information is available about processing agreements on our website where a draft agreement template can also be accessed. In addition officers make reference to our willingness to enter into agreements in pre-application discussions. To date applicants/agents continue to be reluctant to enter into formal agreements with the Council but appear to be satisfied that we have adequate processes in place to ensure that the processing of planning applications is properly managed and lines of communication are clear.

Submission of Applications

49. There has been a 10% reduction in the number of invalid planning applications received. Reasons for invalidity include applications submitted online without a fee and failure to submit appropriately scaled and dimensioned drawings. To address this issue we held a workshop session in December 2015 with our most prolific agents to go over what is required for registration of a planning application and a further session is proposed within our next reporting period to seek further improvements in the quality of submissions.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Service and Engagement

Communications, Engagement and Customer Service

Customer Engagement

50. The Development Plan team undertook a major consultation exercise through autumn/winter 2015 as part of the pre-Main Issues Report stage for LDP2. The objective was to establish the key issues which LDP2 had to address, and also to identify sites where there was development interest through a 'Call for Sites' exercise. The consultation included the following:
- Consultation meetings were held with the key agencies
 - Two meetings were held with representatives of the house building industry;
 - Two members' workshops were held to explore what the key issues might be for LDP2;
 - A corporate workshop was held to engage all relevant Council Services in the LDP2 process;
 - Two stakeholder workshops were held, attended by 61 representatives of agencies and organisations, developers, community councils, infrastructure providers and business;
 - An issues consultation was carried out via an online survey and the Council's Citizens' Panel. This sought people's views on the issues which they think the plan will have to address. This attracted a total of approximately 650 responses.
 - Our bi-annual newsletter was issued to support the issues consultation;
 - A 'Call for Sites' exercise was carried out, with around 60 submissions received. The submissions have been made available to view on the Council's web site through an interactive web map;
 - A training event was held for community councils to help them understand the process and how they can participate effectively; and
 - A youth engagement exercise has been undertaken with senior pupils in Larbert High School to inform them about the planning process, engage them about placemaking issues, and explore options for change and growth in the local area (see case study). The issues consultation survey has also been completed by students from Forth Valley College.
51. Feedback from the events was positive. The meetings with housebuilders, which was a new initiative, were considered useful by all those who responded via the evaluation form. A typical comment was 'Good open discussion and quite a positive attitude by Falkirk Council'. The community council training event was rated 'excellent' or 'good' by 90% of participants who responded. The stakeholders workshop was also welcomed, with all who responded indicating that the event had met their expectations, and its format was appropriate.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Service and Engagement

Case Study:

LDP2 Youth Engagement at Larbert High School

In March 2016, the Development Plan team engaged with senior pupils at Larbert High School as part of pre-MIR consultation on LDP2. Two workshops were held, involving 80 students who were all studying geography at National 5/Higher level. The intention was to tie in effectively to the curriculum so that there were useful outcomes for planners and students alike, an idea which was enthusiastically received by the teaching staff. The pupils were asked to analyse their neighbourhoods using the Scottish Government's new 'Place Standard', to look at the process of rapid change in the Larbert area over the last 30 year, and to identify a growth strategy for housing using information on constraints. This has provided us with an insight into how the young people see the area and its future, whilst helping them understand how planning works to shape their environment.

52. The Development Plan team is now utilising social media to communicate with customers. An LDP Facebook page was launched in October 2016 through which customers can follow the progress of the LDP and easily receive updates on planning policy and plan implementation.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

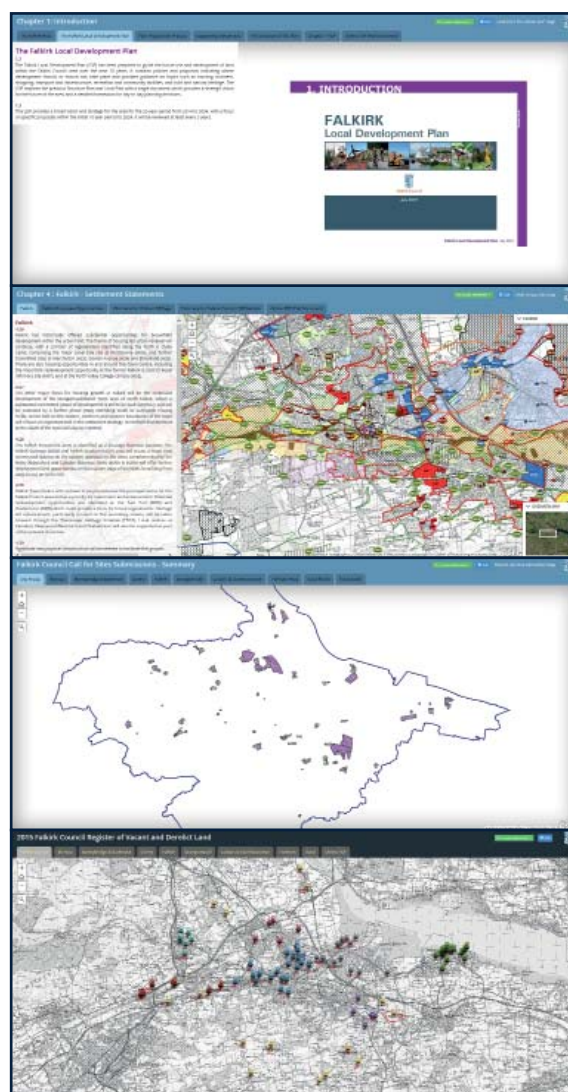
Quality of Service and Engagement

E-Planning

53. The Development Plan team and Development Management Unit continues to develop its web presence and content, and electronic communication with customers. A key development this year has been the use of online web mapping to enhance electronic access to the new LDP and other spatial datasets (see case study). Online surveys are now being routinely used to receive information from customers. A link to the survey questionnaire is available on staff email correspondence.
54. We continue to encourage the electronic submission of planning applications online. During the reporting period 424 (56%) of planning applications were submitted online. This is an 5% increase since the last reporting period and reflects the continuing trend towards online submissions.

Case Study: Online Mapping

The Council has recognised the need to provide an interactive online version of its development plan. Previously we were a part of the Scottish Government-led, jointly procured OLDP project, which gave access to a product developed by IDOX/ISpatial. This had never met our aspirations in terms of functionality and usability. In 2015, we decided not to renew the contract and to find an alternative solution. Using ESRI's ArcView Online, we have developed a more cost-effective, attractive and useable alternative which is now live and provides interactive access to LDP1 and its proposals map. The Development Plan team is now using ArcView Online to develop other web mapping applications where spatial planning information needs to be shared through the web in an interactive way. This has been used to display the LDP2 'Call for Sites' submissions and the Vacant and Derelict Land Register. These applications have been received enthusiastically by customers.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Service and Engagement

Charters

55. The Development Management Unit produced the Development Management Charter (DM Charter) in March 2016. This forms a clear communication strategy for users of the service. It sets out what we do, how we do it and provides measurable service standards. This links with the Enforcement Charter which is due to be updated in the next reporting period and will be reformatted to match the DM Charter.

Plain English

56. All publications are checked for the use of plain English to ensure that information published is suitable for all readers. Information is published on our website in a number of different formats to meet the needs of users of the site.

Complaints Process

57. The Council has complaints procedures in place and details are available on our website. The procedure is based on a two stage process, the first being frontline resolution and the second being investigation. The procedures follow the model developed by the SPSO. Each Council Service has a nominated lead officer for complaints and a Complaints Officer's Working Group is in place. An annual report on the Council's performance in dealing with complaints is produced and published. In the main the report highlights that the Council's performance, as a whole, is close to or better than the national average.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service

Quality of Service and Engagement

Customer Service

58. The continued use of the customer surveys allows us to monitor performance and respond to issues as appropriate. All service users can respond online or using a free-post card. There has been a slight reduction in customer satisfaction which may be a result of increased workload and reduced staffing numbers. Nonetheless, 91.7% of respondents considered the Development Management representative to be helpful, courteous and polite.

'Contact with Development Management is superb.'

'FC planning team told us exactly what was required and assisted with getting this information from our architect and engineers. You have a good team in this office. Thank you.'

'Query was submitted to DC, and forwarded promptly on to DM. DM replied within 24 hours.'

59. The Council once again held an annual planning/building standards service customer workshop. This year, along with the usual planning and building standards updates a session was held on validating planning applications. This was partly in response to previously relatively high levels of invalid applications on receipt. Feedback forms were also provided, they asked for, amongst other things, possible future topics for discussion and any other comments. All of those who provided feedback found the discussion session worthwhile and useful for sharing experiences. The workshop was held half way through the reporting period and there has been a 10% reduction in invalid applications. It is hoped that we will be able to report a further reduction in the next reporting period.

60. We continue to chair the Flood Liaison and Advisory Group and to have planning presentation on the Falkirk Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) Group and regularly participate in the development planning and development management sub-groups of the Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS). We also continue to have regular liaison meetings with representatives from Scottish Water and SEPA, in addition to separate liaison meetings with the Council's Housing, Education and Roads Services.

61. We liaise with adjoining local authorities on development proposals that may have impacts beyond the Falkirk Council boundary and share learning and best practice as highlighted in the following case study.

Case Study: Unconventional Gas Feedback

Falkirk Council received an application for unconventional gas extraction. This application is currently with Scottish Ministers for determination following a Public Inquiry and the Scottish Government moratorium. Whilst the application is not for fracking it raised many relevant and related issues. Throughout this reporting period the Development Management Unit has provided guidance and information to other Councils and has attended HOPS meetings to share experiences and provide feedback on the processing of this planning application and issues arising.

Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service Governance

Efficient and Effective Decision Making

62. The majority of planning applications (94.3%) are determined under the Council's Scheme of Delegation. The scheme allows applications for local and major applications that are in accordance with the Development Plan to be determined by officers unless called to Planning Committee following publication of the weekly recommendations list. Where Members call in an application for determination by the Planning Committee they are required to state the reasons and the applicant/agent are advised. We encourage Members to discuss potential call in's with officers in advance to see if concerns or questions can be addressed.
63. Decision making on the LDP is reserved to full Council. This meets on a six weekly cycle, but special meetings are held to expedite progress and meet project timescales where necessary. Briefings for Members are typically held in advance of the Council meetings to explain processes and proposed policy direction. This aids debate and decision making at the meetings. Other forward planning matters, including Supplementary Guidance are reported to the Council's Executive which meets on a four weekly cycle. There is also provision for Members to influence policy through a policy development panel. The LDP process continues to be subject to a project management approach, with project and stage plans, clear lines of reporting, and a hierarchy of project meetings.



Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service Governance

Effective Management Structures

64. The planning process is coordinated by a management team led by the Head of Planning Service. A breakdown of the structure is provided in Part 6: Workforce and Financial Information.
65. The Planning & Environment Unit has been affected by restructuring, expanding to take in the parks and bereavement services functions from Operational Services. The development plan team is reducing in size due to voluntary severance, and project budgets have also been cut in response to Council financial pressures. Against this background, however, the Unit has endeavoured to maintain and improve the development plan service and continue to lever in external funding to deliver environmental, access and built heritage projects.
66. The Development Management Unit has also been affected by restructuring within Development Services with the Development Manager taking on the management of Building Standards. The Development Management Unit has also reduced in size due to a voluntary severance and a planning officer vacant post not being immediately filled. However, the Unit has experienced officers who have served the Council for a number of years and this has assisted us to adapt to changing circumstances and to maintain a good standard of service.
67. The ability to have flexible team working continues to be recognised, particularly given the changing nature of local authorities and increasing pressures on resources, This flexibility ensures work load pressures when identified are resolved by targeting appropriate staff resources. In Development Management “key development” proposals are identified at either pre-application or submission stage, project teams are set up to allow joint and shared working on applications and to promote staff development.
68. The planning function is located within Development Services in one building along with transport planning, environmental health, architecture, roads, building standards and asset management. This helps to provide an integrated “one stop shop” service for the public and also helps build cross service working relationships.
69. The Planning & Environment Unit continues to provide in-house expertise on landscape, urban design, conservation and outdoor access which is also used by other Council Services, as well as providing advice to the Development Management Unit.

Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service Governance

Unit and Team Meetings

70. Development Management and Planning & Environment Unit meetings are held on a monthly basis and are attended by all staff. These meetings are structured and minuted with the minutes being circulated to senior managers. The meetings allow for work updates, discussion of performance issues and for the cascade of information. Weekly team briefings also take place which allow for the circulation and discussion of urgent information and issues. Development Plan team meetings are held every three weeks as part of the LDP2 project management system.

Financial Management and Local Governance

71. Annual use of budget review templates has ensured revenue budget bids are scored against the Council's stated priorities. Priorities and objectives are aligned through the Single Outcome Agreement, Strategic Community Plan and Corporate Plan. The annual Service Performance Plan ensures staff are clear what their day to day role is in meeting the Council's priorities. Spend is guided by the Council's Contract Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation and through monitoring by Internal Audit and the Council's Best Value Forum.
72. To best utilise the enforcement resources available to the Council, the Planning Enforcement Charter sets priorities for investigation and this ensures cases are prioritised appropriately. The Planning Enforcement Charter is regularly reviewed and has most recently been updated in June 2016. It will be reviewed again in another 2 years.
73. Council procurement rules and procedures are followed. Regular monitoring of budgets is undertaken between Unit managers and the Service accountant.

Planning Obligations

74. The planning service is currently leading a project to improve the process for recording and monitoring planning obligations and agreements under Section 69 of the Local Government Act. A multi-disciplinary team (Planning Obligations Monitoring Group) has been set up comprising officers from across the Council who are involved in the process i.e. staff involved in identifying where contributions are required, the level of contributions sought, the drafting of agreements, the banking and spending of monies received. Planning Obligations are now recorded with easier public access. Advice has also been given to other Councils, such as West Lothian Council, who are looking to implement similar monitoring regimes or to review their existing monitoring processes.
75. Planning applications recommended for approval subject to a planning obligation are reconsidered within 6 months if there has been no meaningful progress by the applicant to conclude an agreement with the Council. Decisions to reconsider are minuted.

Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service Culture of Continuous Improvement

Legacy Cases

76. Work is continuing to clear legacy cases. 17 legacy cases were cleared in the reporting period with 11 remaining at the end of the period. The clearance of these cases has involved detailed discussions with applicants and agents and with members to ensure cases can be progressed to determination or are withdrawn if there is no likely intention to proceed with proposed development.

Validation of Planning Applications

77. During the reporting period a training session was held for agents to seek improvements in the standard of planning application submissions and to reduce the number of applications that cannot be validated because of regular minor errors. The session also provided an opportunity to build better working relationships and contacts between officers and agents. It was also an opportunity to share information with agents about changes in building standards and the introduction of the building warrant submission online system.
78. During the reporting period there has been a 10% reduction in the number of invalid applications and we propose in the coming year to seek further reductions in the number of invalid applications by engagement with applicants/agents and a review of the guidance we provide.

Development Plan Team

79. The Development Plan team within the Planning & Environment Unit has introduced a number of innovations over the course of the reporting period which demonstrate commitment to improve communication with our customers. These innovations have responded to particular issues which we highlighted in last year's 'Communications and Engagement Review'. These have been referred to previously in the report and include:

- Use of social media through the launching of the LDP Facebook page
- Active engagement with housebuilders at the pre-MIR consultation stage
- Youth workshops integrated with the National 5/Higher geography curriculum
- Development of the online version of the LDP and other web mapping applications.

Planning Enforcement

80. We have seen an increase in flyposting and unauthorised advertisements over the reporting period. This has resulted in customer complaints and concerns about the impact on the character and appearance of the area. We are looking into improving our processes and procedures across Council services to tackle this issue.

Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service Culture of Continuous Improvement

Staff Training and Development

81. Officers continue to attend external workshops and training courses. The outcome of these are reported back to staff at team meetings and relevant paper work is stored electronically for officers to access. Courses have included The Scottish Planning & Environmental law (SPEL) Conference 2015, 'The Place Challenge 2015 - Town Centre Living' and Planning Enforcement Update. Representatives also regularly attend RTPI Chapter meetings, the 'Local Authority Urban Design Forum' and 'Scottish Planning Enforcement Forum' (SPEF). Email updates from Scottish Government, Idox, Planning Aid for Scotland (PAS) and others continue to be circulated and discussed at team meetings where relevant. Topic awareness sessions continue in lunch breaks and recent topics within the reporting period included a session on 3D technology. Use of the Knowledge Hub is encouraged. A culture of sharing information and knowledge continues to be encouraged and promoted within the Development Management and Planning & Environment Units. The Council's experience of LDP1 and lessons learned were shared with other local authorities at a conference event in August 2015.
82. All staff are involved in the Council's Achievement and Personal Development Scheme, whereby individual members of staff meet regularly with line managers to receive mentoring and to set personal objectives and identify training needs.

Councillors

83. Training for new Members of the Planning Committee has taken place. These sessions have been jointly organised and run by officers from the Planning Service and Legal Services.

Service Improvements

84. We are continuing to review our internal procedures to ensure that they are up to date and effective as indicated in the case study example below(see panel).
85. Our Development Management Charter was completed on time and we have reviewed our Planning Enforcement Charter to ensure that it can be republished within the recommended 2 year timescales.
86. Feedback from customer surveys, the developer/agent workshop and internal meetings have allowed us to set a clear programme of improvements for the next reporting period.

Case Study:

Agricultural Prior Notifications

Following a SPEF meeting which included a discussion on prior notifications, Development Management set up a working group of officers to put a procedure in place for assessing agricultural prior notifications. This resulted in the creation of a procedure document which staff follow and ensures consistency across the teams and certainty for service users.

Part 3: Supporting Evidence

Part 2 of this report was compiled, drawing on evidence from the following sources;

1. [Development Plan Scheme 2016](#)
2. [Adopted Falkirk LDP \(Online Version\)](#)
3. [Falkirk LDP Action Programme](#)
4. LDP2 Project Plan
5. [Supplementary Guidance](#)
6. [Development Plan Update Newsletters](#)
7. [Pre-MIR Consultation Summary Report](#)
8. Evaluation forms from pre-MIR consultation activities
9. Development Framework for the former RSNH Estate, Larbert
10. [Draft Open Space Strategy](#)
11. [Online Vacant and Derelict Land Register](#)
12. Town Centre Health Checks
13. [Housing Land Audit 2014-2015](#)
14. [Development Management Customer Survey](#)
15. [Scheme of Delegation](#)
16. [Development Management Charter](#)
17. [Enforcement Charter](#)
18. Feedback from Developer Workshop
19. [Falkirk Council Complaints Procedure](#)
20. [Complaints Annual Report 2014-2015](#)

Part 4: Service Improvements

In the coming year we will:

Service Improvement	Timescale
Publish and consult on the MIR for LDP2	January 2017
Complete the programme of Supplementary Guidance associated with LDP1	March 2017
Finalise and approve the Open Space Strategy	October 2016
Prepare East Maddiston Development Framework	October 2016
Prepare a review of the Built Heritage Strategy	March 2017
Reformat Enforcement Charter	June 2016
Create working group on unauthorised advertisements	February 2017
Make enforcement register available online	February 2017
Continue to reduce the number of legacy cases	March 2017
Increase public access to electronically stored planning application information	March 2017
Commence Review of Old Minerals Permissions	October 2016
Arrange a further developer/agent workshop on application validation requirements	December 2016
Meet with PPF benchmarking partner to review PPF and share best practice	September 2016
Commence project with Building Standards and Roads to review procedures to align consent processes	December 2016
Review of Development Management procedures	December 2016

Part 4: Service Improvements

Delivery of our Service Improvement Actions from the 2014-2015 PPF:

Committed Improvements and Actions	Complete?
Adopt Falkirk Local Development Plan	Yes. Plan adopted in July 2015
Complete Supplementary Guidance	14 of the planned 17 SGs are completed and approved. The remainder are planned for completion in 2016-17
Carry out pre-MIR Consultation for LDP2	Yes. Consultation undertaken from October 2015 to January 2016
Prepare and consult on draft Open Space Strategy	Yes. Consultation completed February 2016.
Revise SPG on Developer Contributions to Denny Eastern Access Road	No. Work ongoing to revise project costing and assignment of contributions to different proposed developments.
Complete Town Centre Health Checks	Yes.
Complete Development Management Charter	Completed March 2016.
Arrange a developer/agent workshop on application validation requirements	Took place December 2015 and successes have been reported in the PPF.
Review best practice procedures of benchmarking partners	Yes. Met with benchmarking partners during the year to review PPF and share examples of good practice.
Continue to reduce the number of legacy planning applications	There has been a significant reduction in numbers which has been reported in the PPF.
Review how we continue to promote the use of processing agreements	Yes. Website updated. Staff invite use of agreements at pre-application stage.
Increase public access to electronically stored planning application information	No, ongoing; a review of internal consultation templates and responses is underway in liaison with consultees and electronic systems are being tested.

Part 5: Official Statistics

A: Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Category	Total Number of Decisions	Average Timescale (weeks)	
	2015-2016	2015-2016	2014-2015
Major Developments	7	84.3	135.3
Local Developments			
(non- householder)	231	12.3	11.2
Local: less than 2 months	63.6%	7.0	7.0
Local: more than 2 months	36.4%	21.6	17.9
Householder Developments	262	6.9	6.9
Local: less than 2 months	95.0%	6.6	6.6
Local: more than 2 months	5.0%	11.9	11.0
Housing Developments			
Major	4	81.9	154.9
Local housing developments	66	17.7	13.6
Local: less than 2 months	43.9%	7.4	7.4
Local: more than 2 months	56.1%	25.8	17.4
Business and Industry			
Major	1	38.6	----
Local business and industry	2	6.9	10.3
Local: less than 2 months	100%	6.9	7.4
Local: more than 2 months	0%	----	11.2
EIA Developments	----	----	----
Other Consents*	83	8.6	9.1
Planning/Legal Agreements**			43.4
Major	4	81.9	154.9
Local	10	63.2	27.4
Local Reviews	5	24.6	33.4 (25.2)

* 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.

Part 5: Official Statistics

B: Decision-making: Local Reviews and Appeals

Type	Total Number of Decisions	Original Decision Upheld			
		2015-2016		2014-2015	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local Reviews	5	0	0	3	37.5
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	6	3	50	2 (3)	33.3 (42.9)

C: Enforcement Activity

	2015-2016	2014-2015
Cases Taken Up	174	240
Breaches Identified	174	240 (155)
Cases Resolved	104	204
Notices Served***	9	38
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

Comments regarding decision making and decision making timescales are set out within the body of the report. We are continuing to clear a back log of legacy cases and significant progress has been made in this respect. In the context of change in local authority resources we continue to strive to maintain and improve performance and to adapt to change.

Part 6: Workforce and Financial Information

as at 31/3/16

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Head of Planning Service			1	

	Managers		Main Grade Posts		Technician Posts		Office Support/Clerical		Total
	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	
Development Management	1	0	10	1	2	0			14
Enforcement	0	0	2	0	0	0			2
Development Planning	0.3	0	5	0	1	0			6.3
Other Planning	0.3	0	7.5	1	1	0			9.8
Cross Service (Office Support/ Clerical)							4.5	0	4.6

1	Total Budget ²	Costs		Income
		Direct	Indirect ³	
Development Management	£1,037,180	£675,265 ³	£894,110	£506,200
Enforcement		£70,684		
Development Planning	£1,363,040	£371,657	£1,015,524 ⁴	£228,796
Other Planning ⁴		£475,710		
Total	£2,400,220	£1,593,316	£1,909,634	£734,996

Staff Age Profile	Number
Under 30	0
30-39	7
40-49	10
50 and over	17

Committee and Site Visits	Number per year
Full Council Meetings	9
Planning Committees	11
Area Committees (where relevant)	-
Committee Site Visits	7
LRB	8
LRB Site Visits	8

¹ Admin staff costs not included as admin is a cross-service function that is difficult to apportion.

² Total budget can only be broken down by Unit, not by function.

³ Indirect costs can only be broken down by Unit, not by function.

⁴ Other planning comprises landscape, biodiversity, urban design/conservation, greenspace, environmental policy/projects, access and outdoor ranger service.

Performance Markers

Driving Improved Performance

	Performance Marker	Council Response/Evidence
1	Decision Making: Authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types.	National Headline Indicators show that our timescales for dealing with householder developments is consistent high with 95% being determined within 2 months. Our timescales for major developments has significantly improved. The timescales for local non householder developments has increased slightly and this is being monitored. PPF Reference: Part 1: National Headline Indicators Part 5: Official Statistics
2	Project Management: Offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and availability publicised on planning authority website.	We continue to take a proactive stance to promote the use of processing agreements. There is guidance and a template on our website. Agreements are invited during pre-application discussions and in correspondence with applicants/agents. PPF Reference: Part 1: National Headline Indicators Project Planning, paragraphs 12 -13 Case Study: Processing Agreement Miller Homes (page 6) Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service Quality of Service and Engagement, paragraphs 34, 48 Case Study: Development of new Ineos HQ, Grangemouth (page 13)
3	Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications.● Clear and proportionate requests for supporting information.	We continue to encourage early dialogue with applicants and offer a free pre-application service. Guidance is provided on our website. PPF Reference: Part 1: National Headline Indicators Project Planning, paragraphs 12 -13 Case Study: Processing Agreement Miller Homes (page 6) Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service Quality of Service and Engagement, paragraphs 31 - 37, Case Study: Development of new Ineos HQ, Grangemouth (page 13)
4	Legal Agreements: Conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant'.	The progress of applications subject to legal agreement is closely monitored and applications are reported back to Planning Committee for reconsideration if not determined within 6 months. PPF Reference: Part 1: National Headline Indicators Project Planning, paragraphs 12 - 13 Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service Governance, paragraphs 74 - 75 Culture of Continuous Improvement, paragraphs 76 Part 5: Official Statistics
5	Enforcement Charter updated/ re-published.	The Charter remains up to date and will be reviewed before August 2016. PPF Reference: Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service Quality of Service and Engagement, paragraphs 55 and 72
6	Continuous Improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Show progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators.● Progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report.	Progress on National Headline Indicators and Service Improvements are set out in the relevant sections of the PPF. We have had our first formal processing agreement and continue to project manage and monitor all applications. There has been a significant reduction in legacy cases. Decision making timescales have remained reasonably consistent as we adapt to the impact of restructuring. We have reduced the number of invalid applications. For development planning, there have been particular innovations in customer engagement as evidenced through the pre-MIR consultation for LDP2, and in the online presentation of the development plan and other spatial data. PPF Reference: Part 1: National Headline Indicators Project Planning, paragraphs 12 - 13 Part 2: Defining and measuring a high quality planning service Quality of service and engagement, paragraphs 14 - 16, 34, 47 - 53, 58 - 63 Case Study: LDP2 Youth Engagement (page 19) Case Study: Online Mapping (page 20) Culture of continuous improvement, paragraphs 74 - 86 Part 4: Service Improvements (delivery of 2014 - 15 service improvements)

Performance Markers

Promoting the Plan-Led System

	Performance Marker	Council Response/Evidence
7	Local Development Plan less than 5 years since adoption	The LDP was adopted in July 2015, and was eight months old at the end of the reporting period. PPF Reference: Part 1: National Headline Indicators, paragraph 9
8	Development Plan Scheme demonstrates next LDP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On course for adoption within 5 year cycle ● Project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	DPS 2015 and 2016 indicate adoption of LDP2 in January 2020. i.e. within 5 year timescale. Pre-MIR stage has proceeded in accordance with DPS and plan is on target. PPF Reference: Part 1: National Headline Indicators, paragraph 9 Part 2: Defining and measuring a high quality planning service Quality of service and engagement, paragraphs 43 - 45
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Two Member workshops were held at the outset of the pre-MIR process in September/October 2015 giving Members an opportunity to discuss the issues which LDP2 would have to address at both the strategic and local levels. This has been followed up by further workshops in May to discuss the outcome of the issues consultation and 'call for sites', and the content of the Main Issues Report. PPF Reference: Part 2: Defining and measuring a high quality planning service Quality of service and engagement, paragraph 50
10	Cross-sector stakeholders, including industry, agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Extensive pre-MIR consultation took place from October 2015 to January 2016 with all stakeholders including key agencies, business, housebuilders, community councils and the public using a variety of techniques. This exercise has been described within the PPF report. PPF Reference: Part 2: Defining and measuring a high quality planning service Quality of service and engagement, paragraph 50
11	Regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through SPGs produced on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Information required to support applications; and ● Expected developer contributions 	The Council has continued its programme of preparation of Supplementary Guidance in association with LDP1. 14 SG documents have now been approved by the Scottish Government and the remaining 4 SGs are under preparation. Overall, the SGs provide guidance on the detailed implementation of policy, particularly in respect of design and placemaking, built and natural heritage, and infrastructure and developer contributions. The SGs which have been prepared and approved during the course of the reporting year cover Shopfronts, Healthcare and New Housing Development and Low and Zero Carbon Development. Where relevant the SGs provide guidance on the information required to support applications and checklists for applicants to ensure that all the relevant issues have been considered and addressed pre-submission, to give the application the highest chance of prompt assessment and determination. Those SGs which set out required developer contributions provide clear guidance on the circumstances in which contributions will be required, the scale of those contributions, and how the contributions are derived, thereby demonstrating proportionality. PPF Reference: Part 2: Defining and measuring a high quality planning service Quality of service and engagement, paragraph 46

Performance Markers

Simplifying and Streamlining

	Performance Marker	Council Response/Evidence
12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit	<p>Regular liaison meetings between planning and other relevant services are held on housing, education, open space and cemeteries. These ensure the integration of plans and strategies, sharing of information, and liaison on day to day issues, including current planning applications. In parallel to this, the Planning Obligations Monitoring Group brings together colleagues from planning, finance, legal and the various delivery services to ensure that developer contributions are taken forward and applied timeously to relevant projects.</p> <p>As part of the LDP2 pre-MIR process, a corporate workshop was held to engage other services in the process and give them an opportunity to contribute issues. There have been follow-up meetings with key officers in education, transport and economic development.</p> <p>PPF Reference: Part 2: Defining and measuring a high quality planning service Quality of service and engagement, paragraphs 36, 38, 50, 59 - 60 Case Study: Development of new Ineos HQ, Grangemouth (page 13) Governance, paragraphs 65 - 69, 71 - 74</p>
13	Sharing Good Practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	<p>Staff have attended forums, conferences, training events and RTPI Chapter events. The Knowledge Hub is used to share information and experience. We have liaised with our SOLACE benchmarking family members in reviewing our previous and current PPF.</p> <p>The Council's experience of LDP1, and lessons learned, were shared with other local authorities at a conference event in August 2015.</p> <p>PPF Reference: Introduction, paragraph 3 Part 2: Defining and measuring a high quality planning service Quality of service and engagement, paragraphs 57, 60 - 61, 74, 80 Case Study: Unconventional Gas Feedback (page 22) Culture of continuous improvement, paragraph 81</p>

Delivering Development

	Performance Marker	Council Response/Evidence
14	Stalled Sites/Legacy Cases: conclusion/withdrawal of planning applications more than one year old	<p>During the reporting period the number of legacy cases has reduced from 28 to 11. We are continuing to work with applicants/agents to further reduce the number of legacy cases.</p> <p>PPF Reference: Part 1: National Headline Indicators, paragraphs 12 - 13 Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service, Quality of service and engagement, paragraph 35 - 37, 76, 79 Part 4: Service Improvements Part 5: Official Statistics</p>
15	Developer Contributions: clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set out in development plan and In pre-application discussions 	<p>Our LDP and SGs provide clear guidance on the circumstances in which contributions will be sought, the scale of those contributions and how they have been calculated. We demonstrate that where contributions are sought this is in accordance with circular 3/2012. The LDP and SGs are published on our website. Staff refer to the documents in pre-application discussions and correspondence. We consider impact of developer contributions on development viability in liaison with applicants/agents and the District Valuer. There is regular corporate officer liaison regarding contributions to take account of changing circumstances. Where appropriate, payments are phased to mitigate the impact on development viability and cash flow.</p> <p>PPF Reference: Part 2: Defining and Measuring a High Quality Planning Service, Quality of service and engagement, paragraphs 12 - 13, 35 - 37, 46, 48, 74</p>



Falkirk Council
Development Services