



Planning Performance Framework 2015-2016

July 2016



FOREWORD



Councillor Matthew Brown
Chair of the Planning Committee



It is my pleasure to present the fifth North Ayrshire Planning Performance Framework (PPF5). This year's response presents evidence of the fantastic collaborative and innovative approach to Planning which we deliver in North Ayrshire.

This approach enables us to maintain high levels of performance to deliver high quality sustainable development. I have no doubt that this response will demonstrate our continued commitment to excellence by focusing on the positive feedback received last year in relation to PPF4.



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath



CONTENTS

Part 1. National Headline Indicators (NHIs)	1
Part 2. Defining and measuring a high-quality planning service	3
Quality of Outcomes	3
High quality development on the ground - Case Studies	3
Saltcoats Town Hall	3
Ardrossan North Shore, Cunninghame Housing Association	5
Irvine Leisure Centre	8
Quality of service and engagement	10
Open for business – Case Studies	10
Largs Campus	10
Arran Distillery	13
Certainty	17
Processing Agreements	17
Action Programme	17
Communications, engagement and customer service	18
Pre-Application Procedure	18
Governance	19
Efficient and effective decision – making	19
Effective Management Structures	20
Financial Management & Local Governance	20
Culture of continuous improvement	21
Place Standard Testing	21
Garnock Valley Charrette - 'Go Garnock'	22
LDP2 Branding	23
Away Days	23
2015/16 Service improvement Update	25
Part 3. Supporting evidence	30
Part 4. Service improvements: 2016-17	32
Appendix 1 - Planning Performance Framework	34
Official Statistics	
Appendix 2 - Workforce and Financial Information	36

Part 1. National Headline Indicators (NHIs)

Key outcomes	2015-2016	2014-2015	2013-2014
Development Planning:			
1. age of local/strategic development plan(s) (years and months) at end of reporting period <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i>	1yr 10m	1	8
2. Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5 th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
3. 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)	Y-later	n/a	n/a
4. Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year? (Y/N)	N	n/a	n/a
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs			
5. established housing land: years supply	3.5years	4.2 years	5.89 years
6. 5 year effective housing land supply ¹	1934 units	2345 units	3,300 units
7. Previous annual housing completions. ²	201 units	411 units	285 units
8. 5 year housing supply target	2800 units	2800 units	n/a
9. housing approvals ³	234 units	85 units	n/a
10. housing completions over last 5 years	1324 units	1614 units	
11. marketable employment land supply ⁴	231Ha	138Ha	161Ha
12. employment land take-up ⁵	3.4Ha	8.7 Ha	3.9Ha
Development Management			
Project Planning			
13. percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice	43%	41%	51%
14. number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	6	3	1
15. percentage planned timescales met	100%	100%	n/a%
Decision-making			
16. application approval rate	96.2%	96.7%	97.8%
17. delegation rate	96.5%	96.8%	93.8%
Decision-making timescales			
Average number of weeks to decision:			
18. major developments ⁶	26.7 weeks	12.6 weeks	21.5 weeks
19. local developments (non-householder)	5.8 weeks	6.2 weeks	6.8 weeks
20. householder developments	4.7 weeks	5.1 weeks	5.7 weeks

¹ The effective housing land supply is based on our draft 2015-2016 Housing Land Audit. The finalised audit figure is likely to result in an increase in the years supply.

² Figure derived from new build return data.

³ Figure consists of new dwellings and change of use applications consented to form houses or flats

⁴ Figure includes 'for sale' and 'under offer'. Source CoStar.

⁵ Source CoStar.

⁶ The increase in average processing time is due to one historic case file being decided.



Legacy Cases			
21. Number of legacy cases cleared during the period	4	3	
22. Number remaining.	7	11	
Enforcement			
23. time since enforcement charter published/ reviewed (months) <i>Requirement: review every 2 years</i>	April 2015/12	April 2015/0	Feb 2013/2
24. number of breaches identified/resolved	135/136	86/126	127/169

Part 2 Defining and measuring a high-quality planning service

Quality of Outcomes

High quality development on the ground Case Study: Saltcoats Town Hall



Saltcoats Town Hall, Category B Listed, is a key historical building in the heart of Saltcoats, which had suffered from significant decline to the point of closure, reflecting a pattern experienced in the wider town centre.

Following a strategic review of the Council's property estate and in conjunction with the Town Centre Regeneration Plan, the Town Hall was identified as a key building socially and economically, and presented an opportunity to rationalise the property estate.

Planning Services provided initial input into this review. The outcome was a proposed amalgamation of 5 offices which had been historically spread across a wider local area, with a fully refurbished Town Hall. The proposal would ensure a regular and enduring operational focus through a customer hub, safeguarding the long term future of the building.



In December 2013, planning and listed building applications were submitted for the change of use, internal alterations and extension of the building. Due to delays from statutory consultees, consent was granted in April 2014.

In May 2015, work started on site to repair and refurbish the building. Where normally Planning Services would not necessarily be involved in a project's development, given the importance and complications expected with the building a supervisory role was undertaken in conjunction with the project manager, Historic Environment Scotland and the client.



The key challenge for Planning Services was ensuring that swift advice was provided on what was an ever evolving project. It was found during redevelopment that significant repairs were required, designs were changed and key features, thought to have been lost, were uncovered. This proved to be a challenging project for everyone involved.

At the latter end of the project, Planning Services were then drawn upon in order to provide advice on colours and finishes.

In February 2015, the project was coming to an end and Planning Services were there to oversee any last minute fixes and provide advice on any potential snagging issues.

Throughout the project's life Planning Services provide an advisory role to the project.

High quality development on the ground

Case Study: Ardrossan North Shore, Cunninghame Housing Association



As part of its commitment to regeneration, the Council in conjunction with Ardrossan North Shore LLP, a joint venture between Clydeport and Irvine Bay Regeneration Company, developed a masterplan for the redevelopment of a significant area of vacant land at Ardrossan Harbour.

On 24th April 2013, Planning Permission in Principle (PPP) was granted for the erection of a mixed use development comprising residential units, nursing home, commercial units, distributor road and coastal defence works.

Having received two related applications, one for the erection of 106 dwellings and another detailed proposal for a road and revetment, Ardrossan North Shore LLP approached Cunninghame Housing Association to lead on the provision of affordable housing within the masterplan area.



In March 2015, Planning Services received a draft layout for the provision of affordable housing units of varying types. As a major development the proposal would be subject to Pre Application Consultation but prior to this we met with the applicants and sought to provide meaningful advice on layouts, access, design and materials.

Pre application discussions were undertaken over a period of 6 months and involved key Council departments and statutory consultees.

The challenge for Planning Services was to negotiate key changes to the proposal that reflected the aspirations of the wider masterplan, comments received by consultees and by residents during public consultation. A 12 metre wide no build zone which dissects the site along the route of an existing 1125mm sewer provided a significant challenge for all involved. Furthermore, the surrounding area has no defined character containing a mixture of building types, scales and designs that provided challenges for the designers.



In November 2015, a planning application was submitted proposing the erection of 70 affordable housing residential units comprising of 28 terraced three apartment houses, 4 semi-detached four apartment houses, 24 common close three apartment flats and 14 cottage three apartment flats. The terraced, semi-detached and cottage flat blocks would be two storey's in height and the remaining common close flats contained within three storey blocks.

The significant level of public consultation by the applicant and the positive negotiations led by Planning Services resulted in the application receiving no objections from consultees or members of the public alike and in January 2016, planning permission was granted, 12 weeks after its submission.

The images speak for themselves, but the design, scale and layout of the proposal received commendation from the Planning Committee as well as positive feedback from the client with regard to the open and consistent discussions provided at pre app.

Work is due to start in summer 2016.

Some testimonials that we have secured from our customers during the period include:

“Throughout the Planning process we benefitted from a proactive and involved attitude from all members of NAC’s Planning team, which allowed any issues to be discussed and resolved without adversely impacting upon project timescales or aims. As a result of this collaborative process, we have arrived at a proposal which maximises the opportunities of the site and will provide a sustainable and viable new residential development. We have been impressed with the assistance that has been afforded to us and would commend the approach taken by the Department to facilitate delivery of what we hope will be an excellent addition to Ardrossan’s townscape.”

Mast Architects

‘The development at Montgomerie Street is an important new build project for the Association. The site has lain vacant for some time and is located within a residential area, therefore one of the challenges was creating a development which sits well within its surrounding environment and is well received by local residents. The proposals which we showcased at consultation events had benefitted from pre application discussions with the North Ayrshire Council Planning team. At all stages of the process with the Planning officials, there was clear direction provided and they were willing to discuss and review options of how best the site could be delivered. This active engagement helped to expedite the planning process and ensured that any issues were fully considered prior to a formal planning application being made. Our experience of engagement with the NAC Planning team has been wholly positive.’

Linda Anderson
Executive Director of Operations
Cunninghame Housing Association Ltd



High quality development on the ground

Case study: Irvine Leisure Centre

As part of its commitment to town centre regeneration, the Council promoted a new leisure centre development for Irvine during 2013. In addition to new indoor courts, halls, gymnasium and swimming pools, the focal point of the development is the historic Townhouse, which will accommodate a family history research centre and a new conference/wedding venue in the heart of Irvine.



Originally, the Townhouse was the home of Irvine Burgh Council, but following local government reorganisation in 1975, its role changed to that of the district court and the Council's licensing offices. By 2010, it was increasingly apparent that under-investment in the fabric of the building over many decades, as well as the impact of numerous minor repairs and alterations, necessitated a more radical plan for its future.

The Council commissioned LA Architects to design a new leisure centre which would be physically integrated with the historic Townhouse. Key issues were the need to respect the setting of the Townhouse and to ensure the new build provided a contemporary contrast that would not over-dominate nor detract from a landmark building in the town. The Townhouse is a significant contributor to the Irvine skyline due to its distinctive Italianate spire.

The challenge for Planning Services was to manage the decision making process for what was, in 2013, a controversial proposal. Key planning issues raised by the proposals included the demolition of the old Irvine Police Station and a community centre, as well as parking provision and access. The proposal sparked significant local debate about the demolition of several old buildings, and the merits of limiting on-site parking for staff and disabled persons only. The 'town centre first' principle, as advocated in Scottish Planning Policy and endorsed by the Council both corporately and in terms of the Local Development Plan was under intense scrutiny, and it required commitment and skilful negotiation by Planning Services to ensure the key benefits in terms of regeneration and sustainability were kept at the forefront of the debate.

Planning permission was granted by the Council's Planning Committee in June 2013. Thereafter, the proposed closure of an historic close through the site required a Stopping Up Order which was challenged by numerous objections. Again, careful negotiation led by Planning Services enabled a positive outcome for both the promoters and objectors when the outcome of the Hearing conducted by the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals was published by Scottish Ministers in late 2014. Consequently, the construction phase was significantly delayed until early 2015.

By the spring of 2016, the renovation works to the Townhouse and the external shell of the new leisure centre building were fully complete, providing a glimpse of the potential benefits the development will bring to Irvine town centre. The development is taking place at a time when the historic fabric of many buildings in the locality are showing signs of stress due to the lack of investment and under-use, mainly as a result of long-term trends in shopping patterns which favour out-of-town superstores and centres. It is therefore hoped that The Portal will act as a catalyst for the regeneration of the original heart of the town which dates back to medieval times. To reinforce the long history of settlement on The Portal site, an archaeological report undertaken by Rathmell Archaeology uncovered numerous artefacts and building remains dating back as far as the 13th century. The Portal is due for completion in early 2017.



Quality of service and engagement

Open for business Case Study: Largs Campus

As reported in 2015, the Council decided to promote a campus development for replacement education facilities in Largs. The aim of the campus is to encompass the provision of early years, primary and secondary education at a single campus in the town, in addition to the provision of new sporting and leisure facilities for the wider community.

Early investigations led by Education & Youth Employment indicated that the most suitable site for the campus would be on greenfield land to the east of the town, currently used as a golf training ground within Sportscotland's Inverclyde national training facility. Planning Services were heavily engaged in the pre-application process, which resulted in an open exchange of information between the prospective applicant and the local community. In addition to the statutory public event, additional events and a series of meetings were held in Largs after the summer holiday period. The timing of events and meetings was carefully considered to ensure that people did not feel excluded due to inappropriate time slots or dates.

The meetings held during the autumn of 2015 provided an opportunity for genuine dialogue between the local community and the Council as the promoter of the development. Planning Services provided direction and guidance during this process, which culminated in the production of the pre-application consultation report featuring a "You Said, We Did" format. The benefit of this pre-application engagement enabled the application to take into account many concerns over issues such as traffic, parking, paths to school, visual impacts, noise and proposed mitigation methods.



In November 2015, the major planning application for the campus was lodged. The nearest residents to the site who were individually notified were kept fully up to date with the process and provided with additional information when requested. The applicant also held additional discussions in order to help resolve, where possible, matters of concern.

Since the application site had not been allocated for educational use in the adopted Local Development Plan, and directly affected an affordable housing site, it was necessary to hold a pre-determination hearing involving all 30 members of the Council. This was arranged for 24th February 2016, just over 3 months after the application was registered. Following consideration of the presentations made by the applicants and the objectors, the Council resolved to grant the application at a meeting involving the full Council. The Council were also able to provide an undertaking that the affordable housing site which had been allocated would be provided instead on one of the surplus school sites in the town, thus ensuring the delivery of an important element in the LDP.

In addition, the comprehensive upgrading of the adjacent Sportscotland Inverclyde national training facility, including a replacement golf training ground, is also taking place. The co-location of complementary uses will enable synergies to develop between the schools and Inverclyde, and it is hoped that this will lead to improved educational and sporting achievements.

Following confirmation from Scottish Ministers that the application would not be called in, the decision notice was issued on 18th March 2016. Works to develop the campus will commence in May 2016.

As part of our efforts to promote the benefits of Processing Agreements and improve the quality of our service, we requested feedback from the agent, JM Architects as follows:

Did the timescale for handling the application fit with the targets for the project?

Yes, completely.

Was the Processing Agreement a useful tool for managing the workload generated by the project?

Yes, this was essential for both ourselves and the Managing Contractor. On Hub Procured projects the Planning Approval and cleansing of the pre-start conditions is essential to the closing of the contract. It was therefore imperative that we had the Processing Agreement to be able to programme work accordingly.

Was communication from Planning Services effective?

Very. Always prompt and responded quickly to emails and/or telephone messages.

Did the outcome meet your expectations?

Very. Genuinely the best service we have received from a Planning Officer and Planning Department in years, and streaks ahead of other Authorities.

Would you be able to comment favourably on the Council's handling of the planning application, or not?

Definitely. Prompt, efficient, pragmatic and professional.



The following is a letter from sportscotland to James Miller, Senior Planning Services Manager commenting on their experience with planning:

Dear Mr Miller,

sportscotland National Centre Inverclyde - Planning Services

I am writing to express sportscotland's gratitude to you and your colleagues at North Ayrshire Council for their assistance in all Planning matters throughout the design development and tender process for the redevelopment of the sportscotland National Centre Inverclyde.

From the outset, you and Mr Gordon Craig have gone out of your way to advise and assist in any way you can and, without exception, have been extremely helpful and co-operative in working with us in this process. In particular, your attendance at the Contractor Open Day on site, where you highlighted the parameters against which any proposals for replacement facilities would be assessed was invaluable to us ensuring that the teams understood the design restraints and opportunities that existed and a realistic view on the design risks associated with the Planning process. This enabled our successful team to propose a high quality design solution which met this advice and enabled a relatively smooth Planning process given the time constraints on the project. We believe the proactive approach your department has taken has been instrumental in the quality of this project to date.

The relationships developed with me and my colleagues at the National Centre continued with the other applications regarding the replacement Maintenance Shed and Golf Course works and, as before, the advice was forthcoming and helpful. Given the extent of the works being undertaken on the site, in all the projects noted, it is good to be able to rely on this advice when making applications to ensure our consultants could make the appropriate level of detail in their submission to allow you to assess the applications without the need to have endless correspondence on missing information allowing us to focus on other equally important matters on site.

I am delighted that the partnership between North Ayrshire Council and sportscotland is strong at this level and thank you again for positively contributing to the delivery of a successful project for the benefit of the National Centre and the larger community in Largs and beyond.

Steven Anderson
Lead Manager – Facilities - sportscotland

Open for business

Case Study: Arran Distillery



The Isle of Arran lies off the west coast and is accessible, for many, by using the dedicated ferry service from Ardrossan. The community relies heavily on tourism and existing businesses on the island to provide jobs and facilities. Many businesses jointly manage an 'Arran' brand and marketing tool which sells goods off the island. Isle of Arran Distillers is one of the more successful contributors and provides much needed employment and investment in the north of Arran.

Unfortunately the island location and lack of direct access to the mainland meant that the distillery was struggling to store their produce in what was an ever expanding business.

In December 2014, Planning Services received an initial enquiry from Isle of Arran Distillers proposing the erection of whisky bonds on the island. Site selection was proving difficult due to various ownership, landscape and access issues and unfortunately a suitable site could not be found. Planning Services met with the applicant to discuss the proposal and seek further information.

The development of a number of isolated whisky bonds in the Countryside provided concerns regarding compatibility with the landscape and security for the client. It was suggested that a more significant economic investment could be supported. Following a number of meetings the proposal was altered and the scale of the project increased with plans to instead build a new distillery in the south of the island. The scope of the project changed and Planning Services engaged the services of SNH and SEPA to discuss proposed sites.



It was an initial scoping enquiry requesting opinions on a number of potential sites. In February 2015 Planning Services agreed to carry out a joint visit to the initial sites alongside the applicant and SNH, who had a key interest in the probable landscape impacts of the development. In the following months the initial 5 potential sites were reduced to 2.

All sites were located within the Countryside and any development would be contrary to the LDP. As much of the island is designated as a Special Landscape Area and National Scenic Area, the site is heavily constrained. However, the development had the potential to provide a significant level of direct and incidental investment for the island as well as creating jobs and further securing the 'Arran' brand.



Throughout 2015, Planning Services met and discussed potential proposals with the applicant, following which one site was selected. During this time, the applicant procured the services of an architectural practice. Planning Services provided some input into this process with respect to the draft designs. The selected agent has continued the ongoing negotiations and following many months of negotiation have agreed a high quality, bespoke and ultimately unique approach to the design of the distillery.

The challenge for Planning Services was to assess potential sites whilst meeting the needs of interested parties. Pre application discussions have been undertaken over a period of 12 months and involved key Council departments and statutory consultees.

Due to the scale of the site a Major planning application is required. We are expecting a planning application in the following months.

Some testimonials that we have secured from our customers during the period include:

I am writing with regard to the performance of North Ayrshire Council and in particular you when handling the applications for SBC Renewables.

I have found you to be extremely helpful and professional when dealing with all the applications. You contacted me directly when there were any matters that needed further discussions and you always explained fully the needs of the Council to be able to determine the applications in a timely manner.

Both you and other members of your team actively made an effort to work with me on the applications so that we were able to build a good working relationship.

Many thanks for all your help and assistance.'

Adele Ellis, AE Associates

'The Network Rail development project at Saltcoats sea wall required NAC to work collaboratively with Marine Scotland to reach agreement on the requirement for EIA. Subsequently the pre-application process was managed in a confident and competent manner ensuring that Network Rail were certain about the steps required of us in relation to community consultation and liaison with NAC. Full cognisance was taken of the split between sections of work that were permitted development and those requiring planning consent. During the application process, NAC took the time to contact Network Rail to ensure that community views were expressed directly, which meant that we were able to resolve problems along the way and positively engage with concerns from the general public. At one stage surveys indicated there was a risk of critical deterioration of the wall structure and Network Rail were able to speak directly to the case officer, agree immediate solutions and commence works to satisfy the survey's concerns. The application process was swift and well managed throughout. During the project we were also working to manage the council's highway, access and conservation expectations and felt that the internal council departments worked proactively, enabling us to work through the process in a coordinated fashion'.

Laura Mitchell, Town Planner, Network Rail



The following are comments posted in the ‘post-decision survey’ (Survey Monkey) on ePlanning, which asks applicants for their views on their experience with the planning system:

‘We had trouble establishing the correct planning history and Fiona was extremely helpful, going back to check that the history we had received from Business Support Team referred to the correct location. She also dealt with the application within 3 weeks of receiving it’.

‘Polite, approachable and proactive throughout. My first contact with Ross Middleton was made by my mistake yet he took my call and has responded positively throughout’.

‘The planning officer was exemplary in his effort to progress our application from beginning to end. Pre-submission discussions were very helpful and full of good advice. Technical and aesthetic aspects of our proposals were considered in a comprehensive and homogenous manner ensuring that no single challenge became a sticking point. Our application was determined well within the two month period and the decision notice was issued quickly thereafter’.

“I welcome the ‘fleet-of-foot’ decisions on planning applications within North Ayrshire, which continue to support business.” The Deputy First Minister, John Swinney MSP, at the Business Conference at the Waterside Inn, Seamill on 4th March 2016.

Certainty

Processing Agreements

In the last PPF we received an amber rating for our measuring and publication of processing agreements.

The Council as a whole is currently engaging in a programme of improvements to the website and we are working with our IT team to renew our webpages. It is proposed to provide more information than currently available on our Planning webpages.

In the meantime, we continue to respond directly to applicants and agents for major or more significant applications to encourage the use of Processing Agreements.

The creation of our Pre-Application procedure, which is explained within the section relating to Communications, engagement and customer service, has been useful in identifying and recording potential applications which would require a processing agreement. The requirement is also highlighted when providing initial advice or throughout the negotiation process.

This is evidenced by the marked increase in the use of Processing Agreements, 11 in total, five of which related to local applications for energy consents.

Action Programme

Previous feedback from the PPF 14/15 recognised that our Action Programme provided a one stop document containing clear expectations around information required to support applications.

To ensure the effectiveness of the Action Programme is maintained we have undertaken a review of its content and implementation. This review considered past, existing and forthcoming applications which have been subject to pre-application discussion. Working alongside our colleagues in building standards, we monitor progress on significant sites identified in the LDP. This includes all types of development from housing to industrial to leisure. We use this information to provide updates and refocus our activities from sites that are progressing to those which may have stalled.

In addition, we examined sites with any economic activity. This assessment ensures that our priorities are focused and aligned with wider Corporate Strategies, to consider sustainable and inclusive economic growth across North Ayrshire.

The Action Programme demonstrates our flexible approach to developer contributions. Giving due consideration to the economic climate in North Ayrshire is essential when considering development viability. The Action Programme outlines our expectations for each site. In order to ensure that applicants have access to further information relating to developer contributions we have adopted a proactive approach to pre-application engagement. Face to face meetings provide the applicant with more detail in relation to any potential contributions or requirements. It also allows for any issues to be raised in relation to the requirements outlined within the Action Programme at the earliest possible stage, thus avoiding any delay late in the process.

An invitation to developers is offered within the updated Action Programme which will be approved by Committee in Summer 2016 and available on our website thereafter.



Communications, engagement and customer service

Pre-Application Procedure

In the last PPF we received an amber rating for our early collaboration with applicants and consultees.

To address this issue Planning Services have improved our internal registration and work flowing of Pre-Application enquiries. Taking advice from other Councils, Planning Services have drawn up an internal procedure for the recording of enquires on our Uniform and IDOX databases. App pre-application enquiries are recorded and work flowed in the same manner as a planning application with each pre app provided with a suffix i.e. 16/00001/PREAPP. The new system was trialled between September and November 2015 and was officially adopted in the new year. Since January 2016 we have received and responded to 410 enquiries.

Planning Services continue to operate a Help Desk for members of the public and recently drew up a rota in order to support this. All enquirers are made aware of the PRE-APP service and are encouraged to email our eplanning inbox. This allows for the easy management of work.

Where early discussions with consultees are required the creation of the suffix allows us to issue consultations and manage responses accordingly. There are many examples of early discussion with consultees. The case study, Arran Distillery, is one such example. The Council as a whole is currently engaging in a programme of improvements to the website and we are working with our IT team to renew our webpages. It is proposed to provide more information than currently available at:

<http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/resident/planning-and-building-standards/do-i-need-planning-permission.aspx>

Planning Services are also engaging our so called 'frequent flyer' agents and are using social media, mainly the Councils Twitter account (11,500 followers) and Any Biz (500 business accounts), to publicise and make the public aware of the advantages of pre app.

Since embarking on the new procedure and publication procedures we have seen a marked increase in pre-application enquiries, even within the first 5 months. The system allows for the easy management of work for staff as well as tracking their performance. The system could be used to measure the quality of advice provided as well as providing justification for more staff resources or higher planning fees.

Governance

Efficient and effective decision - making

A major planning application for 200 dwellinghouses and associated works to the east of West Bankside Farm, Kilbirnie, a new LDP residential site was presented to the Planning Committee on March 23 2016.

Prior to the application submission, an initial meeting was arranged in November 2014 between the applicants, key stakeholders and NAC officers who would be closely involved in the planning application process.

A further three meetings were held prior to the application submission to ensure that the submitted layout embraced the Designing Streets concept from the outset.

A collaborative approach between the applicant, planning and transportation officers resulted in the submitted layout, which was refined several times since November 2014 with a focus on place-making. This was achieved through a combination of building design, layout, street design, open spaces, landscaping, paths, etc. Infrastructure constraints with respect to the education capacity for the local primary school also needed to be overcome prior to the application submission.



Planning Services also recommended that a processing agreement would be an effective project management tool for the planning application, which the applicant was agreeable to. The processing agreement included key dates, a list of supporting documentation which would be required with the application submission and a list of consultees. An application was submitted on 21 December 2015 and the checklist for supporting documents contained within the processing agreement ensured that the application could be registered and processed efficiently.

Due to the front loading of the application at pre-application stage and working to the timescale set within the processing agreement, Planning Services were able to present the application to Planning Committee on 23 March 2016, just 3 months after registration.

“Both my client (Muir Homes Limited) and I were extremely satisfied by how smoothly and efficiently Fiona Knighton and her colleagues handled the planning process from pre-application meetings through to processing the application and all the respective applications.”

Effective Management Structures

The scheme of delegation to officers was extended by the Council's Planning Committee in April 2015. This enables a wider range of applications to be determined at officer level, including the refusal of advertisement consent. This improvement has helped to streamline the decision making process further and has delivered administrative efficiencies within both Planning Services and Committee Services.

In April 2016, as part of a wider restructure of the Department, Development Management and the Policy Planning Team will be brought together under one Senior Manager to provide closer integration to deliver the Council's statutory planning functions. The aim is to engender greater collaboration and work as one Planning Service to deliver the Council's key strategies to grow our economy, increase employment, and regenerate our towns, whilst protecting and enhancing our natural and built environment.

Financial Management & Local Governance

During the year a further three officers have completed management training at both High and Intermediate Levels; and undertaken bespoke training on budgetary planning and management techniques. Both Senior Management Team and Planning Management meetings are undertaken on a weekly basis. Planning Team briefings are held every Monday morning to discuss key proposals and workload.

Culture of continuous improvement

In the past year we have strengthened our approach and commitment to maintaining a culture of continuous improvement for all staff through a variety of different projects and improvements.

Place Standard Testing

Planning Services sits within the Economy and Communities Directorate. We work closely with our colleagues in the Connected Communities Service of our Directorate and have organised joint working sessions to strengthen our collaborative partnership approach to place making.

A key example of this is the work and testing we have undertaken in relation to the draft Place Standard. Led by Planning Services we initially held officer working sessions in Irvine, which included a site walk around the town centre, using the Place Standard to evaluate a potential regeneration proposal. These sessions brought together officers from Community Planning, Community Empowerment & Development, Planning and Regeneration.



The outcome of the above session helped us to identify a new approach to placemaking which considers both spatial and community planning priorities. A further session was held in August 2015 with a local community group in the Garnock Valley. This session was equally successful and the use of the Place Standard helped the group identify and articulate the key issues for their town.



Garnock Valley Charrette 'Go Garnock'

By recognizing the challenges between spatial and community planning for both internal and external customers we made a successful application to the Scottish Government's Charrette Mainstreaming Programme.

This was led by Planning Services, in conjunction with Connected Communities and the Community Development Team to enable direct links to be established between spatial planning and community planning as the NAC approach to Locality Planning emerges.

This project will facilitate the delivery of interactive and dynamic community workshops. The workshops will enable networking and strengthen relationships across the Garnock Locality. This approach will enable staff and communities to broaden and develop their own skills set and for potential replication of the approach elsewhere.

By working with PAS this project will involve all ages and deliver outcomes for our customers in Education, supporting the aspirations for the Curriculum for Excellence and encouraging active citizenship across the area.

This project will pilot the charrette approach in North Ayrshire and represents a 'best practice' method for engagement across planning and community planning. This also links to Consultation Institute Training that was completed by staff in 2015, and was included as a Service Improvement in last year's PPF.

The development of this approach is a key example of our continued improvement in 2015/16.

We will use the outcomes from the charrette to inform the Main Issues Report and it is a key part of our pre-MIR engagement with communities.

You can view our progress to date via the web and social media links below:

- Website: www.gogarnock.com
- Twitter: @GoGarnock
- Facebook Go Garnock



YOUR QUICK GUIDE TO LOCALITY PLANNING

Why introduce locality planning?
To develop stronger local partnerships that focus on engaging with people in their communities.

Who will be involved in the partnerships?
A range of local people and organisations who have responsibilities and expertise in the priorities identified.

Where did locality planning come from?
The Christie report recommended closer involvement of people in the design and delivery of the public services they use. In North Ayrshire we have been working towards this approach since 2013.

Will the partnerships have any money?
They will have the opportunity to use participatory budgeting. This is where local people decide on how to allocate part of a public budget - a first for North Ayrshire.

Where will locality partnerships be set up?
There will be one in each of North Ayrshire's localities:

- North Coast and Cumbraes
- Arran
- Three Towns
- Garnock Valley
- Kilwinning
- Irvine

Can you get involved?
Yes, local involvement is the basis of Locality Planning. Local people are experts on their local area and will be involved in creating and delivering Locality Plans.

What will locality partnerships do?
They will identify and address local issues by working closely with local people, community groups and organisations to develop a Locality Plan. This plan will set out priorities for the Locality and how they will be addressed.

How can I find out more information?
A formal consultation gets underway on 19 October with information roadshows giving you all you need to know. These will take place in each locality and will run until 18 December.

North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Air a Tuath

LDP2 Branding

As we progress towards the next plan, LDP2, we felt we needed to make our approach more customer - centric by focusing on the look and language of any documents we publish which link to the development planning process.

To improve our Development Plan Scheme (DPS) we were inspired by recent Plain English Campaign training which was held in 2015. By using the knowledge and skills delivered by the training the DPS was reviewed by the Plain English Campaign and boasts the Crystal Mark Award, which is used corporately by the Council. By having the Crystal Mark we have made the document more user friendly and hopefully more engaging.

We also looked to best practice examples such as Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (LIVE Plan) as a key example of a strong visual brand. We worked with our internal Communications team to appoint a designer for the LDP. The brief for the designer is to establish a strong image and identity for the LDP and the process.

This design will apply to documents and publicity for the plan, hopefully strengthening its impact throughout the process.



Away Days

As well as improving our internal procedures, Planning Services staff are regularly engaged in internal and external training.

The purpose of which is to ensure that staff are suitably trained, engaged and provide consistent and reliable advice.

One such example are the team away days that are undertaken on an annual basis. The trip in July 2015 was to the Isle of Arran with a focus on housing development and pressures on the island, the balance between its special landscape characteristics and existing building vernaculars.





The second half of the day focussed on the particular landscape and marine character of Arran and the fine balance between conservation and development. Key speakers provided presentations and site visits on particular issues. The day provides an opportunity to share ideas and concerns regarding LDP policy as well as allowing team building.



2015/16 Service improvement Update

Open for Business

- **Continue to upgrade and improve public access to ePlanning and coordinate with planning introduction of eBuilding Standards**

Progress

Coordination of ePlanning and the new eBuilding Standards will be finalised in August 2016 and will then be known as eDevelopment. The new and improved site will allow agents to apply for both planning and building warrants via the online portal.

- **Improved approach to the way in which we register and record all pre-application enquiries.**

Progress

Previously all pre-application enquiries were workflowed by clerical staff with a simple recording method on IDOX. There was no record of pre-application enquiries with inconsistent ways of recording responses.

Planning Services have striven to improve the recording and visibility of enquiries. We have renewed our procedure to allow all written enquiries to be recorded on our Uniform and IDOX databases. The system has been tested and is now in operation, allowing the easy management of work for staff as well as tracking their performance. The system could be used to measure the quality of advice provided as well as providing justification for more staff resources or higher planning fees.

The next step in the process is to develop our marketing campaign to increase awareness of our free Pre-App service with the view to improving the quality of submissions/development in the area.

- **Strengthen our online presence, improving the design and visibility of pre-application information that we currently provide to members of the public.**

Progress

The Council as a whole is currently engaging in a programme of improvements to the website and we are working with our IT team to renew our webpages. This has delayed any significant improvements to the Planning Services pages. It is proposed to provide more information than currently available at:

<http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/resident/planning-and-building-standards/do-i-need-planning-permission.aspx>

Planning Services are also engaging with agents and are using social media, mainly the Council's Twitter account (11,500 followers) and Any Biz (500 business accounts), to



publicise and make the public aware of the advantages of pre app. We have also been using social media to publicise significant or major applications to encourage greater engagement.

Since embarking on the new pre-application and publication procedures, we have seen a marked increase in pre-application enquiries, even within the first 5 months, and recent application for a new distillery on Arran was publicised on twitter, with the following results:

- *Impressions (how many people saw the tweet) - 3,441*
- *No. of people who clicked the link to the e-planning page - 48*
- *'Likes' - 21*
- *Re-tweets - 13*

High Quality Development

- **Deliver improved place making within major public realm projects including Irvine Town Centre and Ardrossan North Shore.**

Progress

The detail, progress and success of our projects in Irvine Town Centre and Ardrossan North Shore are evidenced in detail on pages 5 and 8.

- **Engage with key stakeholders including SportScotland to deliver the National Facility at Inverclyde in conjunction with the new Largs Campus.**

Progress

On 24th February 2016, a decision was taken by the full Council to grant the planning application for the Largs Campus following a pre-determination hearing to consider the views of objectors. The planning process was completed well within 4 months of the planning application being registered, during which time a number of face to face meetings were held to listen to the local community and take account of concerns raised. The development is due to commence in June 2016.

Certainty

- **We will develop a consultation strategy which will be approved by Elected Members to accompany the DPS. This strategy will provide further clarity on our approach and timescales for engagement, pre engagement and formal periods of consultation.**

Progress

The revised DPS, complete with new LDP2 branding can be viewed via:

<http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/Documents/CorporateServices/LegalProtective/LocalDevelopmentPlan/dps-201603.pdf>

The revised timetable within the DPS takes account of the political calendar. Given the Locality Planning approach and the successful GoGarnock Charette bid, the engagement strategy is a work in progress to take account of the outcomes of existing and wider work stream which may impact on this strategy.

- **Deliver outcomes to some eight LDP allocated sites following the adoption of the LDP in May 2014.**

Progress

The LDP has now supported residential development at the following allocated sites:

John Galt, Irvine - 80 Affordable Housing Units

Fencedyke, Irvine - 35 Affordable Housing Units

West Bankside, Kilbirnie - 200 Market Housing Units

Middleton Road, Irvine - 172 Market Housing Units

West Byrehill, Kilwinning - Mixed Use Development

Blairland Farm, Dalry - Planning permission in principle c. 200 Market Housing Units

Ardrossan North Shore - 70 RSL Housing Units

Sharphill, Saltcoats - Mixed Use Development

Communication, Engagement & Customer Service

- **Within the new Economy and Communities Directorate we will work collaboratively with colleagues in Connected Communities to raise awareness of placemaking through engagement with Architecture & Design Scotland.**

Progress

As detailed on pages 20 and 21, Planning Services have led on the integration of spatial planning and community planning via work with the draft Place Standard and the GoGarnock Charette. The Place Standard is also being used by the Locality Planning Partnerships and a session was held for officers in May 2016.



Efficient & Effective Decision Making

- **Continue to maintain efficiency of decision making.**

Progress

Planning Services strive to improve the efficiency of decisions through one to one management of staff and weekly meetings. This managerial approach has resulted in an improvement of our decision times for householder applications from 5.1 to 4.7 weeks and non-householder applications from 6.2 to 5.8 weeks.

- **Continue progress to determine outstanding legacy cases.**

Progress

As detailed on page 2, Planning Services continue to work with applicants to progress legacy cases. This has been achieved through renewing outstanding relationships and using Processing Agreements to ensure all parties are signed up to progress. This has led to a further reduction in the number of legacy cases to seven.

Some of the older legacy cases were resolved during 2015/16, in particular an application dating from 2002 which was withdrawn following approval of an alternative proposal for the site concerned (Tearne Quarry, Beith). A proposed sand and gravel quarry at Bogside, Irvine dating from 2008 was resolved through the conclusion of an S75 obligation. This followed a review of the case which resulted in the preparation of a processing agreement which set out a timetable for the remaining workload by the applicant and the Council. A number of other cases were resolved following review, processing agreements and reporting back to Planning Committee and using planning conditions instead of S75 obligations. Of the legacy cases which now remain, one has become complicated by company insolvency issues.

- **Promote the benefits of Processing Agreements through early engagement with applicants and agents, drawing on previous success.**

Progress

Planning Services continues to promote the benefits of Processing Agreements with all applicants subject to major development consent. We have also extended their use to more significant local developments, particularly where those proposals have been subject to pre application advice. This allows for the effective management of key projects for the area.

The requirement for a Processing Agreement for all Major Planning Applications is now embedded in the workload of Planning Officers, who will make a request to all prospective applicants during the pre-application stage highlighting the key benefits of processing agreements.

This is evidenced by the significant increase in the number of Processing Agreements over the year from 3 to 9.

This approach has been widely supported by applicants although we continue to maintain that processing agreements do not guarantee a positive decision.

Effective Management Structures

- **A further restructure, at Officer level will be undertaken in the forthcoming year to reflect the strategic priorities and ambitions of the new Council Plan 2015-20.**

Progress

The scheme of delegation to officers was extended by the Council's Planning Committee in April 2015. This enables a wider range of applications to be determined at officer level, including the refusal of advertisement consent. This improvement has helped to streamline the decision making process further and has delivered administrative efficiencies within both Planning Services and Committee Services.

Culture of Continuous Improvement

- **We will undertake consultation training across the service to encourage a best practice approach to consultation. This approach will align with Council wide aspirations to deliver exemplary engagement with all stakeholders and our communities.**

Progress:

Cross Directorate training was held in June and July 2015. This training was delivered by the Consultation Institute over six full days of training, including interactive workshops and discussions with guest speakers. Council Officers from Planning, Education, Infrastructure, Housing and Regeneration attended the sessions, gaining accreditation in best practice consultation methods. A series of five courses was delivered by the Consultation Institute leading to the Institute's Certificate in Professional Development in Consultation Practices:

- *Best Consultation Practice*
- *Effective Focus Groups and Facilitation Skills*
- *Understanding Social media*
- *Evaluating Public Engagement*
- *Consultation Before and After Masterclass*



Part 3. Supporting evidence

Part 2 of this report was compiled drawing on evidence from:

- statistical data
- discussion with team managers
- customer feedback survey
- team development work
- external benchmarking activity (see below)

Benchmarking

The Benchmarking Group consists of participants from the following Councils: East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire & West Dunbartonshire. The Group normally meets every 3 - 4 months and met four times between 1st April 2015 and 31st March 2016 as follows: 7th April 2015 (at Renfrewshire); 28th July 2015 (at West Dunbartonshire); 6th October 2015 (at East Dunbartonshire) and 20th January 2016 (at Inverclyde). The meetings are minuted, with the host council, chairperson and minute-secretary rotating around the councils.

A wide range of topics were discussed at these meetings, including:-

1. Planning Performance Framework
2. City Deal
3. High Hedges Procedures
4. Planning Fees and Resources
5. Costing the Planning Service
6. Workload and Staffing Levels
7. Committee Report Structures
8. Standard Conditions
9. Legal Agreements
10. ePlanning/eDevelopment including the use of tablets
11. Agile Working
12. Aligning Planning and Roads Construction Consents
13. Geographical Information Systems
14. The Application of Conditions to Planning Applications by Councils
15. Joint Training
16. Part Approval & Part Refusals
17. Solar Farms
18. Pay-day Loan/Betting Offices
19. Short-Term Holiday Lets in Residential Properties
20. Changing of Descriptions in Planning Applications
21. Enforcement Charters and Issues
22. Flood Risk and Drainage Impact Assessments

The meetings allow for the sharing of experiences and of best practice. This does not necessarily lead to standardisation of practice, but allows for legislative interpretation and practice of practical issues to be shared.

Of particular note this year has been our discussions on:

- **The Planning Performance Framework** and the feedback reports which the Councils received from the Scottish Government. This allowed the sharing of experiences and practices and learning from best practice elsewhere.
- **Planning resourcing** was discussed, including experiences of making savings and raising income. The Local Government financial settlement implications were raised and charging for pre-application enquiries was also explored. The experience and results from the 'Costing the Planning Service' exercise were discussed.
- **Staffing levels** within the authorities were explored, allowing each Council to compare staffing and performance statistics in the light of discussions on the profile and practices of each authority.
- **Geographical Information Systems** were discussed – Renfrewshire Council gave a presentation on the QGIS system that they use.
- **Agile working** experiences were shared, including the use of shared desks and mobile technology such as tablets. This allows the participants to learn from what works well (or not well) in the other authorities and to design service improvements.

In addition to the formal meetings, the participants also use the email list as a 'forum' for quickly asking questions on areas of uncertainty.

This group concentrates on development management issues. Development Plans teams benchmark extensively with the eight Councils who prepare the Glasgow & Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan (including sub-groups); as well as through Heads of Planning and the national Development Plans Forum. Benchmarking also takes place supporting environmental and technical functions, including through the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership; the Scottish Outdoor Access Forum; the Scottish Strategic Environmental Assessment Forum; the Local Authorities Historic Environment Forum; the Corporate Address Gazetteer Forum; the One-Scotland Mapping Agreement Group; and the Ordnance Survey User Group.

Some of the Councils also participate in the national (Solace) benchmarking families.



Part 4. Service improvements: 2016-17

Open for Business

- Continue to engage in a purposeful dialogue with internal and external stakeholders in order to increase certainty and the delivery of new developments on the ground.

High Quality Development

- Continue to work very positively with developers, including our partners within the Council, to support and assist the delivery of high quality development on the ground.
- Monitor progress on developments including Garnock Community Campus to ensure development is implemented and complies with any conditions imposed.

Certainty

- Engage in a partnership working group with Housing Services to examine the use and implementation of the Affordable Housing Policy, how this might be improved and the production of a protocol to ensure certainty for applicants.

Communications, Engagement & Customer Service

- Continue to strengthen our online presence, improving the design and visibility of pre-application and other relevant information that we currently provide to members of the public.
- Build upon our current use of social media to improve the visibility of the service and current, more significant, planning applications.

Efficient and Effective Decision Making

- Continue progress to determine outstanding legacy cases.
- Continue to promote the benefits of Processing Agreements through early engagement with applicants and agents, drawing on previous success and provide online guidance.

Effective Management Structures:

- Implement a restructure in April 2016 to strengthen the delivery of one of the Council's key Strategic priorities of 'Growing our economy, increasing

employment and regenerating towns' as part of the Economy and Communities Directorate within the Council.

- Create two new posts of Regeneration Managers within the Regeneration Team and bring Planning Services back together to be more focussed on service delivery.
- Create new posts of Strategic Planning Manager and Planning Assistant and bring a dedicated Admin Support Officer back into the Service from the central support.

Culture of Continuous Improvement

- To build on the outcome of the GoGarnock Charette, ensuring synergy between spatial and community planning through Locality Partnerships.



Appendix I

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Decision-making timescales

Category	Total number of decisions 2015-2016	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2015-16	2014-2015
Major developments	5	26.7 weeks	12.6 weeks
Local developments (non-householder)	241	5.8 weeks	6.2 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	97.5%	5.6 weeks	5.9 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	2.5%	12.4 weeks	13.9 weeks
Householder developments	213	4.7 weeks	5.1 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	100%	4.7 weeks	5.1 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	0%	n/a	n/a
Housing developments			
Major	2	42.1 weeks	14.6 weeks
Local housing developments	73	6.2 weeks	6.9 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	95.9%	5.9 weeks	6.2 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	4.1%	12 weeks	17.3 weeks
Business and industry			
Major	1	8.3 weeks	12 weeks
Local business and industry	16	5.3 weeks	6.1 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	93.8%	5.1 weeks	5.7 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	6.3%	8.9 weeks	9.1 weeks
EIA developments	0	n/a	9.3 weeks
Other consents*	99	3.9 weeks	4.8 weeks
Planning/legal agreements**	6	12.7 weeks	7.6 weeks
Local reviews	4	8.8 weeks	5.6 weeks

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

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

Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

Type	Total number of decisions	Original decision upheld			
		2015-2016 No.	%	2014-2015	
Local reviews	4	4	100%	5	62.5%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	2	1	50%	1	50%

Enforcement activity

	2015-2016	2014-2015
Cases taken up	135	86
Breaches identified	135	86
Cases resolved	136	126
Notices served***	13	5
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.

Context

The Council continues to maintain a high level of performance to assist with the Council's Aims and Strategies.



Appendix II

WORKFORCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Head of Planning Service	Tier								
	1	2	3	4					
	Managers		Main Grade Posts		Technicians Posts		Office Support/ Clerical		
	No. of Posts	Vacant	No. of Posts	Vacant	No. of Posts	Vacant	No. of Posts	Vacant	Totals
Development Management	2	0	4.2	0	2	0	2	0	10.2
Development Planning	1	0	3	0	3	0	0	0	7
Enforcement Staff	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Cross Service/ Other Planning	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	4
									22.2

Staffing Profile	Number
Under 30	1
30-39	11
40-49	5
50 and Over	6

Committees & site visits	Number per year
Full Council Committees	10
Planning Committees	11
Area Committees (where relevant)	n/a
Committee site visits	None
LRB	5
LRB site visits	0
LDP Committees	1

Planning Service Budgets	Budget	Costs		Income
		Direct	Indirect	
Development Management	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Development Planning	TBC	TBC	TBC	
Enforcement	TBC	TBC	TBC	

Our contact details

For more information or advice, please contact

Planning Services,
Economic Growth Services,
Economy and Communities,
North Ayrshire Council
Cunninghame House,
Irvine, KA12 8EE

Tel: 01294 324300

www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk



This Planning Performance Framework can be made available in other formats such as on audio tape, on CD, in Braille or in large print. We can also provide it in other languages if you ask us to.



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath