

North Ayrshire Planning Performance Framework 2014–2015

June 2015



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

FOREWORD



Councillor Matthew Brown
Chair of the Planning Committee



I am delighted to present the fourth North Ayrshire Planning Performance Framework. The information within this document reflects a great deal of hard work in sustaining our high performance, and in places improving upon already high standards. I am confident that the constructive comments within the report from Scottish Government on PPF3 have been addressed within this latest PPF which demonstrates excellent progress since the last reporting period.



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1. National Headline Indicators (NHIs)

Key outcomes	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013
Development Planning:			
1. age of local/strategic development plan(s) (full years) <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i>	1	8	7
2. development plan scheme: on track? (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs			
3. established housing land: years supply	4.2 years	5.89 years	6.57 years
4. 5 year effective housing land supply ¹	2345 units	3,300 units	3,683 units
5. Previous annual housing completions. ²	411 units	285 units	366 units
6. 5 year housing supply target	2800 units	n/a	n/a
7. housing approvals ³	85 units	n/a	n/a
8. housing completions over last 5 years	1614 units		
9. marketable employment land supply	138ha	161ha	333ha
10. employment land take-up ⁴	8.7 Ha	3.9Ha	2.8Ha
Development Management			
Project Planning			
11. percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice	41%	51%	33%
12. number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	3	1	0
13. percentage planned timescales met	100%	n/a%	n/a%
Decision-making			
14. application approval rate	96.7%	97.8%	96.1%
15. delegation rate	96.8%	93.8%	91.7%
Decision-making timescales			
Average number of weeks to decision:			
16. major developments	12.6 weeks	21.5 weeks	30.9 weeks
17. local developments (non-householder)	6.2 weeks	6.8 weeks	8.7 weeks
18. householder developments	5.1 weeks	5.7 weeks	6.6 weeks
Legacy Cases			
19. Number of legacy cases cleared during the period	3		
20. Number remaining.	11		
Enforcement			
21. time since enforcement charter published/ reviewed (months) <i>Requirement: review every 2 years</i>	April 2015/0	Feb 2013/2	Feb 2013/1
22. number of breaches identified/resolved	86/126	127/169	137/138

¹ The effective housing land supply is based on our draft 2014-2015 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 the sale of a large mixed use development site – currently under offer. Source CoStar.

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

2. Defining and measuring a high-quality planning service

Open for business -

Open for business Case Study: Garnock Campus

The decision by North Ayrshire Council to relocate Garnock Academy, Garnock Swimming Pool and Glengarnock Primary from three different sites in Kilbirnie onto a single campus in Glengarnock was taken during November 2012. The Council was clear that the campus development was to be much more than a school and that it should act as a catalyst for regeneration and improved quality of life in the Garnock Valley.

In order to meet the funding deadlines for the scheme, pre-application workshops with key stakeholders, facilitated by Architecture and Design Scotland, took place during 2013. The outcome of the workshops then fed into the design concepts subsequently presented to the local communities in the Garnock Valley during pre-application public consultation in April 2014.

In May 2014, the major planning application for the campus was lodged. From the outset, it was evident that the nearest residents to the site were dissatisfied with the pre-application process and wanted to engage in the statutory planning process as much as possible. Considerable effort was then made to keep this group of residents up to date with the process and provide additional information when requested. An evening meeting was also held to enable the residents to voice their concerns.

Whilst the site selection process had concluded prior to the submission of the planning application, there remained scope for amendments with the submitted proposal and, to this end, Planning Services required that the campus building be moved around 30m east of its originally proposed site, and sought a commitment from the applicant to provide a substantial landscaping buffer between the nearest householders and the building. Further amendments were negotiated with respect to access arrangements, a reduction in the speed limit from Beith to Glengarnock and the provision of an all-abilities cycleway/footpath from Beith to the campus via Longbar.

The application was presented to the Council's Planning Committee on 22nd July 2014, just over 2 months after the planning application was submitted. Works to develop the campus commenced in February 2015.



Planning conditions continue to be closely monitored to ensure that the development is delivered in accordance with the planning permission.

Open for business Case Study: Willowyard

Due to an ongoing requirement within the whisky industry for additional storage, it was noted that the gradual, incremental expansion of the bonded warehouses at Willowyard near Beith required a plan-led approach. Chivas Brothers approached Planning Services during 2013 to highlight that it was their intention to expand the site northwards onto land which, although allocated for bonded warehouse use in the Local Development Plan, had never been developed.

The land consisted of a group of fields bounded by hedgerows, and was characterised by a number of woodland areas on rising ground to the east of Kilbirnie Loch. In addition, a group of dwellinghouses were situated to the north of the site. It was noted from an early stage in discussions with Chivas Brothers that a more sensitive approach to the landscape setting of the area would be required than had been the case at Willowyard in the past.

This was borne out during pre-application public events held by Chivas Brothers during the Spring of 2014. There was clear public opposition to further loss of open countryside and woodland areas, although positive comments were made in respect of Chivas

Brothers' willingness to consider a more sensitive colour scheme for the 14 additional warehouses under consideration at "Phase 7".

Through positive engagement with Chivas Brothers at pre-application stage, Planning Services successfully negotiated various amendments to the originally designed scheme, including the retention of mature woodlands around the former Mains House and the planting of new trees on the perimeter of the site. As an additional safeguard, a Tree Preservation Order was promoted with the full cooperation of Chivas Brothers. A new colour scheme using dark green cladding was trialled at a new warehouse being built on the lochside, which was subsequently adopted as the most appropriate colour for Phase 7.

The major planning application was lodged during August 2014 and determined by the Planning Committee well within the 4 month period on 12th November 2014. Objections were considered and addressed in a constructive manner.

Planning Services also successfully argued that more tree planting would benefit the earlier phases of development at Willowyard, thus helping to mitigate the visual impacts of the overall site. This approach was subsequently endorsed by the chief executive of Chivas Brothers' parent company, Pernod, who stated during a visit to Beith that he wanted to see much more woodland planting at Willowyard.

Overall, the approach taken by Planning Services ensured that an appropriate balance between the requirements of a major export industry and the concerns of the local community were efficiently and effectively managed.

A testimonial that we have secured to evidence that we are open for business includes:

Many thanks for yesterday –
a positive outcome and we appreciate all the work that has
gone into it from your team. Thanks again 23/10/14

David. J. Balmer CEnv. MCIWM.
Malcolm Construction
W. H. Malcolm Ltd.

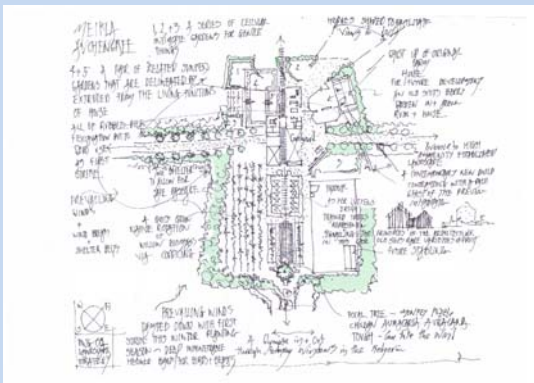
High quality development on the ground

High quality development on the ground

Case Study: Meikle Auchengree

Planning Services were approached in 2012 by a couple hoping to build a dwellinghouse in the countryside. The couple had been looking at conversion opportunities in the area but could find nothing to suit their particular requirements. Advice was given regarding the Council's policy to encourage the development of distinctive houses designed by award winning architects at suitable sites in the countryside.

The couple then identified a site in the countryside between Beith and Dalry which was on the market, and appointed a suitable architect to consider the issues associated with the site and the Council's policy. A series of pre-application meetings then followed to refine the design concept and allow adequate time for the preparation of supporting information, such as a design statement and landscape capacity assessment. Policy and design advice was offered by planning officers throughout this process.



Due to the quality of the pre-application advice offered, it was possible to reach a decision on the planning application within 1 month of its registration date. The house has subsequently been developed and is nearing completion.



Certainty

The Scottish Government noted that within our last PPF that there was insufficient evidence of how pre application is promoted and that our next PPF would benefit from more details of how early collaboration ensures clear and proportionate supporting information requests.

To address these comments we would highlight that the pre application service is promoted on the Council website at <http://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/resident/planning-and-building-standards/do-i-need-planning-permission.aspx>.

Members of the public are encouraged to engage with us through our pre application service, particularly where a development has the potential to be sensitive or locally significant. Our Service also maintains a public counter whereby members of the public can request informal advice on local developments or query live or approved planning applications.

Our last PPF contained a case study, North Coast Crematorium, for high quality development on the ground making mention of ongoing pre application negotiations with the developer. A formal application has since been submitted and planning permission was granted earlier this year.

The success of our pre application service is evidenced by our indicators whereby 41% of applications received have been subject to pre application advice. However we always strive to improve our services.

Following the last PPF we have discussed procedures with other local authorities such as Orkney and Argyll and Bute Councils and undertaken an assessment of our pre application promotion and procedures. This exercise involving all of the officers associated with the development management service highlighted a few key improvements which could be implemented. These recommendations include considerations such as:

- Strengthening our online presence and improving the design and visibility of pre application information that we currently provide to members of the public.
- Improved approach to the way in which we register and record all pre application enquiries.

These improvements are currently in development, will be implemented in the forthcoming year and are reflected in our Service Objectives for 15/16.

Major developments are subject to separate pre application requirements and we discuss the process with developers, providing advice on appropriate venues, advertisement and timings. The pre application service provides us with the opportunity to consult with internal departments and provide comments on potential developer contributions. We have recently set up a formal procedure relating to affordable housing contributions which sets out a clear criteria and outcome for applicants. Contributions relating to education and other infrastructure improvements are considered on a case by case basis.

The pre application process at both local and major level allows early collaboration with key stakeholders; ensuring applicants are aware of clear and proportionate supporting information requests.

An example of this is a recent application for a 5MW solar farm within the countryside. This is the first of this type of proposal for the local authority. Pre application advice was sought by the applicant whereby we pre consulted with Prestwick Airport, CAA, MOD, SNH, West of Scotland Archaeology Service and Transportation. This provided an opportunity for the consultees to comment and request information that should be submitted with the planning application. These requests were considered and provided to the applicant. A formal planning application was submitted in May 2015 and the application was approved in June 2015, well within the statutory 2 month period.

Communications, engagement and customer service

Eglinton Medical Practice

An application for the erection of a medical centre was submitted in April 2014 on land at the south west corner of Ayrshire Central Hospital, Irvine at the corner of Kilwinning Road and Castlepark Road. The medical practice had been occupying a group of portable buildings within the grounds of the hospital for a period of 10 years, and required to develop a more permanent solution for the delivery of primary health care. The applicant did not hold discussions with Planning Services prior to the submission of the application.

The site is located within an area which is covered by Irvine no. 3 Tree Preservation Order. To accommodate the proposed medical centre and its associated parking, it was proposed to remove 36 out of 83 trees within the site. There were also no multi user path links into the site from Kilwinning Road nor pedestrian links into the wider hospital site. This was raised with the applicant's agent early in the process where several meetings were held with the applicants and Council officers to amend the layout in order to safeguard as many trees as possible and to provide adequate pedestrian links. Discussions were also undertaken with NHS Ayrshire and Arran to ensure that the pedestrian links could be delivered.

Due to the timescale necessary to reach an agreed solution, which would have exceeded the available processing period, the initial application was withdrawn and resubmitted in July 2014 with a revised layout and multi user path links included. The amended layout ensured that just 3 trees would be removed as opposed to the original proposal of 36. Planning Service collaborated with the Council's Arboricultural Officer, Access Officer and Transportation Officers to ensure that multi-user paths could be constructed to ensure minimal damage to trees. The application was approved 6 weeks after registration.

Works on the development commenced in February 2015 and the site will be continued to be monitored to ensure compliance with conditions.

Largs Campus (cross service working)

Following the decision of the Council to promote a campus development for replacement education facilities in Largs, the statutory consultation process for the school communities was undertaken by Education & Youth Employment. This indicated a broad level of public support for a new campus to encompass the provision of early years, primary and secondary education at a single campus in the town.

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.

At this point, Planning Services became involved with the planning of the project. The work being undertaken involves cross service working with Education & Youth Employment, Strategic Planning & Infrastructure and Connected Communities. The experience gained from the Garnock Campus project will be used as the Largs Campus project develops and progresses through the statutory planning process. As with Garnock Campus, the intention would be to front load the various technical issues associated with the proposed development, such as transportation, drainage and ground conditions. Pre-application consultation with the public is anticipated during late-Summer 2015. The next step will be the preparation of a processing agreement.

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

Many thanks for the time you extended at our meeting the other day, I was extremely encouraged by your comments and suggestions at this embryonic stage in the process of ascertaining your council's thoughts.

Toni Antoniou - Proposed Film Studio at i3

Planning application went through in record time – seriously. Submitted on 23 Dec got approval on 13 Jan. Fantastic

Could you please pass on our appreciation for the support of your Planning Dept – genuinely much obliged.

Hugh McGhee

Head Of Social & Economic Development, Cunninghame Housing Association Ltd
Head of Cunninghame Furniture Recycling Company Ltd

GSK Irvine would like to thank North Ayrshire Council for the way in which your planning and statutory consultation departments managed the recent site planning application for our proposed Biomass CHP.

The local planning protocol, that is in place within the Irvine Life Sciences Enterprise Area (EA), is designed to build on the good practice already employed within North Ayrshire to provide efficient and expedient determination of planning applications. We have been impressed by the structured approach and focus of your staff tasked with implementing the steps of this protocol, through the single point of contact, providing specific planning guidance, planning process agreements, managing stakeholder meetings through to dialogue on necessary conditions. This highlights the value of the protocol and the experience of your staff as best practice for future developments within the Irvine Life Sciences Enterprise Area.

We are delighted that your team were able to progress these matters so effectively. This timely delivery from NAC was very important for us in building our investment case within GSK.

Please pass on our thanks to your team

Alastair Leighton
Site Director, Irvine
Global Manufacture and Supply
GSK

Efficient and effective decision-making

All applications for Major developments are now proactively encouraged by Officers to enter a Processing Agreement. During 2014 a total of 3 out of the 5 major applications were the subject of Processing Agreements, which contributed to the significant reduction to 12.6 weeks in the processing time for major applications in 2014-15, compared to 21.5 weeks in 2013-14.

Text to support case study on Irvine Community Hospital (Processing Agreements)

Planning permission in principle was granted in February 2013 for the erection of an Acute Mental Health and Community Hospital and associated works at Ayrshire Central Hospital, Kilwinning Road, Irvine, with 19 conditions attached to the consent. Following a successful tender for the project by Balfour Beattie, an initial meeting was arranged in August 2013 between NAC, Balfour Beatty and NHS Ayrshire & Arran to discuss timescales, key milestones and application requirements.

A further two meetings were held prior to the submission of the planning application which included key stakeholders and NAC officers who would be closely involved in the application process. Planning Services 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 20 March 2014 and the checklist for supporting documents contained within the processing agreement ensured that the application could be registered and processed efficiently.

As part of the key dates contained within the processing agreement, several meetings were also arranged with key stakeholders including SEPA to ensure that timescales were on target. 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 20 June 2014, just 3 months after registration.

The development commenced on site during July 2014, and significant progress has been made to date. The site will continue to be monitored to ensure that the development is delivered in accordance with the planning permission.

A testimonial that we have secured to evidence our efficient and effective decision making includes:

Just a short note to thank you again for your (and your colleagues) time yesterday. It was extremely helpful exercise with the Bidders and hopefully should assist when the detailed Planning Application is submitted.

**John Scott, Head of Capital Planning, AAHB –
Proposed Irvine Community Hospital**

Effective management structures

In June 2014, a corporate restructure was implemented which created two new services: Planning Services and Strategic Planning & Infrastructure. Both services sit within the new Economy and Communities Directorate.

Strategic Planning and Infrastructure are responsible for: planning policy, transportation, outdoor access and digital infrastructure. Planning Services are responsible for: statutory and informal advice and guidance on sustainable economic development and land use; the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment, through the implementation and enforcement of the Planning Acts and associated legislation.

Through this restructure there are now two senior officers responsible for the distinct functions of the planning process, which means that there is a stronger representation and profile of planning at a corporate level within the organisation.

There are further plans to restructure Planning Services Team to prioritise key Development Management work streams of growing our economy, increasing employment and the regeneration of our town centres in accordance with the Council priorities

Financial Management & Local Governance

We have streamlined our budget reporting procedures and the management team continue to meet six weekly to monitor the service budget.

The Scheme of Delegation to Officers, which permits decisions on applications to be taken by Officers, was amended to include the determination of applications submitted in respect of the High Hedges (Scotland) Act.

Culture of continuous improvement

In recognising the timing issues and associated delay with the adoption of the Local Development Plan we have held subsequent sessions in relation to the next LDP, reflecting on the lessons learned from the previous plan and process. This reflection led to the creation of a 'post-mortem' document detailing almost 100 actions for improvement in the next LDP preparation process. These SMART actions were grouped under specific topic headings covering:

- Project Management
- SEA
- Presentation
- Engagement
- MIR

- Proposed Plan
- Examination
- Elected Members

In December 2014 a session for Officers from Planning Services and Strategic Planning and Infrastructure was held to examine the LDP. This session assessed how successful its implementation had been in the first six months since its adoption. The qualitative data from this meeting has informed the baseline for the monitoring of the LDP and subsequent sessions are planned for the forthcoming year. Examples of areas for development include a stronger focus on placemaking and improving the language within the plan to ensure sustainable economic growth is delivered in line with the LDP.



Future sessions are planned for the forthcoming year as well as training in relation to Project Management and Consultation skills for officers across the service to build capacity for professional and personal development. These sessions reflect our commitment to continuous improvement and form part of our service improvements for the forthcoming year.

In addition our new Development Plan Scheme was approved by the LDP Committee in March 2014. To further emphasise the challenges which we identified through our reflection of lessons learned we delivered a presentation to Elected Members to raise awareness of the constraints of the Development Plan process and the need for commitment from them as decision makers at the highest level. Further training and our approach to improved engagement and pre engagement with Elected Members will be further detailed in future drafts of the Development Plan Scheme.

3. Supporting evidence

Part 2 of this report was compiled drawing on evidence from statistical data, discussion with team managers, PSIF activity, customer feedback survey, team development work and external benchmarking activity.

4. Service improvements: 2014-15

High Quality Development:

- **We will implement a local design awards programme;**

Progress

After informal consultation with development stakeholders, the consensus was that an awards programme may be difficult for the Council to deliver objectively. As an alternative work has been undertaken to develop a database of local examples of high quality design on the ground, most of which pre date Designing Streets.

This database allows high quality examples of design to be celebrated and to inform pre application discussions through local examples.

- **We will undertake Community Council training on design.**

Progress

Following the adoption of the Local Development Plan in May 2014 a review of the process for engagement and consultation was undertaken. It was identified that Community Council's across North Ayrshire would benefit from a review of the Planning process and how best to engage in the planning process, as opposed to specific training on design at this time.

To meet the needs of our Community Council's effectively, training was delivered to all Community Councils in March 2014. This full day training session was delivered and facilitated by Planning Aid Scotland.

- **We will review our suite of Design Guidance to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, and to identify whether consolidation is required in light of national guidance such as Designing Streets and the SCOTS Roads Development Guide.**

Progress

An internal working group, comprising planning, transportation and access officers was formed to undertake a comprehensive review of our approved design and roads guidance. This review was concluded in March 2015 and the recommendations arising from it are being evaluated for implementation in the forthcoming year.

Certainty:

- **We will benchmark with other authorities in relation to guidance on pre-application advice and protocols with internal and external consultees;**

Progress

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 three times between 1st April 2014 and 31st March 2015: 29th May 2014 (at East Renfrewshire); 23 September 2014 (at North Ayrshire) and 27th January 2015 (at Inverclyde). The meetings are minuted, with the host council and chairperson rotating around the councils.

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

1. *Planning Performance Framework*
2. *Scottish Minister call-in of applications*
3. *Decision Notice contents*
4. *High Hedges Act and DPEA appeal interpretation*
5. *Restoration Bonds*
6. *Electric car charging points in new developments*
7. *Pre-application briefings & guidance for councillors*
8. *Legal Agreement procedures*
9. *Retention of planning registers procedures*
10. *Charging for pre-application enquiries*
11. *Certificates of Lawful Use or Development*
12. *Charging for street naming and numbering*
13. *Costing the planning service*
14. *Local Review Body procedures & judicial review*
15. *Processing agreements*
16. *Staffing levels*
17. *Review of quarries and landfill sites*
18. *Validation standards guidance note*
19. *EPlanning and EBuilding Standards portal and agency agreement*
20. *Content of reports of handling*
21. *Hearings procedures*
22. *Section 42 applications*
23. *Advertisement Stop Notices*
24. *Policy on houses in the countryside*
25. *Obtaining archaeological expert advice*
26. *Pay-day loan government consultation*
27. *Format of EIA screening opinions*
28. *Procedures for Rights of Way diversion orders*

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 to be shared.

Of particular note this year have been our discussions on:

- ***The Planning Performance Framework***, where the Councils' submissions and feedback reports were discussed, with the Council's learning from each-other's reports.
- ***The High Hedges Act***, where policy and practice was shared, leading to a better understanding of the legislation, and experiences shared of the approaches which can be taken on a range of issues on this new subject.
- ***Pre-application councillor briefings***, allowing the authorities to share how they are implementing the government advice.
- ***Staffing levels*** within the authorities, looking at how each authority's service is staffed, allowing comparisons with performance statistics.
- ***Archaeological advice*** and how the authorities purchase this service through either the West of Scotland Archaeological Service or from private consultants, and whether value-for-money is obtained.

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 through Heads of Planning Scotland 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 Gazeteer Forum; the One-Scotland Mapping Agreement Group; the ePlanning Group; the PINs Group; the Knowledge Hub; and the Ordnance Survey User Group.

- **We will set up a programme of regular meetings with Action Programme stakeholders to monitor progress on programme delivery;**

Progress

Our Action Programme is extensively used at pre-application discussions to draw attention to stakeholders of likely planning/infrastructure requirements, in the most resource efficient way possible. The document provides certainty to developers over what supporting studies and planning obligations could potentially be required and front loads resolution of potential issues, enabling timely determination of planning applications.

The most recent draft was approved by Elected Members in July 2014, highlighting significant progress made on implementation of the LDP. Further updates to the Action Programme are programmed over the summer 2015.

- **We took part in the review of Validation Standards to gain a consensus on minimum standards of information required to validate different types of applications. We will continue to participate and to review and simplify our application forms and guidance in line with the conclusions.**

Progress

North Ayrshire continues to work with the Heads of Planning Scotland, the Scottish Government and other bodies to complete this project.

Communications, Engagement & Customer Service:

- **We will prepare a Customer Service Charter, following the baseline evidence gathered from our customer feedback work;**

Progress

A short life working group was formed to prepare a Customer Service Charter for Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (SP&I) Service in August 2014. This took account of the Council's Corporate Customer Service Charter, the Staff Values and the baseline evidence gathered through the customer feedback exercise. The Charter was then considered and approved by the overall SP&I Team in January 2015. The team regularly discusses case studies at team meetings to demonstrate how the team are fulfilling the charter.

- **We will upgrade the public access to our planning records and guidance; and**
- **We will undertake a comprehensive review of our online planning presence on our website to improve the content and accessibility of information.**

Progress

Public Access 2 was implemented on Monday 11th May 2015. This version provides the platform for the next generation with major enhancements across the product, including:-

New Mapping functions, Smart phone responsiveness, PSN Compliant infrastructure and key recommendations from the SOCITM 2013 Top Task Survey implemented (part of the better connected report)

In simple terms, the upgrade offers new mapping functions, smart phone responsiveness, greater control for administrators, better ways of finding information, and improvements to making and viewing comments. Public Access now supports current common mobile devices including tablets and smart phones with pages specifically laid out for ease of use on small screens.

To improve our online planning presence in terms of Development Planning as well as Development Management we are currently utilising existing software to develop an online version of the Local Development Plan. The introduction of this improved presence online should improve access to planning information for residents, applicants and stakeholders.

Efficient & Effective Decision Making:

- **We will prepare a protocol for progressing and monitoring more effectively applications which are subject to a restoration bond.**

Progress

We have assessed all applications which have or could be potentially be subject to a restoration bond including mineral and renewable energy proposals. A database of these applications has been created with a series of actions /milestones for each one.

We have recently employed a Planning Officer whose main responsibility will be monitoring these, and any future applications, and will take ownership of effectively assessing these proposals particularly where they are subject to ROMP applications. To assist this officer we have, where appropriate, procured the services of an external consultant to provide advice and guidance on appropriate restoration plans and bonds.

Effective Management Structures:

- **We will complete the restructure of Planning Services and Strategic Planning and Infrastructure.**

Progress

In June 2014 a Corporate restructure was undertaken. This created the new Economy and Communities Directorate comprising of Economic Growth and Connected Communities. Planning Services and Strategic Planning and Infrastructure are part of Economic Growth Services, which also includes Business Development, Employability and Skills, Protective Services and Regeneration.

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, 'to improve the lives of North Ayrshire people and develop stronger communities'

Culture of Continuous Improvement:

- **We will prepare an annual plan of staff, elected Member and other stakeholder training initiatives, building on our significant successes to date.**

Progress

During the period various training events were held with a variety of stakeholders. Including Community Councils, Elected Members, and cross departmental officers to promote more efficient internal working processes.

In addition we welcomed Elected Members and Planning Officers from two of the new Northern Irish Councils, Mid Ulster and Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council to North Ayrshire on a two day planning training session. These visitors formed part of the newly elected members of the respective planning committees who were engaging with the planning function for the first time. Their visit commenced with attendance at Planning Committee & Local Review Body, followed by workshops and site visits delivered by Planning Officers, on the following topics:

- *Rules of Committee – Review of presentation of reports, site meetings, resolution of officers / members different views;*
- *Local Development Plan – LDP Committee and preparation of the LDP in relation to National Planning Policy and Guidance;*
- *Members Responsibility- Code of Conduct, training for Planning Committee members and role of non-members of planning committee;*
- *Scheme of Delegation – SoD approval by Scottish Government, Call – In by Members, Deputations, Hearings and Performance and;*
- *Officers Responsibility – Preparation of Reports.*

On day two the Elected Members and Officers undertook a series of site visits to demonstrate how regeneration and planning can be used effectively to revitalise the area.

Testimonials that we have secured to evidence our commitment to a culture of continuous improvement include:

‘The visit was a huge success and all who attended thought it extremely worthwhile. It was particularly useful to have the opportunity to talk to fellow Councillors on the Planning Committee about their experiences of Planning in a Local Government context. It was also beneficial to listen to the presentations and answers provided by the Planning Officers.....These presentations and the officers experience gave a valuable insight into how North Ayrshire manage planning and provided the new Members with plenty to discuss.....’

Councillor David Drysdale, Chair, Shadow Planning Committee, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

“Just a quick note to pass on my personal thanks for accommodating us last week at the top performing Scottish planning authority! The visit certainly opened the eyes of members to the task ahead with nothing but positive feedback on the way back”

Philip Moffett, Change Manager, Mid Ulster Council.

Service improvements: 2015-16

Open for Business

- Continue to upgrade and improve public access to ePlanning and coordinate with planned introduction of eBuilding Standards.
- Improved approach to the way in which we register and record all pre application enquiries.
- Strengthen our online presence, improving the design and visibility of pre application information that we currently provide to members of the public.

High Quality Development

- Deliver improved place making within major public realm projects including Irvine Town Centre and Ardrossan North Shore.
- Engage with key stakeholders including SportScotland to deliver the National Facility at Inverclyde in conjunction with the new Largs Campus.

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.
- Deliver outcomes to some 8 LDP allocated sites following the adoption of the LDP in May 2014.

Communications, 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.

Efficient & Effective Decision Making:

- Continue to maintain efficiency of decision making.
- Continue progress to determine outstanding legacy cases.
- Promote the benefits of Processing Agreements through early engagement with applicants and agents, drawing on previous success.

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,

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.

Appendix I

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK OFFICIAL STATISTICS

Decision-making timescales

Category	Total number of decisions 2014-2015	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2014-15	2013-2014
Major developments	5	12.6 weeks	21.5 weeks
Local developments (non-householder)	247	6.2 weeks	6.8 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	95.5%	5.9 weeks	6.2 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	4.5%	13.9 weeks	14.2 weeks
Householder developments	224	5.1 weeks	5.7 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	100%	5.1 weeks	5.7 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	0%	n/a	9.1 weeks
Housing developments			
Major	2	14.6 weeks	n/a
Local housing developments	83	6.9 weeks	7.2 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	94%	6.2 weeks	6.6 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	6%	17.3 weeks	14.6 weeks
Business and industry			
Major	2	12 weeks	n/a
Local business and industry	18	6.1 weeks	6.1 weeks
• Local: less than 2 months	88.9%	5.7 weeks	6.1 weeks
• Local: more than 2 months	11.1%	9.1 weeks	0 weeks
EIA developments	1	9.3 weeks	0
Other consents*	108	4.8 weeks	2.8 weeks
Planning/legal agreements**	5	7.6 weeks	18.7 weeks
Local reviews	8	5.6 weeks	7.0 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			
		2014-2015 No.	%	2013-2014	
Local reviews	8	5	62.5%	7	77.8%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	2	1	50%	1	100%

Enforcement activity

	2014-2015	2013-2014
Cases taken up	86	158
Breaches identified	86	127
Cases resolved	126	169
Notices served***	5	7
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	1
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.

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	3
30-39	14
40-49	1
50 and Over	6

Committees & site visits	Number per year
Full Council Committees	8
Planning Committees	14
Area Committees (where relevant)	n/a
Committee site visits	None
LRB	9
LRB site visits	1
LDP Committees	2

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



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