

**ABERDEEN
CITY AND
SHIRE**

*Strategic Development
Planning Authority*

Planning Performance Report

2016/17

July 2017

Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA	4
3	The City Region	5
4	SDPA activity during 2016/17	6
5	National Headline Indicators	10
6	Defining and measuring a high quality planning service	12
7	The year ahead	17
8	Supporting evidence	18
Appendix 1	SDPA Membership	19
Appendix 2	Councillor attendance at SDPA meetings	20
Appendix 3	Workforce and financial information	21

1. Introduction

1.1 Aberdeen City and Shire is a growing and economically dynamic city region with high quality environmental assets and exceptional quality of life. The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA), in partnership with others, has a key role in shaping the future development of the area.

1.2 Aberdeen City and Shire is one of four city-regions in Scotland and is made up of the areas of Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. However, the area covered by the strategic development plan (SDP) excludes that part of Aberdeenshire within the Cairngorms National Park (Figure 1).

1.3 This is the eighth annual report of the SDPA since its formation in 2008. This report covers the year to 31 March 2017 and incorporates the authority's 'Planning Performance Report'. The SDPA's audited accounts for 2016/17 will be published separately.

1.4 This year the workload of the SDPA has largely focused on implementation and infrastructure provision, as well as the planning review initiated by Scottish Ministers and preparatory work for the next strategic development plan.

1.5 This report provides the opportunity to both review the achievements of the past year and look forward to the year ahead. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the SDPA, while section 3 provides a description of the area. Section 4 gives an overview of the activity of the SDPA over the last year. Section 5 covers the National Headline Indicators, while section 6 presents information to demonstrate the performance of the SDPA against a defined set of themes. Section 7 looks forward to the year ahead and identifies the service improvement commitments identified, while the final section of the report provides references for supporting evidence. Appendices are provided as appropriate to present more detailed information.

1.6 All 32 local planning authorities, 4 strategic development planning authorities and 2 national park authorities in Scotland are preparing performance reports in a common format. Due to the particular function of the SDPAs, their reports are more limited in scope. This report has been prepared in accordance with the March 2017 version of the guidance for Planning Performance Frameworks.

Figure 1: Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan Area



2. Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA

2.1 The SDPA was established in 2008 through the implementation of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, meeting for the first time on 18 September 2008. The SDPA's initial task was to take a structure plan forward to approval by Scottish Ministers, taking over this role from the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee. Due to the need to replace the structure plan, work had started in 2007 and was completed before starting work on a strategic development plan.

2.2 The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers without modification in August 2009 and was commended at that year's Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning. A replacement strategic development plan has now also been prepared and was approved by Scottish Ministers on 28 March 2014. Well in advance of the five year deadline.

2.3 The SDPA is made up of 12 Councillors, six from Aberdeen City Council and six from Aberdeenshire Council (Appendix 1). It is currently chaired by Councillor Peter Argyle (Aberdeenshire Council) who took up the role in January 2015 after being the Vice Chair for the previous 2½ years. Councillor Ramsay Milne (Aberdeen City Council) is the Vice Chair after being the Chair for 2½ years ending in January 2015.

2.4 There was one change to the substantive membership of the SDPA during the year, with Cllr Alan Donnelly replacing Cllr Ross Thompson who was elected as an MSP at the May 2016 elections to the Scottish Parliament. There were two changes to substitute membership during the year and these are set out in Appendix 2.

2.5 The Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Committee of Aberdeen City Council and the Infrastructure Services Committee of Aberdeenshire Council are the two committees with a development plan remit, while the six Area Committees of Aberdeenshire Council also have a consultative role. However, the approval of the proposed Strategic Development Plan is done by Full Council in both councils.

2.6 The SDPA meet at least quarterly to conduct its business, although it can meet more often if necessitated by workload and project timescales. The work of the SDPA is supported by a small dedicated officer team.

2.7 More details are provided in section 4 in relation to the past year and section 7 for the year to come.



Cllr P Argyle (Chair)



Cllr R Milne (Vice Chair)

3. The City Region

3.1 Aberdeen City and Shire is a large city region in the north east of Scotland, occupying around 6% of the landmass of Scotland and accounting for around 9% of its population and households. The City of Aberdeen is at the heart of the region, with Aberdeenshire forming a large and varied hinterland. The North Sea to the north and east provides an important setting to the region as well as critical resources for its continuing prosperity.

3.2 The area is characterised by high employment, low unemployment, high wages and a high growth rate over the last few years. The area's economy has seen the fastest rising productivity of any part of the UK since 2004 and the economy has grown twice as fast as the rest of Scotland since the recession in 2007.

3.3 Aberdeen City and Shire is projected to be the fastest growing part of Scotland over the next 25 years. The SDP has a key role to play in promoting, facilitating and managing that growth. However, the fall in the price of oil during 2014/15 and sustained low levels throughout 2016/17 is likely to have significant impacts on the local (and national) economy over the next few years which are only starting to be felt.

3.4 Figure 2 below provides some summary statistics which paint a picture of the area.

Figure 2: City-Region Statistics

	Aberdeen City & Shire	Scotland
Geographical Area*	5,050 sq km (6%)	77,933 sq km
Households* (2016)	215,570 (+ 1.0%) ↑	2,451,869 (+ 0.7%) ↑
Population* (2016)	488,930 -0.1% ↓	5,404,700 (+ 0.6%) ↑
Jobs (2015)	313,000 (-1.9%) ↓	2,740,000 (-0.2%) ↓
Unemployment (March 2017)	6,495 (2.0%) ↑	84,325 (3.0%) ↑
New Housebuilding (2016)	1,966 (-6.3%) ↓	16,498 ↑
Vacant & Derelict Land (2016)	114ha (1%) ↑	12,674ha ↓
Carbon Emissions 2015 (per capita)	6.4 tonnes CO ₂ (-0.1 tonnes) ↓	6.1 tonnes CO ₂ (-0.1) ↓
Average House Price (2016/17)	£206,727 (-6.2%) ↓	£166,658 (0.1%) ↑
Gross Value Added per head (2014)	£36,726 (- 2.5%) ↓	£23,685 (+ 1.8%) ↑

* SDP Area, other figures are for the combined council areas of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire



The price of oil fell by 72% over two years to February 2016 (\$106 → \$30) before stabilising at around **\$50** during 2016/17, with a significant impact on the local (and national) economy.

55%

Economic output per head is second in the UK...**55%** higher than the Scottish average.



Aberdeen City and Shire accounted for **9%** of the Scottish population and households in 2016.



Aberdeen City and Shire has a **fully up-to-date** development plan at both strategic and local levels.



Aberdeen City and Shire accounted for **12%** of all new homes built in Scotland during 2016.



Over **£218m** of seafood was landed in Peterhead and Fraserburgh during 2016, around 50% of the total Scottish catch.

4. SDPA activity during 2016/17

4.1 While the implementation of the SDP and issues around infrastructure provision have been the main focus of activity for the SDPA during the year, a range of other activities have also been carried out and these are summarised below.

Strategic Development Plan

4.2 The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers on 28 March 2014. The SDP was the last of the four plans across Scotland to be approved due to the approval of the previous structure plan in August 2009. However, the SDP was approved less than 5 years after the previous plan, maintaining the fully up-to-date development plan coverage of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire, an achievement the area is rightly proud of. This enabled a plan-led approach to the significant development pressures at a time of significant economic growth, particularly the rapidly expanding commercial floor space requirements of the Oil and Gas industry.

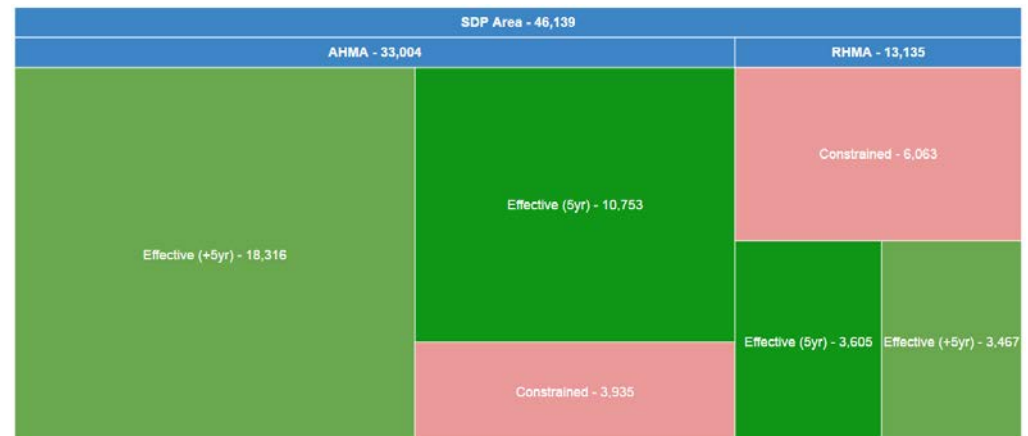
4.3 The SDP is a robust and visionary plan for the future development of the area, identifying the need for a significant increase in historic levels of housing and commercial development as well as the infrastructure required to deliver it. While the take-up of employment land over recent years has been unprecedented, levels are now much more subdued following the fall in the price of oil. When developments currently underway are completed there will be a very considerable supply of office and industrial floorspace available. House building is only now returning to pre-recession levels, with 2015 completions just 20 units short of the level reached in 2007. However, Aberdeen City and Shire is the only city region to achieve this, with the rest of the country still lagging well below pre-recession averages.

4.4 Figure 3 demonstrates the significant quantity of land available for house building in the area over the next 20-30 years. These figures, agreed with the house building industry, will enable a significant upturn in the construction of new homes in response to market demands over the next few years.

Strategic Transport Fund

4.5 During the past year, attention continued to focus on the supplementary guidance on the Strategic Transport Fund and the subsequent legal challenge to its adoption.

Figure 3: Housing Land Supply in Aberdeen City and Shire



Source: Housing Land Audit 2017

4.6 Following its adoption in June 2015, Elswick Development Company Ltd submitted a legal challenge to the adoption of the guidance at the Court of Session, with a hearing taking place in early March 2016. The court issued its judgement in late April 2016, sustaining the appeal and quashing the guidance. Leave to appeal was obtained in late December 2016 and a hearing will take place on 13 June 2017 before the Supreme Court in Edinburgh. This has led to significant additional financial and workload pressure during the year, with both councils agreeing to support the legal costs of the appeal.

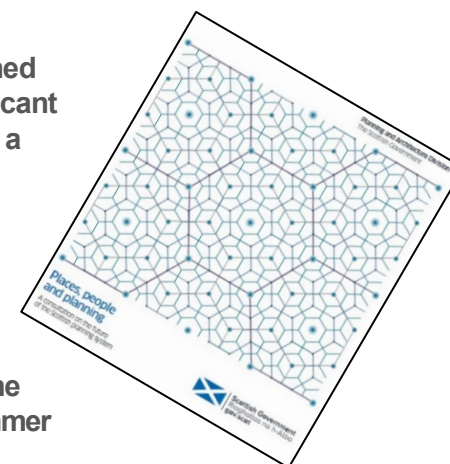


Consultation responses

4.7 The SDPA responded to a number of policy consultations during the year, ranging from Transport Scotland's 'Rail Infrastructure Strategy' to the Scottish Government's 'Draft Advice on Net Economic Benefit and Planning' and their consultation on the future of the planning system in Scotland 'Places, People and Planning' (see below). In addition to this, a range of responses were made on regionally significant planning applications. The four responses (and one appeal statement) ranged from three retail-led proposals to an application for a 20,000 seater football stadium and training facilities. Two appeal decisions were received by Aberdeenshire Council to which the SDPA had responded to the original application (and provided a supplementary statement to one appeal), both were dismissed. Of the six applications either commented on or determined during the year, one was withdrawn, one was refused (and subsequently on appeal as well), one was approved, one was notified to Scottish Ministers and two are outstanding. The SDPA also engaged with the two councils during the 'examination' stage of their Local Development Plans, helping to respond to further information requests.

Independent Review of Planning

4.8 The Scottish Government announced a review of planning in June 2015 and an independent panel published their report "Empowering planning to deliver great places" on 31 May 2016. The panel's report included significant recommendations regarding planning and infrastructure provision at the city region scale and these would have a significant impact on the nature and function of the SDPA if implemented.



4.9 The SDPA ran a well-attended workshop for all Councillors of both councils in late November 2016 to consider the potential implications of the recommendations and help inform the drafting of responses to the expected consultation at the turn of the year. Following the publication of the 'Places, People and Planning' consultation in January 2017, meetings took place between officers of the SDPA and both councils to inform their respective responses. The SDPA's response was agreed at its meeting of March 2017. It is anticipated that the Scottish Government's position on how aspects of the consultation will be taken forward will be announced in summer 2017.

Service Improvement Activities

4.10 The SDPA identified three service improvement commitments for 2016/17, delivering each of these as set out in Figure 4 below. Commitments for 2017/18 are identified in section 7 of this report. Due to the size of the SDPA (just one or two members of staff throughout the year) and the 5-year cyclical nature of its operations, it is often difficult to deliver actions within a set financial year, as proved the case in 2016/17 where two of the actions will find their fulfilment during 2017/18. The planning review recommendations have also brought the delivery of the actions themselves into focus.

Figure 4: Delivery of Service Improvement Commitments (2016/17)

Service Improvement Commitments 2016/17	Progress	Comment
Develop a series of easily updatable infographics which can be used across the four SDPAs.	✓	The development work was undertaken but not rolled out given the uncertainty resulting from the planning review. The roll-out will be re-considered in the context of the final outcomes of the planning review when known during 2017/18.
Implement a Twitter account to facilitate engagement on the next SDP.	✓ / ➔	Preparatory work was done to enable a Twitter account to be implemented but the roll-out was timed to coincide with a period where it would be more active during 2017/18.
Implement an online engagement tool (in partnership with Community Planning) and assess its value for strategic planning in conjunction with the other three SDPAs.	✓ / ➔	The online engagement tool ('Dialogue') was implemented in partnership with Community Planning in Aberdeenshire Council who trialled it via engagement on the Aberdeenshire Children's Services Plan 2017-2020 during November / December 2016. A total of 50 'ideas' were generated, along with 148 'votes' and 25 'comments'. This was a learning experience for all involved and enabled valuable lessons to be learnt when it comes to implementing the technology by the SDPA. Due to the timing of implementation during the year, assessing its value for strategic planning with the other three SDPAs will continue into 2017/18.

Other activities

4.11 The SDPA continued to facilitate a range of proposals of strategic importance identified in the SDP, some of which have been designated as National Developments in National Planning Framework 3. These included the extension of Aberdeen Harbour, a carbon capture proposal at Peterhead, a potential electricity interconnector to Norway (NorthConnect), as well as various transport and electricity transmission projects.

4.12 The SDPA had a role in the preparatory work leading to the City Region Deal announced in January 2016, focusing in particular on the housing and transport themes. This work continued into 2016/17, with the SDPA represented on the Transport Working Group (along with Transport Scotland, Nestrans and the two councils) which is focused on preparing a strategic transport appraisal – a £7m project to identify future transport infrastructure projects to feed into national, regional and local transport and land use strategies.

4.13 Since February 2016 the SDP Manager has been a professional advisor to the Nestrans Board (North East Scotland's Regional Transport Partnership) which has further enhanced the co-ordination between the two organisations. During the year the SDPA has also participated in the Nestrans project to upgrade the regional transport model (ASAM), with a particular focus on the development inputs to it. Preparation also started on a project to update the Cumulative Transport Appraisal which provides the evidence base behind the transport impacts of the SDP and the Strategic Transport Fund.

4.14 The four SDP Managers met several times during the year, with work focussing on the Scottish Government's planning review. Discussions also focused on the respective Planning Performance Frameworks and the identification of improvement activities which could be done jointly. The four teams met twice during the year with a focus on sharing best practice as well as inputting to the strategic elements of planning reform and sharing experiences of engaging with city region deals.

4.15 The SDPA were represented on the Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) Development Plan Subcommittee at the start of the year but handed over to Aberdeenshire Council in June 2016 (the SDPA take it in turns with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council to be represented geographically on the group). The representation of the four SDPA's is also on a rotating basis, with Clydeplan representing these interests for the next two years. The SDPA retains an involvement with the HoPS housing land supply workstream.

4.16 The SDPA gave a presentation on its role to the Norwegian Standing Committee on Energy and Environment in September 2016, a group of MPs with responsibility for the legislation surrounding the NorthConnect project. A session was also held with planners from Gomel (Belarus) to share experience and ideas. It has participated in a number of meetings and workshops throughout year looking to identify practical solutions to the challenges of housing land supply and infrastructure provision and climate change adaptation through the planning system.

5. National Headline Indicators

5.1 This section reports on the Key Outcome measures identified within the National Headline Indicators which are relevant to the work of the SDPA.

Figure 5: National Headline Indicators

Key Outcome	2016-2017	2015/16	2014/15	Comment
Development Planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age of local/strategic development plan(s) (years and months). 	3 yr 0 mths (at 31 March 2017)	2 yr 0 mths (at 31 March 2016)	1 yrs 0 mths (at 31 March 2015)	The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers on 28 March 2014. This was well in advance of the 5 th anniversary of the previous structure plan on 19 August 2014.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Y/N) 	Y	Y	Y	The current development plan scheme anticipates that the current Strategic Development Plan will be replaced by its 5 th anniversary of 28 March 2019.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? (Y/N) 	N	N	N	The expected date of submission of the next Proposed Strategic Development Plan to Scottish Ministers remains March 2018.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were development plan scheme engagement / consultation commitments met during the year? (Y/N) 	N	Y	Y	It was anticipated that consultation on the Main Issues Report would take place before the local government elections in May 2017. However, As a consequence, the engagement activities were put back until after the elections. One consequence of this is that later parts of the process will be under more time pressure in order to submit the plan to Scottish Ministers by 28 March 2018. However, there is no imminent risk of the plan being over 5 years old before it is replaced.

Key Outcome	2016-2017	2015-2016	2014/15	Comment
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established housing land supply (units) 5-year Effective housing land supply (units) 5-year Housing Supply Target (units) 5-year Effective housing land supply (years, to one decimal place) housing approvals Housing completions in last 5 years (units) Marketable employment land supply (Ha) Employment land take-up (Ha) 	<p>AHMA = 33,004 RHMA = 13,135 SDP = 46,139</p> <p>AHMA = 10,753 RHMA = 3,605 SDP = 14,358</p> <p>AHMA = 7,509 RHMA = 3,206 SDP = 10,715</p> <p>AHMA= 7.2yrs RHMA= 5.6yrs SDP= 6.7yrs</p> <p>AHMA= 2,621 RHMA= 1,683 SDP= 4,304</p> <p>AHMA= 7,369 RHMA= 2,461 SDP= 9,830</p> <p>SDP= 546ha</p> <p>SDP= 24ha</p>	<p>AHMA = 33,821 RHMA = 13,084 SDP = 46,905</p> <p>AHMA = 11,250 RHMA = 3,510 SDP = 14,760</p> <p>AHMA = 7,668 RHMA = 3,271 SDP = 10,939</p> <p>AHMA= 7.3yrs RHMA= 5.4yrs SDP= 6.7yrs</p> <p>AHMA= 3,451 RHMA= 1,027 SDP= 4,478</p> <p>AHMA= 6,994 RHMA= 2,465 SDP= 9,459</p> <p>SDP= 510ha</p> <p>SDP= 32ha</p>	<p>AHMA= 34,731 RHMA= 13,569 SDP= 48,300</p> <p>AHMA= 12,091 RHMA= 3,686 SDP= 15,777</p> <p>AHMA= 7,827 RHMA= 3,336 SDP= 11,163</p> <p>AHMA= 7.7yrs RHMA= 5.5yrs SDP= 7.1yrs</p> <p>SDP= 8,459</p> <p>AHMA= 6,300 RHMA= 2,566 SDP= 8,866</p> <p>SDP= 500Ha</p> <p>SDP= 32Ha</p>	<p>Housing Land Audit Base Date = 1 January 2017.</p> <p>AHMA = Aberdeen Housing Market Area (whole of Aberdeen City and part of Aberdeenshire)</p> <p>RHMA = Rural Housing Market Area (the rest of Aberdeenshire but excluding the CNPA)</p> <p>SDP = Strategic Development Plan (AHMA + RHMA)</p> <p>Both housing market areas continue to evidence a healthy housing land supply, exceeding 5 years in both cases. A considerable quantity of land is effective but programmed beyond year 5 (2022 onwards - 21,738 units) which will supplement the supply in years to come.</p> <p>Housing approval figures cover the financial year 2016/17, all other housing data is for the calendar year 2016</p> <p>Annual housing completions across the SDP area increased every year between 2010 and 2015 (increasing by 40% over this time). However, completion levels fell by 6% between 2015 and 2016 due to the economic challenges facing the area. However, over the last 5 years as a whole, the level of completions increased by 4% on last year's total.</p> <p>Employment Land Audit Base Date = 1 April 2016</p> <p>A further 40Ha of employment land was under construction at the base date of the Audit.</p>

6. Defining and measuring a high quality planning service

6.1 A high-quality planning service is vital to Aberdeen City and Shire to ensure development is supported in the most sustainable locations and in a sustainable way. This section of the report focuses on a number of themes which characterise such a service and the contribution the SDPA has made to each.

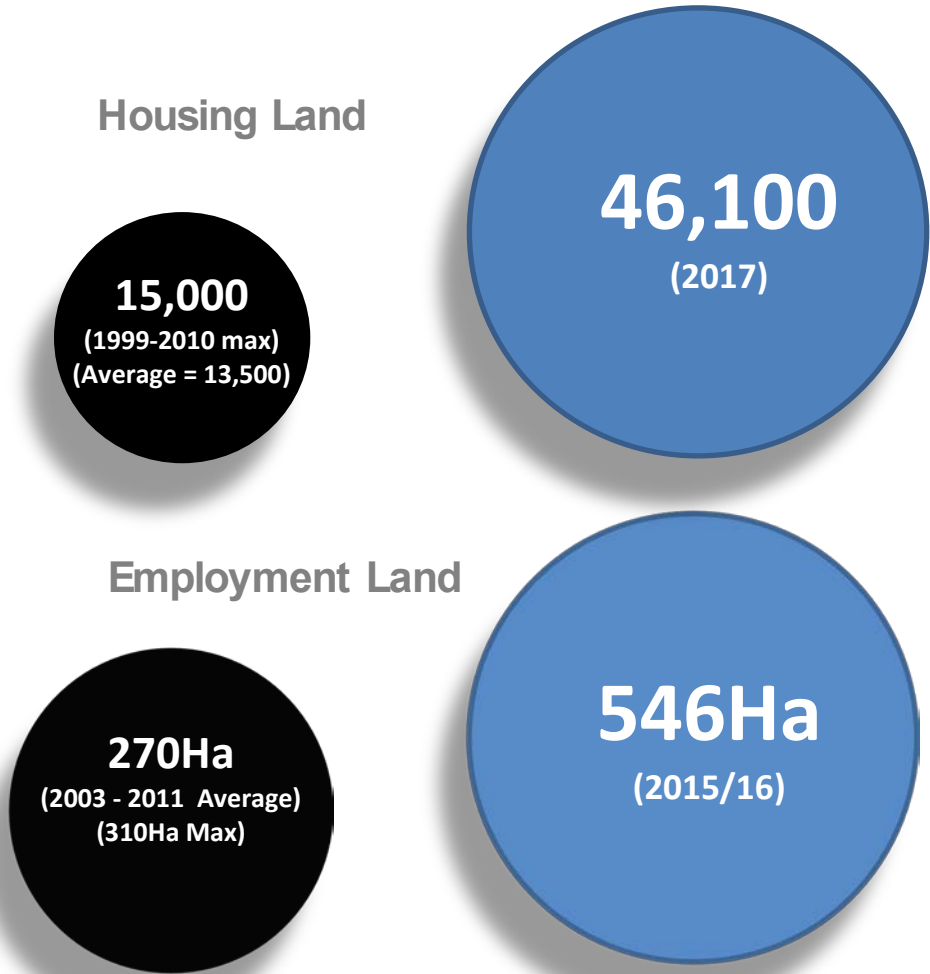
Open for business

6.2 The SDP area is one of the most economically dynamic in the whole of the UK, built on a strong presence from the oil and gas industry. One of the primary purposes of the strategic development plan is to facilitate this growth and direct this is to the most sustainable locations. While the oil price continued to average less than \$50 for the second year in a row, the effects on development rates is likely to slowly emerge over time.

6.3 The Strategic Development Plan, Housing Land Audit and Employment Land Audit all highlight the positive and aspirational nature of the plans prepared by the SDPA. Significant quantities of land are now available in locations attractive to the development industry and end-users. The available supply of housing land, for example (see Figure 6) has more than trebled through the development plan since 2009. Over a similar period of time, the availability of employment land has almost doubled. This will facilitate the significant expansion of house building to complement the significant take-up being experienced in commercial floorspace. This effectively moved away from the long-term trend evident since the late 1990's to a significantly more positive land supply position.

6.4 Take-up of land for employment uses is likely to be modest during 2017 and 2018 as significant space is now available on the market and demand is at relatively low levels. House sales have also fallen over the last two years. However, significant quantities of land exist to facilitate the upturn in demand when it happens.

Figure 6: Established housing and employment land supply



Source: Housing & Employment Land Audits (rounded)

High quality development on the ground

6.5 One of the fundamental reasons for the delivery of an aspirational plan was to focus more on the quality of new development rather than fruitless arguments with the development industry over the quantity of new development.

6.6 The SDP sets the strategic framework for the delivery of high quality development on the ground, focusing as it does on the delivery of sustainable mixed communities. The plan explicitly targets national recognition for schemes, with award-winning schemes being highlighted to the SDPA on a regular basis. Recent examples include the University of Aberdeen for its new nursery, Portsoy Boatbuilding Centre and a private house in Aberdeen. However, it is still recognised that there is a long way to go to pull the quality of the majority of schemes up to that of the best.

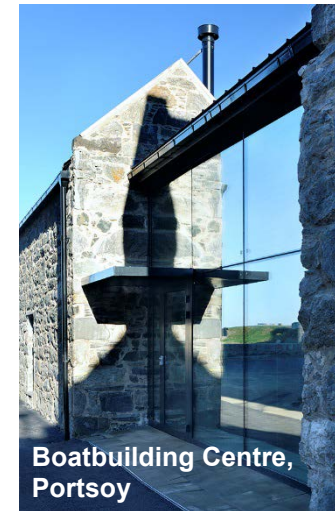
Certainty

6.7 An up-to-date development plan is one of the primary contributions the SDPA can make to providing certainty to communities and the development industry.

6.8 The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers in March 2014, within five years of the previously approved Structure Plan. It had been submitted to Ministers within the 4-year target set in legislation.

6.9 Local Development Plans consistent with the current strategic plan were adopted by both councils in early 2017 (Aberdeen City in January 2017 and Aberdeenshire in April 2017) so the whole area has an up-to-date development plan. These were the first two second-generation local development plans in Scotland.

6.10 A Development Plan Scheme has now been published for the next SDP, with the publication of the Proposed SDP anticipated in late 2017/18. The election cycles for Holyrood and Local Government elections, as well as the European referendum, have had a significant impact on the timetable, with the aim being to ensure decisions can be made in an inclusive way as possible and not constrained by pre-election periods. However, the statutory nature of the submission target (four years after plan



Boatbuilding Centre,
Portsoy



Westville House,
Aberdeen



Rocking Horse Nursery,
University of Aberdeen

approval) makes this particularly challenging. The timetable does mean, however, that the new plan will be agreed by the new administrations in both Councils after the elections in May 2017. The time likely to be spent on the various stages of plan preparation is set out in Figure 7 below.

6.11 The highest element of risk identified to date for the delivery of the project plan revolves around the two election cycles. This will be actively monitored and managed throughout the plan preparation process. Reducing risks in this way reduces risks at the implementation phase when both councils prepare Local Development Plans and make decisions on strategic planning applications. The previous structure plan was subject to no changes while the SDP was subject to very limited changes. This gives certainty to LDP preparation (enabling Main Issues Reports to be prepared on a firm foundation) as well as developers and communities.

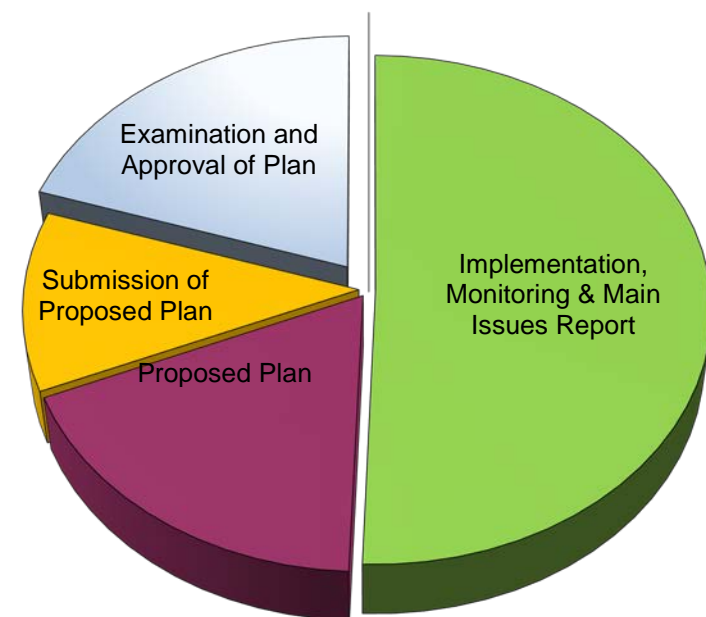
Communications, engagement and customer service

6.12 The SDPA pioneered the use of Plain English for strategic development plans. The current SDP as well as the Development Plan Scheme, Main Issues Report and Proposed Strategic Development Plan all have 'Crystal Marks' from the Plain English Campaign. The purpose of this accreditation is to recognise the importance of clear communication with customers.

6.13 An E-Update system was introduced on the launch of the SDPA's website in 2008 and the recipients of the emails now number around 150. Recipients range from interested individuals, community groups, neighbouring planning authorities, developers and consultants. Improvements have been made last year (and into 2016/17) following a customer survey, enhancing both the format and content – with 5 issued during the year. A Twitter account being implemented this year will provide an additional channel of communication.

6.14 The use of the SDPA website is regularly monitored and reported to the SDPA. A particular focus is put on reporting site traffic during consultation periods when activity increases significantly. The Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA website is highly rated by search engines, with a Google search for 'SDPA' putting the website at the top of the list. This helps to ensure easy access to the website. A total of 8 news items were added to the website during the year.

Figure 7: SDP Preparation Timescales



Note: The Pie diagram represents the five year plan preparation cycle, with the Main Issue Report stage not starting immediately after the approval of the previous plan.

6.15 Early engagement has already taken place on the preparation of the new SDP through a joint seminar with SDPA Members and the Nestrans (Regional Transport Partnership) Board. In addition to this, two workshops with SDPA Members took place during 2016/17 looking at the current plan and the topics which might need to be addressed in the next plan. This will be repeated throughout the plan preparation process and rolled out to all 110 Councillors of both councils at appropriate points in the process.

6.16 The SDPA agendas normally include a Bulletin which is designed to inform Members and other interested parties of a range of matters related to the work of the SDPA but where decisions are not required. This included updates on various aspects of plan implementation in terms of both LDP progress, infrastructure projects and strategic planning applications related to the plan's proposals.

6.17 Liaison took place during the year with the two LDP teams to help identify issues with the implementation of the current plan, topics for potential inclusion in the next main issues report and provide assistance with issues such as housing land supply. Liaison also took place with neighbouring authorities with the same purpose.

Efficient and effective decision-making

6.18 The SDPA is comprised of six Councillors from each council with three professional advisors (the Heads of Planning from both councils and the SDP Manager). The SDPA meet a minimum of four times a year, coinciding with key decision-making events in the life of the SDPA. However, there is the provision for additional meetings if required by the project plan. Attendance at the meetings is open to the public, with papers available in advance on the SDPA website.

6.19 Appendices 1 and 2 set out the membership and attendance of SDPA Members during the year. During the year Councillor Thomson stood down from membership of the SDPA after being elected as an MSP and was replaced by Councillor Donnelly. There were also changes to substitute members, with councillors Gray and Donnelly being replaced by Councillors Stuart and Young. Four of the five meetings during the year were attended by at least 10 members (out of 12). In addition, 5 of the 12 substitute members also attended at least one meeting. Following the local government elections in May 2017 there are likely to be a number of new Members nominated by the two councils. An induction session will be run to supplement the more general planning training received by all the Councillors and organised by the two councils themselves.

6.20 Appropriate powers are delegated to the SDPA to ensure that decisions only need to be ratified at key points in the SDP process, primarily the agreement of the Proposed Plan. This ensures that the SDPA is effectively able to co-ordinate the preparation of the SDP and associated workstreams without constant recourse to the partner councils. The scheme of delegation to officers was reviewed during the year to help avoid the need for special meetings of the SDPA.

Effective management structures

6.21 A Management Team comprising the SDP Manager and the Heads of Planning from the two constituent councils meet on a regular basis to direct the work of the SDPA and consider reports for subsequent meetings of the SDPA.

Financial management and local governance

6.22 The SDPA is governed by a Minute of Agreement between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council as well as a set of Financial Regulations, both of which are publically available on the SDPA website. Aberdeenshire Council act as Treasurer to the SDPA. The SDPA is audited on an annual basis as part of Audit Scotland's local government audit activities, with Audit Scotland taking over this year as the auditor for the next five years. The Auditors Report and Audited Statement of Accounts are published annually on the SDPA website.

6.23 A budget for the SDPA is set and agreed on an annual basis, with indicative budgets produced for the following two years. The SDPA consider a Budget Monitoring Report at least three times a year and also agree unaudited and audited accounts on an annual basis.

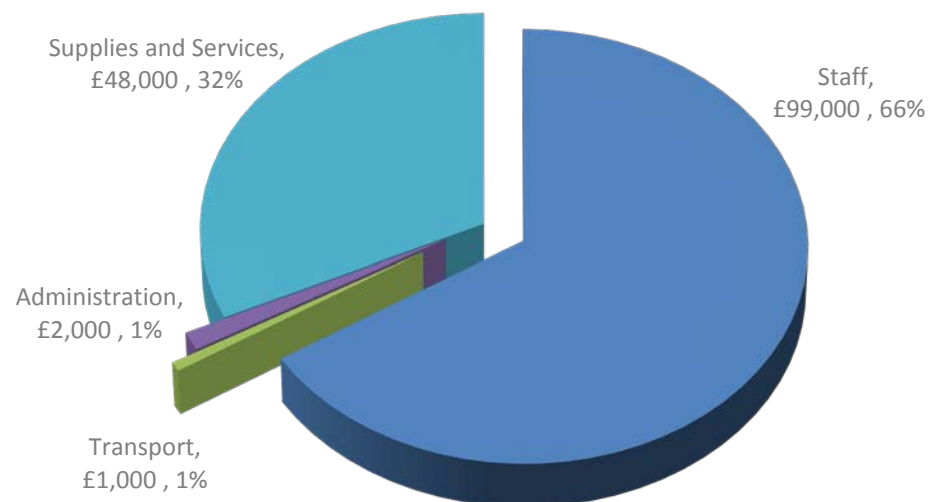
6.24 Costs for 2016/17 (£150,000) were higher than the previous year but lower than was budgeted for, due in part to the costs of the legal case but particularly due to there being just one member of staff for the first five months of the year.

Culture of continuous improvement

6.25 During the year staff benefited from a range of training opportunities and opportunities to share good practice – including the Scottish Government's introductory event, online data protection training. A conference on planning reform and attendance at the TAYplan examination hearing session in Dundee.

6.26 SDP Managers across Scotland's four SDPAs meet on a quarterly basis to focus on innovating together and sharing good practice. The benefits of this have included joint approaches to the Scottish Government and joint actions to improve processes and guidance.

Figure 8: SDPA Expenditure 2016/17 (Unaudited)



7. The year ahead

7.1 In the early part of 2017/18, work will focus on the ongoing legal case around the Strategic Transport Fund. The case is due to be called at the Supreme Court on 13 June 2017, with a decision by the court expected in either late July or September/October. Two further continuing workstreams during the year will relate to the implementation of the City Region Deal and the ongoing review of the planning system. The planning review is likely to result in continued uncertainty around the future of strategic planning and will make engagement on the Main Issues Report even more challenging. However, it will be important that the Councillor induction and all communications activity around the new plan are positive and focused on the future of the area over the period to 2040 rather than the current form or future structure of the planning system.

7.2 In addition to the above, a Housing Need and Demand Assessment will be published and consultation undertaken on a Main Issues Report, with all the associated assessments and documentation. Liaison will continue with neighbouring authorities and Key Agencies. Work will continue with Nestrans to ensure the work on the review of the regional transport strategy is closely aligned with the SDP.

7.3 Four meetings of the SDPA are planned for 2017/18, although the nature of the work over the year means that another meeting may be required.

Service improvements: 2017-18

7.4 In the coming year we will:

- Implement a series of easily updatable infographics which can be used across the four SDPAs.
- Work with the other SDPAs to co-ordinate materials for Councillor inductions after the May 2017 elections.
- Use the new Twitter account to facilitate engagement on the next SDP.
- Use the online engagement tool 'Dialogue' to facilitate discussion on the Main Issues Report.

SDPA Meetings 2017/18

30 June 2017
20 September 2017
20 December 2017
21 March 2018













8. Supporting evidence

Supporting evidence

This report was compiled drawing on evidence from the following sources:

- Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (2009)
- Housing Land Audit 2017
- Employment Land Audit 2015/16
- Minute of Agreement and Standing Orders (Version 2, 2010)
- Audited Statement of Accounts 2015/16
- Report by External Auditors 2015/16
- Unaudited Statement of Accounts 2016/17
- Development Plan Scheme 2016/17
- Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (2014)
- Scottish Government SDP Approval letter (March 2014)
- Strategic Development Plan Monitoring Report (September 2014)
- Supplementary Planning Guidance: Delivering Transport Improvements through a Strategic Transport Fund (2012)
- Supplementary Guidance: Strategic Transport Fund (2015)
- Graphical Communication in Strategic Development Plans (2012)
- Sub-regional Productivity (March 2017) – Office for National Statistics
- Sub-national Population Estimates (June 2017) – National Records of Scotland
- Registers of Scotland – Monthly House Price Statistics
- Scottish Government Signals Planning Modernisation - 9/6/2015

Appendix 1: SDPA Membership (as at 31 March 2017)

					
Cllr P Argyle (Chair)	Cllr R Milne (Vice Chair)	Cllr D Aitchison	Cllr P Bellarby	Cllr J Corall	Cllr J Cox
					
Cllr A Donnelly	Cllr A Finlayson	Cllr R Grant	Cllr N Smith	Cllr B Topping	Cllr I Yuill

Appendix 2: Councillor attendance at SDPA meetings

	19 May 2016	15 June 2016	21 September 2016	25 January 2016	22 March 2017	Total
Councillor Peter Argyle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Councillor David Aitchison			✓	✓	✓	3
Councillor Peter Bellarby	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Councillor John Corall	✓			✓	✓	3
Councillor John Cox	✓	✓	✓	✓		4
Councillor Alan Donnelly ¹			✓	✓	✓	3
Councillor Andrew Finlayson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Councillor Ross Grant			✓	✓		2
Councillor Ramsay Milne	✓		✓	✓	✓	4
Councillor Norman Smith			✓		✓	2
Councillor Ross Thomson ¹						0
Councillor Brian Topping	✓	✓		✓		3
Councillor Ian Yuill		✓		✓	✓	3
SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS						
Councillor Bill Cormie						0
Councillor Steve Delaney						0
Councillor Alan Donnelly	✓	✓				2
Councillor Jim Gifford	✓	✓		✓		3
Councillor Gordon Graham						0
Councillor Ian Gray						0
Councillor Jean Morrison	✓	✓			✓	3
Councillor Gillian Owen						0
Councillor Stuart Pratt		✓				1
Councillor Anne Robertson						0
Councillor Stephen Smith						0
Councillor Brian Stuart					✓	1
Councillor Angela Taylor						0
Councillor Willie Young						0
	10	10	9	12	11	

Note: Substitute Members are only recorded as in attendance at meetings where they are substituting for a substantive member.

¹ Councillor Donnelly took the place of Councillor Thomson on the SDPA prior to the September SDPA meeting. Two substitute members also changed.

Appendix 3: Workforce and financial information

Head of Planning Service	Tier?									
	1	2	3	4						
				1						
	Managers No. Posts		Main Grade Posts No. Posts		Technician Posts No. Posts		Office support/Clerical No. Posts		Totals	
Development Planning			1						2	

Staffing profile	Number	Committees & site visits	No. per year
Under 30		SDPA	5
30-39	1	Full Council	0
40-49	1	Council Committees	2
50 and Over		Area Committees	0

Budgets	Budget	Costs		Income
Planning Service		Direct	Indirect	
Development Planning	£150k			£150k

Note: More detailed information is available in the SDPA's unaudited accounts for 2016/17 which are available from the SDPA website

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