









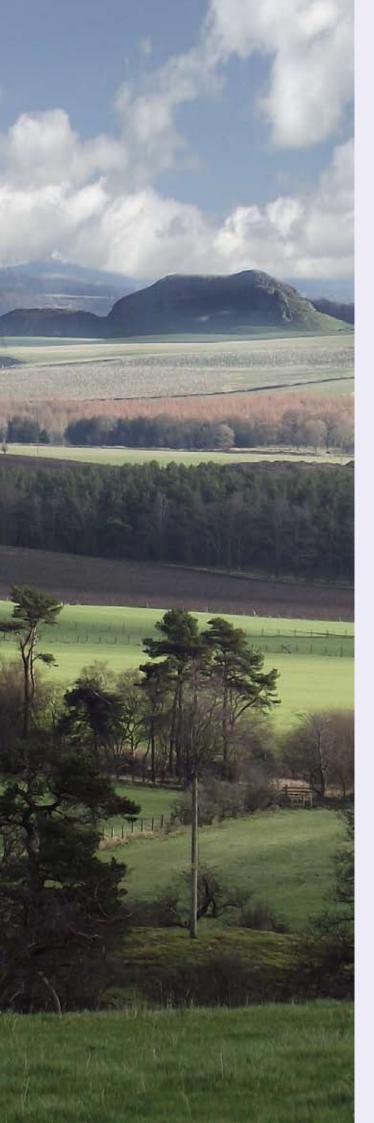
Planning Services

West Lothian Council

Planning Performance Framework 4 2014 - 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	4
1.1	Planning Services in West Lothian	5
1.2	The year in profile	5
1.3	The Performance Markers Report	7
1.4	Planning Services: service delivery	9
Part 1:	National Headline Indicators	10
Part 2:	Defining and measuring a high quality planning service	12
2.1	Open for business	12
2.2	High quality development on the ground	14
2.3	Certainty	16
2.4	Communications, engagement and customer service	18
2.5	Efficient and effective decision-making	20
2.6	Ensure structures and processes are proportionate	24
2.7	Financial management and local governance	25
2.8	Culture of continuous improvement	26
Part 3:	Supporting evidence and case studies	28
Part 4:	Service improvements	28
Part 5:	Official statistics	29
Part 6:	Workforce and financial information	30



Planning Performance Framework 4

1.0 Introduction

- 1.0.1 The format of this year's PPF will again focus specifically on the council's response to the Scottish Government's Feedback Report and the Performance Markers Report of 11 December 2014. In particular the steps taken by the council in 2014 2015 to address priority areas for improvement are summarised in section 1.3 and referenced and evidenced throughout the report; the alignment of the council to comments made in the Feedback Report are described in the commentary to each individual heading in section 2 of PPF4.
- 1.0.2 West Lothian is the 10th largest local authority area in Scotland with a land area of 432 sq. km. The council continues to be one of the fastest growing in Scotland with a current estimated population of 177,990, predicted to grow to 205,345 by 2035. Between 2000 and 2014 it was the third fastest growing local authority in Scotland.
- 1.0.3 Ranging from the wilder land of the Pentland Hills to the shores of the Firth of Forth, the area embraces Livingston new town, former mining settlements, conservation areas and the emerging towns in the core development areas.
- 1.0.4 West Lothian Council's performance markers report for 2013 2014 comprised three 'red' ratings, six 'amber' ratings and six 'green' ratings. PPF4 will demonstrate that the council has addressed each 'red' rating and concurrently has achieved continuous improvement in each of the other markers.
- 1.0.5 Specifically, the council's *enforcement charter* has been updated; the successor local plan, the *West Lothian Development Plan*, is advancing and the *development plan scheme* has now been discussed with the council's elected members and is on track.

1.1 Planning Services in West Lothian

- 1.1.1 In West Lothian the council's statutory planning function is delivered through the council's Planning and Economic Development Service. The council works in partnership with strategic planning partners through SESplan, the strategic planning authority for Edinburgh and the South East of Scotland, and the key agencies.
- 1.1.2 The planning service in West Lothian has recently been restructured. Under the Head of Planning and Economic Development, the Development Planning and Development Management teams are separate service units. The focus of the service is on outcomes which increasingly require 'cross-service' approaches to planning issues including integration with Environmental Health, Education Planning, Building Standards and Economic Development.
- 1.1.3 There are currently six chartered planners employed in the council's Development Planning team and nine chartered planners in the Development Management team. In addition Planning Services has access to a shared administrative support service and a technical support service.
- 1.1.4 Located in the central belt of Scotland, West Lothian continues to play a vital role in delivering economic prosperity to the region and in Scotland as a whole. The district benefits from being strategically located on the key transportation links between Edinburgh and Glasgow and is in close proximity to Edinburgh airport.

1.2 The year in profile

- 1.2.1 West Lothian has benefited from a number of significant economic investment initiatives in the recent past. Residential development is continuing at the core development areas (CDA's) of Winchburgh, Armadale and Calderwood and consent has been issued for residential development as the first part of the west Livingston CDA. At Heartlands, Whitburn, residential development is continuing.
- 1.2.2 House completions in West Lothian in 2014 were at their highest since 2007, as is illustrated in the following table. West Lothian had the 7th highest number of completions in Scotland in 2014.

2007	1062
2008	604
2009	443
2009	573

2011	255
2012	463
2013	614
2014	744

- 1.2.3 The council validated 988 planning etc. applications in 2014/15, an increase of 74 from 2013/14.
- 1.24 Against a background of budgetary constraints, as set out in PPF4, the council is continually improving its performance. Specifically, when compared with all other planning authorities in Scotland, as set out in the most recent statistics published by the Scottish Government, the following conclusions for 2014/2015 can be drawn:
 - The council, together with another 12 local authorities, did not have any processing agreements.
 - The council has more than halved the overall average time scale for the determination of major applications from 102.1 weeks to 48.2 weeks.
 - The council has the 4th highest proportion of major applications nationally.
 - The council has the 4th highest proportion of local applications in the country with legal agreements but determined them faster than the three local authorities with more of this category of application. The council's average timescale was 8.8 weeks, whereas the other three councils' average time scales were 17 weeks, 21.3 weeks and 13.4 weeks.
 - The council has the fastest average time scale for householder applications in Scotland, at five weeks.
 - The council has shown continuous improvement in the determination of major housing applications from 232.9 weeks in 2011/12, to 111.1 weeks 2013/14 and now in 2014/15 to 41.5 weeks.
 - The council has significantly reduced the average timescales for major business and industry applications from 166.7 weeks in 2013/14 to 13 weeks in 2014/15. This is significantly lower than the Scottish average of 41.3 weeks.

- The council has shown continuous improvement in the speed of determination of local business and industry applications from 8.6 weeks in 2011/12, to 8.4 weeks 2013/14 and now to 8.0 weeks.
- The council has the second fastest average time scale for determining Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Consents at 7.4 weeks which is 0.3 of a week slower than the quickest local authority.
- The council is the 4th quickest local authority to issue a decision on applications subject to Local Review Body (LRB) procedure, with 60% of the original appointed person's decisions being upheld.
- The council has shown an increase in the percentage of all applications approved in 2014/15 from 89.6% in 2011/12, to 90.6% in 2013/14 and 93.8% in 2014/15.
- The council has increased the percentage of all applications delegated from 89.5% in 2013/14 to 93.9% in 2014/15.
- The council has reduced the time periods for determining local housing applications from 21.8 weeks to 19.0 weeks.
- The council has reduced the time periods for determining local non householder applications from 13.5 weeks to 11.9 weeks.
- The council has reduced the time periods for determining all local applications from 9.98 weeks to 8.8 weeks.
- The council has reduced the time periods for determining householder applications from 6.0 weeks to 5.0 weeks.
- 1.2.5 Planning fees received by West Lothian Council in 2014/15 have seen a 30% increase from 2013/14's £638,305 to £912,506. This is a 102% increase from the £450,685 received in 2012-2013.
- 1.2.6 Some £3.4m has been secured by the council through planning obligations entered into in 2014/15 for essential infrastructure, compared with £2.1m in the previous financial year.
- 1.2.7 Work continues with the completion of the *West Lothian Development Plan*. The *Main Issues Report* was subject to consultation in the autumn of 2014 and attracted around 250 representations that have been assessed and are being taken into account in the drafting of the *Proposed Plan*. The council is looking to approve the *Proposed Plan* for consultation in September 2015, with consultation taking place thereafter, leading to submission to the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals in early 2016 for their determination and approval thereafter.
- 1.2.7 During 2014 2015 there has been a continual increase in development on the ground in West Lothian. Planning permission has been issued for 984 new residential units. Work is continuing in the three core development areas at Winchburgh, Armadale and Calderwood where 150, 200 and 120 houses have been completed, compared with 51, 72 and 10 respectively in the previous year.
- 1.2.8 At Armadale CDA a new restaurant/public house complex has opened and pre-application discussions are taking place for the development of a major warehouse development; work has commenced on the construction of a new primary school.
- 1.2.9 At Winchburgh five housebuilders are now on site, ScotRail announced the opening of a new railway station in 2017. Following consent being granted for the first phase of the new Winchburgh town centre, comprising seven commercial units and a town square, construction is due to commence later in 2015. All the first three year requirements set out in the section 75 planning obligation have been met by the developers. The council's Public Arts service commissioned a project which is underway and it is a good example of joint working between the planning service, the public, the developer and the community.
- 1.2.10 At Heartlands, Whitburn, consent has been issued for a major incoming investment from Oil States plc and development is now nearing completion. This facility will provide some 100 jobs on the 10 ha site.
- 1.2.11 In 2014 a significant element of Planning Services' resources were taken up defending at appeal the council's development plan position on major housing proposals at Burghmuir and Clarendon, Linlithgow; Falside, Bathgate; Seafield Road, Blackburn; and Brotherton, Livingston. The council successfully defended its position at Burghmuir, Clarendon, Seafield and Falside, the latter case being decided by the Court of Session. The outcome of the Brotherton appeal is not known at the time of writing.



1.3 The Performance Markers Report

The following is a summary of the council's response to the Performance Markers Report.

Performance Marker 1

Statistics set out in section 1.2 and Part 5 'Official Statistics' illustrate the council's continuous reduction in average timescales for determining planning application.

Performance Marker 2

The council offers, in its pre-application discussions with applicants for major developments, the opportunity to enter into a processing agreement. This availability is now publicised on the council's website. Expressions of interest from developers to enter into a processing agreement continue to be limited despite the willingness and offers from the council to partake. The council continues to co-coordinate and track all applications in a 'Project Plan' which aids the improvement of service delivery, an example of which is set out in Annex (a). The council is currently agreeing a processing agreement with the developer for the redevelopment of the listed former Bangour Village Hospital.

Performance Marker 3

The council has recorded that 34% of planning applications received in 2014 were subject to pre-application discussions. The council strives to be proportionate in the amount of information requested and continues to limit such requests. Annex (b) is a schedule of negatively screened EIA 'Screening Requests' and exemplifies this. In 2014/15 the council received four traffic impact assessments compared with six in 2013 - 2014.

Performance Marker 4

In line with a service improvement commitment the council has seen a significant reduction in the time taken to finalise legal agreements; it is reducing the backlog of stalled negotiations and has introduced templates to ease the burden of drafting of legal agreements. Annex (c) is a schedule of outstanding legal agreements which shows the reduction since 2012/13.

Performance Marker 5

The council's enforcement charter has been reviewed and was published in September 2014 (Annex d).

Performance Marker 6

As set out in section 1.2 and Part 5'Official Statistics' the council continues to show a very significant improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators and is continuing to achieve the improvement commitments that were identified in the earlier PPF3. The steps taken to implement service commitments identified in the previous PPF3 are set out in Part 4 of this PPF.

Performance Marker 7

The Main Issues Report for the West Lothian Local Development Plan was published in August 2014 for consultation.

Consultation ended in October and a high level report on the consultation was considered by the D&T PDSP on 23 April (http://coins.westlothian.gov.uk/coins/submissiondocuments.asp?submissionid=26606).

All submissions (254) were made available for viewing on the council's Local Development Plan web page. It is anticipated that the *Proposed Plan* for the *West Lothian Local Development Plan* will be published during autumn 2015, subject to committee approval after the summer recess. A Development Plan Newsletter updating interested parties on progress was published (Annex e).

Performance Marker 8

Development Plan Scheme 7 (DPSNo.7) for the West Lothian Local Development Plan was approved by the Council Executive on 10 March 2015 and subsequently forwarded to Scottish Government.

It is anticipated that the LDP will be formally adopted late 2016/early 2017. This represents slippage from the previous timetable set out in DPSNo.6 and is attributable to the assessment of submissions received to the *Main Issues Report* taking longer than anticipated. The *Local Development Plan* is currently on course for adoption in 2016.

Performance Marker 9

The Main Issues Report for the West Lothian Local Development Plan was published in August 2014 for consultation following a series of member briefing sessions.

Member briefing sessions are ongoing with regard to preparation of the *Proposed Plan* stage for the *Local Development Plan* and commenced in June 2015.

Performance Marker 10

Key agencies and local members are in dialogue with the council to inform preparation of the *Proposed Plan* (Annex f). A further round of SG in relation to education infrastructure was prepared and consulted on during 2014 *e.g.* draft SG for contributions towards St Paul's Primary School, Deans Primary School and primary schools in Broxburn; wind energy and *Planning for Nature*. The *Planning for Nature* SG has been shortlisted for Quality Awards in Planning by the Scottish Government (Annex g).

Performance Marker 11

The council strives to be proportionate in the amount of information requested and continues to limit such requests as is exemplified in Annex (b). Work is in hand to prepare updated guidance on developer contributions.

Performance Marker 12

Case Studies are set out in the Annex to this PPF to continue to show corporate working across services.

Performance Marker 13

The council now regularly participates in meetings within its benchmarking family (Annex h). The development management manager was seconded to East Ayrshire Council to assist in the investigation of the problem encountered with opencast coal mining and has continued to represent Heads of Planning on the Coal Task Force. The council works closely with adjoining councils in matters relating to onshore wind and the Forth Replacement Crossing and its SESplan partners in the preparation of the *strategic development plan*.

Performance Marker 14

Further progress has been made is disposing of legacy cases as set out in Annex (i).

Performance Marker 15

The council publicises the requisite developer contributions in a clear and concise manner on its web site.



1.4 Planning Services: service delivery

- 1.4.1 All service teams in the service group have a role in increasing sustainable economic activity in West Lothian. This is delivered by the work of the Economic Development team and Planning Services are focused on creating a supportive environment for increasing economic output, whilst maintaining and regulating protection for customers and the environment.
- 1.4.2 The climate change activities of the service overarch the work of not just the service group but the council as a whole.
- 1.4.3 The activity budget information set out in the body of the *management plan* Annex (j) details the full range of activities in the service.
- 1.4.4 Key achievements of Planning Services in 2014/15 in the context of PPF4, include
- Continuing to secure significant levels of developer contributions to support infrastructure improvements;
- Completing consultation on the Main Issues Report as part of the preparation of the West Lothian Local Plan;
- Successful appeal outcomes at Burghmuir and Clarendon, Linlithgow, Falside, Bathgate and Seafield Road, Blackburn;
- Successful appeal outcome at Fauch Hill, Pentland Hills;
- Commencement of a planning obligations tracking program;
- Continued early determination of legacy cases;
- Rolled out LED streetlight replacements and progressed the council's Solar PV projects;
- Inter departmental team working on the delivery of 1000 social rented houses;
- Whitburn town centre charrette;
- Continued cooperation with Police Scotland on enforcement cases;
- Recasting of performance indicators with monthly trend chart commentaries;
- Enhanced procedures for complaints and FOI handling;
- Ongoing collaborative inter agency working on Network Rail improvements at Shotts Line and Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme;
- Good design on the ground at Wilkiestson special needs accommodation facility;
- Continued supportive working to facilitate integrated waste management at Levenseat, Fauldhouse;
- Review the transfer of first point of contact for all of Planning & Economic Development services to the Customer Service Centre;
- Progressing the Housing Recovery Action Plan with further year on year increases in house completions;
- Continued community council planning training;
- New householder design guidance published;
- Continued working relationship at the Heartlands regeneration scheme.

Part 1: National Headline Indicators

Key outcomes	2014-2015	2013-2014
Development Planning		
Age of local/strategic development plan(s) (full years): requirement: less than five years	six years and eight months	five years and eight months
Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme? (Y/N)	No	-
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year? (Y-earlier / Y-later / N)	Yes	-
Were development plan scheme engagement / consultation commitments met during the year? (Y/N)	Yes	-
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs		
Effective housing land: years supply		-
Effective housing land supply	ann avalamatam.	-
Housing approvals	see explanatory	-
Effective employment land supply	note 1	119.27 ha
Employment land take-up		11.5 ha
Development Management		
Project Planning		
Percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice	19.9%	34%
Number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	0	2
Percentage planned timescales met	n/a	0%
Decision-making		
Application approval rate	93.8%	90.6%
Delegation rate	93.9%	89.5%
Decision-making timescales		
Average number of weeks to decision:		
Major developments	48.2	102
Local developments (non-householder)	11.9	13.5
householder developments	5	6
Legacy cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	89	
Number remaining	92	
Enforcement		
Time since enforcement charter published/ reviewed (months): requirement: review every two years	10 months	three years
Number of breaches identified / resolved	269/270	269/270



Notes

- (1) The council is not currently in a position to supply the housing land supply calculations for 2014/15 as the required data is sourced from the Housing Land Audit (for 2014/15), which is still to be completed and agreed with Homes for Scotland. It is anticipated that the data will be available by mid September 2015 and figures can be forwarded at that time.
- (2) In line with *Performance Marker 1* the council has seen a continuing and significant improvement in decision making timescales, showing the average number of weeks to determine applications has reduced and, in addition, there has been an increase in the approval rate and the extent of delegated decisions, following a focused effort by the development management team.
- (3) The number of processing agreements remains low, reflecting the experience across Scotland, despite the council's willingness to adopt this approach if so requested by a developer.
- (4) Pre-application advice has been offered to 19% of applicants, due to the withdrawal of this service, because of necessary budget savings. While this has given rise to focussed complaints it is an inevitable consequence of the necessary budgetary savings and its replacement with an emphasis on channel shift and web based information takes place unless of a justifiable need. This was monitored during 2014/15
- (5) Although the adopted *local plan* is now more than five years old, the new *Local Development Plan* is progressing well and on target in relation to the most recent *Local Development Plan Scheme*.
- (6) The council is required annually to publish a *Development Plan Scheme* document (DPS) that sets out the programme for completing the LDP. The *Main Issues Report* was considered by the Council Executive on 19 June 2014. At that meeting it was agreed that the *Main Issues Report* would move forward to public consultation. Consultation commenced in August 2014 and ran for a period of eight weeks.

Part 2: Defining and measuring a high quality planning service

2.1 Open for Business

- 2.1.1 Economic development remains a key priority for the council. The principal focus of the work of the service is to promote economic growth while ensuring that development is delivered in compliance with the development plan and regulatory frameworks.
- 2.1.2 The council has shown an increase in its performance in the determination of planning applications lodged by SME's (local business and industry applications). The time to determine reduced from 8.6 weeks to 8.0 weeks, and from 15.6 to 13 for major business and industry cases.
- 2.1.3 In West Lothian economic conditions remain challenging, but good progress continues to be made with implementing the core development areas and strategic housing sites identified in the adopted *West Lothian Local Plan*. Overall the rate of house completions during the calendar year 2014 increased to 744 compared to 614 in the previous year. In 2011 that figure was 211. The council has the 7th highest number of housing completions in Scotland.
- 2.1.4 Growth in the housing and construction sector remains a key focus for the service. The council has identified additional funding to invest in the infrastructure required to support growth. However, while economic circumstances appear to be improving, investment still has to be balanced against risk, and managing risk will continue to be a core consideration. All parts of the service are committed to supporting existing businesses and potential investors and to minimise, as far as possible, the negative impacts created by difficulties in the wider economy. Regular meetings take place between planning staff and business advisers, and as a result, business advisers have a clear understanding of the requirements for planning permission, and are better able to advise their customers. Planning staff are, in addition, better informed about the service offered by business gateway staff.
- 2.1.5 The council continues to monitor and prioritise the determination of applications that assist with economic development, with a target of 80% of local applications being determined within two months. For the purposes of benchmarking, on the latest available figures at the time of writing, in 2014/15 the council determined an average of 81.7% of such applications within two months. This compares favourably with the Scottish average of 65.1%. In that year the average time taken to determine local business and industry applications in West Lothian decreased from 8.6 weeks to 8.0 weeks. Performance data over the last year shows the number of local applications submitted by SME's which were determined within the two month period is as follows:





- 2.1.6 The best performing month was November 2014 when 91.67% of such applications were determined within the target. Performance over the previous year has been variable, ranging from 22.2% in February 2014 to 91.67% achieved in November 2014.
- 2.1.7 The roll-out of large-scale projects, such as the CDAs and Heartlands, and potential inward investment proposals such as the proposed Lidl distribution centre at Armadale and a replacement meat processing facility following the closure of Vion at Broxburn has occurred in 2014/15. Regular progress and liaison meetings are held to ensure that communication is ongoing and to allow the developers to identify their priorities.
- 2.1.8 This includes, where appropriate, dissemination of information on developer contributions. These meetings also involve other council services, such as Transportation, to ensure a comprehensive response from the council. In the case of the meat processing facility the date of the committee was rearranged to accommodate critical timing for the prospective developer.
- 2.1.9 It is recognised that the council has a large number of developer contribution policies, which can. Where possible, contribution rates such as public art have been reduced. Proposals to amend education contributions to a sliding scale based on room numbers were not implemented following consultation with developers. However, exemptions have been introduced for properties with less than two habitable rooms.
- 2.1.10 Details of all developer contributions are available on the council's website. Furthermore, staff work hard with developers on projects of all scales to ensure a flexible approach to the provision of developer contributions which helps the viability of developments without compromising on council policy. An example of this type of work is shown in case study 1, Buchanan House, Livingston.
- 2.1.11 A positive, albeit modest, example of assisting employment growth is found in an enforcement case regarding a part change of use from a domestic house and garage to an office/operating centre for a building firm. The council after investigating an enforcement complaint granted a six month permission for the use, subject to tight controls over noise, operating hours and vehicle movements. When the owner informed enforcement staff that they were expanding planning services was able to direct them to Business Gateway, who helped them move to more appropriate premises in a nearby industrial estate. As a result a small local business was helped to grow while residential amenity was protected (case study 2).
- 2.1.12 Partnership working is central to the delivery of many of the outcomes supported by the Planning Service. These partnerships take a variety of forms, including statutory and non-statutory arrangements. Some operate within a more rigid framework, while others are more flexible and take different forms depending on the outcome which is to be achieved. The principal partnerships are described below.
- 2.1.13 SESplan is the strategic planning authority for Edinburgh and the South East of Scotland. It is a statutory partnership of six planning authorities. The partnership has responsibility for producing the *Strategic Development Plan* for the area. Key agencies including Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Transport Scotland and Historic Scotland will continue to play a key role in the determination of planning applications.



High quality development on the ground

- 2.2.1 In balancing the need for sustainable economic growth Planning Services has a threefold approach to the quality of development on the ground. Proactive enforcement is used to mitigate the harmful effects of unauthorised development, planning decisions include an emphasis on high quality design and pre-application discussions include a strong emphasis on quality of development, prior to the submission of an application.
- 2.2.2 Working with Police Scotland: enforcement staff have regular meetings with Police Intelligence, to share knowledge of common concerns. In such cases, we inform Police Scotland of any formal notices, and any contact. The council will continue to work with Police Scotland when dealing with complex planning enforcement cases. Case study 3 is an example of this.
- 2.2.3 Some 302 (40%) of householder applications have been subject to negotiated design improvements in 2014/15. This includes encouraging and implementing sustainable materials and increasing biodiversity and successfully amending applications to address objectors' concerns. This is illustrated in case study 4.
- 2.2.4 Planning Services works with Central Scotland Green Network Trust in the implementation of projects that enhance the landscape of West Lothian and provide outdoor access opportunities. In 2014/15 this included 22 projects across West Lothian
 - new woodland planted (ha) 0.75
 - Woodland brought under management (ha) 3.55
 - New Paths / Paths up-graded (m) 4,372
 - Greenspace created (ha) 3
 - Woodland maintained (ha) 115.72
 - Greenspace maintained (ha) 44
 - Path routes maintained (m) 1,1795

- 2.2.5 Other Environmental Projects in 2014/15 related to:
 - securing grant aid from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) from Green Stimulus Peatland Action Programme for peat restoration projects at Easter Inch Moss (£61k over 2 phases), between Blackburn and Seafield and at Black Moss at Armadale (£25k);
 - revising three geodiversity leaflets and confirming 50 geodiversity sites that represent the best in West Lothian's geological heritage;
 - piloting the use of SNH Integrated Habitat Network maps in an area north of Bangour General Hospital in the Bathgate Hills, as a prelude to potential future work should a Landscape Partnership be established. This is also related to Lothian & Fife Green Network Partnership's work with the council on implementing the Lothians & Fife Forest & Woodland Strategy (2012-17);
 - continued extensive partnership working to try and resolve the complex biodiversity issues associated with the Linlithgow Loch catchment;
 - As part of the Main Issues Report (MIR) process on the forthcoming West Lothian Local Development Plan (LDP), a Habitat Regulation Appraisal was undertaken where the implications from preferred options on nature conservation sites protected by European legislation were considered;
 - Within the MIR, a background Technical Paper was produced relating to green networks. Among the various types on green networks, there are various networks identified that can contribute to improved biodiversity;
 - Supplementary Guidance: Planning for Nature Development Management & Wildlife was drafted via consultants paid for by SNH and consulted upon in 2014 and adopted in spring 2015. It has been short-listed for a Scottish Government Quality Awards in Planning 2015.
- 2.2.6 In 2014 2015 the council has seen a number of large scale developments continue on site, including several housing developments in the CDAs. These have been made possible by the council's 'open for business' approach but also reflect our commitment to securing high quality development. Case study 5 illustrates ongoing delivery of the Winchburgh CDA.
- 2.2.7 The council is committed to building 1000 houses by April 2017. This is being achieved by the development of individual sites within each of the council's wards. In order to assist the interface between housebuilding and planning regulation key working groups are attended by development management officers throughout the process. Case study 6 is an example of change brought about to the design of schemes as a consequence of the involvement of development management. Regular liaison continued throughout 2014/15 between Development Management, Transportation and Housing colleagues to ensure that the design of these new schemes reflects best practice in terms of residential design.
- 2.2.8 Again, to improve the quality of the West Lothian environment, the council is continuing to implement a sustained approach to unauthorised roadside advertising and poor quality urban realm spaces across West Lothian.
- 2.2.9 Progress meetings and liaison committees have also proved useful in ensuring high quality development on the ground, for example allowing discussions over compliance with conditions and agreeing finishing materials and landscaping proposals, which can make a significant difference to the quality of a finished development.
- 2.2.10 The council has continued to work closely with NHS Lothian and key agencies to promote the redevelopment of the Bangour Village Hospital without compromising the site's architectural and historic value.
- 2.2.10 In its programme of bi-monthly community council training, design has played a key role in order that local representatives can be more focussed on their responses to key planning applications.



Certainty

- 2.3.1 The *Main Issues Report* (MIR) for the *West Lothian Local Development Plan* (LDP) was published in August 2014 for consultation following a series of member briefing sessions. The council received 250 representations to the MIR. Member briefing sessions are ongoing with regard to preparation of the *Proposed Plan* stage for the *Local Development Plan* and commenced in June 2015. It is anticipated that the *Proposed Plan* will be published for consultation in the autumn of 2015, subject to the Council Executive approving this stage in the process for consultation.
- 2.3.2 The council continues to be proportionate and reasonable in requests for information. The council has published an SG on processing and determining planning applications, which is available on the website.
- 2.3.3 The number of planning applications which were made invalid on receipt has reduced from 37.3% in 2013/14 to 19% in 2014/15, which can be partly attributed to the SG and clearer advice to applicants.
- 2.3.4 The council continues to be reasonable in response to EIA screening and scoping requests. While not diminishing the importance of environmental sensitivities, many screening requests were negatively screened last year, the majority of which were for wind turbines. (Annex b)
- 2.3.5 Last year's PPF recognised that the percentage of applications which were subject to pre-application advice was low and that more needed to be done to promote this service. Analysis of applications during 2014/15 shows that 19.9% of applications were subject to pre-application advice, which is a reduction over the previous year. However, this is due in no small part to the council's decision that a pre-application advice service cannot be resourced from April 2014 and as such this service is not being actively promoted.
- 2.3.6 A standard template for processing agreements was introduced last year and two applications which were determined in 2013/14 were subject to a processing agreement. It is recognised that this figure is low. Nevertheless, if so requested by a developer the council would be committed to entering into a processing agreement; thus far the uptake has been slow by applicants. Despite the low uptake by applicants the council's project plan approach (Annex a) contributes to improved performance. To simplify the process and to reduce staff time, the new plan is available for all planning applications. It will set out the key dates for the processing of each application and is currently being trialled for all major applications, including approval of matters specified in conditions where those applications relate to major developments.
- 2.3.7 New draft interim Supplementary Guidance (SG) on wind energy developments (Annex I) was prepared by the council and for consultation. The SG sets out the council's policy approach to wind energy proposals reflecting SPP requirements providing guidance to the development industry and assisting in the determination of planning applications. Linked to the development plan, consultation was also undertaken on a replacement West Calder High School leading to the identification of a new site for the school.

- 2.3.8 New supplementary guidance was approved for developer contributions towards the A71. The contributions are required to assist in the delivery of the development plan strategy. The SG replaced an earlier version and now specifically targets developer contributions to deliver and to mitigate the impacts on the A71 in West Lothian. This is where the greatest impact arising from development will be and delivery of these schemes has the greatest benefit in influencing future modal share thus reducing car based transport along the A71 and into Edinburgh itself. Contribution rates per house for proposed bus priority measures, costed at £3,710,000, are either £208.54 per unit or £350.72 per unit depending on the location of the development.
- 2.3.9 In addition, contributions are required towards shared infrastructure costs associated with the Calderwood Core Development Area (CDA) which include signalisation of junctions along the road network, road re-alignment and a bypass. Stirling Developments Ltd, the principal developer, is to forward fund and construct the shared infrastructure. However, contributions will be secured from other developers in the Calderwood CDA area and repaid to Stirling Developments Ltd by the council upon completion of the infrastructure.
- 2.3.10 The total cost of these requirements is estimated at £2.36 million, resulting in a developer contribution per residential unit of £929.
- 2.3.11 Supplementary Guidance for developer contributions towards public art and travel plan co-ordinator were updated in January 2014. A temporary reduction in the level of developer contributions towards public art was extended to 31 March 2015. Developer contributions towards travel plan co-ordinator have now ceased.
- 2.3.12 The provision of a multi-use games area at Broxburn Primary School is addressed in the first SG. These works would enable the capacity of the existing school to be increased by 47 places and would support the development of up to 149 new houses within the catchment area in the short to medium term. A longer term proposition to construct a new non-denominational primary school has also been identified. Developer contributions have been provisionally costed at £6,009 per home. The second SG considers an extension to St Nicholas Primary School (Broxburn).
- 2.3.13 The second SG considers an extension to St Nicholas Primary School (Broxburn) to provide a further 75 places and potentially allows for 800 new houses to come forward. The expected contribution rate is £2,442 per unit.
- 2.3.14 The remaining SGs relate to Pumpherston & Uphall Station Primary School and St Pauls' Primary School, East Calder. In both cases, significant extensions are required but would then be able to support a proportionately larger numbers of new houses. The developer contributions are £3,873 for houses built in the school catchment area of Pumpherston & Uphall Station Primary School and £1,419 for St Paul's.
- 2.3.15 The council's scheme of delegation allows members to call in certain planning applications for the decision to be made by the Development Management Committee. In 2013/14, seven out of 63 committee decisions (11%) were made contrary to officer recommendation compared with 8 out of 89 (9%) in 2012-2013. In 2014 2015 93.9% of decisions were delegated and 93.8% of applications were approved. This is an improvement over the previous year as set out in the National Headline Indicators.
- 2.3.16 Development management continues to promote positive support for processing agreements although the uptake from applicants is noticeably low. Information of processing agreements, including an agreement template, is available on the council's website.
- 2.3.17 The LDP is a major undertaking and will continue to be the most significant element of Development Planning's workload for at least the next 18 months. Its governance is being project managed by a designated senior officer and a bespoke work plan has been established which is regularly updated and circulated. Work packages are also frequently prepared and issued to members of the team which clearly set out the task in hand, advise on the processes to be followed, and confirm the expected timetable for completion.
- 2.3.18 A clear reporting structure for the LDP has been established. A formal steering group convenes on a weekly basis with sub-groups relating to transport and affordable housing also meeting (weekly in the case of transport and fortnightly for affordable housing). Action notes of the meetings are produced, together with 'highlights' and 'exceptions' reports which give added prominence to key milestones and critical issues. A series of less formal 'catch up' meetings are also organised at regular intervals as means of informing and supporting team members.



Communications, engagement and customer service

- 2.4.1 Throughout 2014/15 the council made use of a variety of methods for consulting with service users and the wider community, both in relation to Development Management and Development Plans.
- 2.4.2 Preparation of the new LDP has necessitated the adoption of an extensive and varied communications and consultation programme. This has been followed up with a number of general and targeted initiatives to engage with consultees, stakeholders and the public at large and included traditional consultation methods (press notices, written and e-mail communications and public briefings).
- 2.4.3 Additionally the council has made use of social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) to try and reach new audiences. This process is continuous and ongoing.
- 2.4.4 Community Liaison Groups continue to provide a useful tool for engaging with the public, particularly in relation to contentious applications. Such groups take place at each of the CDAs, at Heartlands and Rusha opencast mine. Further examples or the range of issues addressed are seen in Annex I.
- 2.4.5 Planning Services has also been regularly represented at community council meetings and other public meetings throughout the year at Fauldhouse, Whitburn, Linlithgow, Bathgate, Broxburn, Pumpherston and Armadale. Regular attendance at these meetings is welcomed by communities and is a very useful two way process.
- 2.4.6 Community Council training has taken place on a quarterly basis during 2014/15 and is attended by over 60% of the community councils in the area.
- 2.4.7 The service carries out an annual customer survey; during 2014-15 four responses were received from 75 surveys which were sent out, a return rate of 0.5%. As a result of this low level of feedback it has not been possible to draw up a customer service action plan for 2014/15. The survey will be repeated in 2015/16, and the issue of increasing feedback will be considered. The service will make whatever changes it can to the survey itself and the distribution of survey forms, to ensure that sufficient returns are received to give meaningful feedback. Should this be successful a customer service action plan for 2015/16 will be prepared.

- 2.4.8 One of the areas of criticism is that it is difficult for people to contact the service by telephone. As a result of the council's Channel Shift, the council's website has been substantially improved to give customers easier access to Development Management information. As part of this change, the decision was taken to transfer general calls to the customer advice centre, so that calls are handled and responded to in line with the council service standards.
- 2.4.9 Training and support has been provided to the staff handling the calls and the impact on customers will be monitored and reported in next year's report.
- 2.4.10 In tandem the council has updated its planning website to allow stakeholders easier access to key information.
- 2.4.11 The council operates a corporate complaints procedure. In 2014-2015 thirty eight (38) complaints about the planning service were received, compared to 25 in the previous year. Four of these complaints were upheld and additional four were partially upheld. The majority of these complaints relate to the removal of duty cover and the difficulties customers faced in contacting a planning officer
- 2.4.12 Planning & Economic Development have received 181 requests under Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 compared with 136 in 2013-14; 95.03% were responded to within 20 working days, an improvement over the 84.56% in the previous year.
- 2.4.13 The Ombudsman has been contacted on three occasions in 2014/15 but none of these complaints has been upheld against the council.
- 2.4.14 The service continues to engage customers and potential customers in the delivery and re-design of services to ensure that they are accessible and focused on their needs and preferences and the following is a schedule of regular customer consultation carried out by the service:

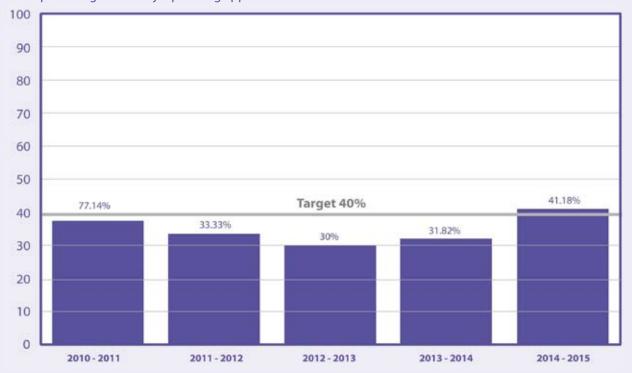
Customer Consultation Schedule						
Customer Group	Survey Method	Frequency	Responsible Officer	Feedback Method		
Development Planning Customers	Online and Newsletter	Annually, linked to development plan timetable.	Development Planning Manager	Development Plan		
	Online, in writing, ad hoc meetings, public meetings, HMI review	As required per consultation	Education Planning Officer	Education Executive		
Applicants and agents – Development Management	Focus group	Bi-annually	Development Management Manager	Minutes and follow up meeting		
Applicants and agents – Development Management	Questionnaires	Annually	Development Management Manager	Service Improvement Plan as part of the Planning Performance Framework		
	Focus group	Biennial	Building Standards Manager	Minutes and follow up meeting		
	Questionnaires	Annually	Building Standards Manager	Balanced Scorecard		

2.4.15 To facilitate greater community involvement in place making a town centre charette for Whitburn was organised, details of which are set out in case study (8).

Efficient and effective decision-making

- 2.5.1 In line with *Performance Marker 1* the council continues to demonstrate an improvement across the performance indicators in 2014/15. Improvement highlights are set out in para. 1.24. Specifically:
- Local business and industry applications reduced from 8.4 weeks to 8.0 weeks
- Local non householder applications reduced from 13.5 weeks to 11.9 weeks
- All local applications reduced from 9.98 weeks to 8.8 weeks
- Local housing applications reduced from 21.8 weeks to 19.0 weeks
- Major housing applications reduced from 111.1 weeks to 41.5 weeks
- Legal agreements reduced from 52.2 weeks to 45.1 weeks.
- 2.5.2 The average number of weeks to process applications has reduced in all categories, but most significantly on local non-householder applications where it has reduced from 13.5 weeks to 11.9 weeks.
- 2.5.3 For the determination of major applications, including those for housing, the council's performance in the determination of such applications within the statutory period 2014/15 was 48.2% (of 13 applications determined), a significant improvement over the previous year when 31.82% (of 22 applications determined) were determined within the statutory period. Performance is above the target of 40% for the first time in the past five years. Major applications that exceeded the statutory period in 2014/15 included further proposals for opencast coal mining at Rusha Farm, housing at Southdale, Armadale; Kirkhill, Broxburn, and restoration of a former landfill site at Winchburgh, all of which required amendments to make the proposals acceptable in planning terms or required a legal agreement.
- 2.5.4 Performance has varied over the past five years from 30.0% in 2012/13 to 41.18 % in 2014/15. The complexity and variability of the major applications makes a year on year assessment of performance difficult to draw any conclusions from.

Annual percentage of all major planning applications determined in four months



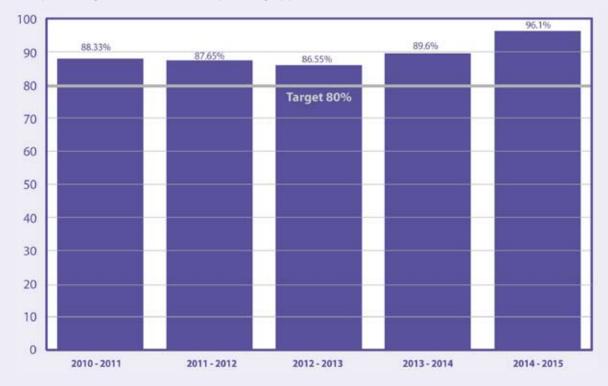
2.5.5 For the purposes of benchmarking, and from the most recent figures available in the council's latest *Planning Performance Framework* submission for 2013/14, in a national context West Lothian Council has the 8th highest number of major planning applications in Scotland and 3rd highest proportion in Scotland of all major planning applications when measured against the total number of applications received. National benchmarking figures for 2014/15 are not available.

- 2.5.6 In respect of householder applications, the council's performance in 2014/15 was 96.1% was an improvement on the previous year's performance of 89.6% and was the best achieved in the last five year period. Performance has been consistently above the statutory target of 80% for the past five years. For benchmarking purposes, and from the most recent figures available in the council's latest *Planning Performance Framework* (PPF) submission for 2013/14, West Lothian Council is the 3rd equal best performing authority of all 32 authorities in the average time taken to determine householder applications. In a national context the council's performance for this indicator is above the Scottish average of 86.4% for 2013 -2014. Figures for 2014/15, in a national context, are not yet published.
- 2.5.7 The annual performance data for the previous five years shows the number of all householder applications determined in two months, out of the total number of all such applications, is as follows:

2014/15: 245 out of 255 2013/14: 267 out of 298 2010/11: 327 out of 370

2012/13: 238 out of 275

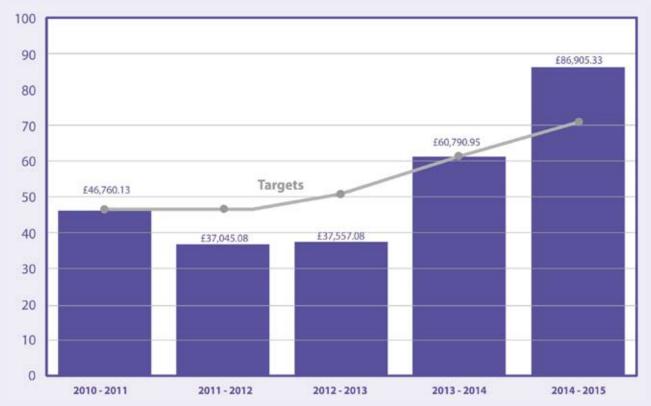
Annual percentage of all householder planning applications determined within two months



- 2.5.8 A measure of the average annual fee income received by each planning officer in development management from planning applications submitted in each financial year is a barometer of the complexity of work received by the council. The average fee per officer is calculated by dividing the planning application fee income by the number of full time equivalent officers. This is one of the measures that are used to balance the workload of officers in the development management service.
- 2.5.9 The chart shows that the annual average fee received for each development management officer in 2014/15 was the highest in the last four reported years, continuing a trend. This is due to the nature of development pressures which are reflected in the types of planning applications submitted in West Lothian and this has in turn resulted in the annual average planning application fees per officer increasing. In 2012/13 the annual average fee for each officer was £37,557.08 and this increased to £60,790.95 in 2013/14, and £91,250 in 2014/15.

2.5.10 This represents an increase of 142% in annual average fees per officer, between 2012/13 and 2014/15. It reflects the fact that development management is receiving more complex applications year on year.





- 2.5.11 The council is particularly mindful of its role in supporting the recovery of housebuilding. In respect of major housing applications there has been a reduction from 111.1 weeks to 41.5 weeks for the determination of this category of application. In terms of local housing applications there continues to be a decrease in the number of weeks in relation to those which exceeded the two month target, reducing from an average of 38.1 weeks to 36 weeks. Both figures confirm that project management has aided performance management.
- 2.512 Furthermore 63% of local housing applications were determined within two months, an improvement from 53.8% the previous year.
- 2.5.13 With regards to major applications, the average number of weeks to a decision has improved from 102.1, in 2013-2014 to 48.2 in 2014 -2015.
- 2.5.14 In line with *Performance Marker 14* the number of legacy cases still to be determined has been reduced but still requires attention and the Development Management team continues to work on concluding such cases. The second point is that post 2009 applications are being determined, on average, much quicker which indicates more efficient decision making procedures.
- 2.5.10 The council's approval rate has increased from 90.6% to 93.8%.
- 2.5.11 The percentage of decisions upheld by the Local Review Body has reduced from 75% to 60% with 15 cases being subject to a review, compared with 16 in the previous year. However, the percentage of decisions upheld on appeal has increased from 26.3% to 37.5% in 2014- 2015, there were 11 less appeals made to Scottish Ministers against council's decisions in that year.
- 2.5.12 The rate of delegation has increased from 89.5% to 93.9%. At present the council operates a delegated list system, which can result in delays to the processing of an application. This will be subject to review in 2015/16.

- 2.5.13 West Lothian Council has long held a culture of continuous improvement, striving for excellence in customer service and encouraging staff to be involved in finding new and efficient ways to provide the service. This is evidence in Chartermark, Investors in People and the council's own West Lothian Assessment Model. (Annex m)
- 2.5.14 West Lothian Council has corporately put the delivery of excellent services at the heart of all its endeavours and activity. The 'Improvement Strategy' underpins the council's approach to continuous improvement to raise the quality of service provision.
- 2.5.15 It aims to deliver high-performing services that meet customers' needs and also recognises the challenge services face to balance customer-focused improvements with value for money, using quality and performance tools to drive positive change in services over the currency of the strategy.
- 2.5.16 Initially, each service sets their own improvement agenda, so long as there is compliance with the corporate requirements for quality and performance. In year one of their improvement cycle each service completed a facilitated self-assessment using the West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM) and attended the WLAM Review Panel. The panel considered the output from the assessment process and identified the appropriate cycle the service was to adopt. Development Planning (together with Development Management) is part of Planning & Economic Development Services and was assigned Cycle B status.
- 2.5.17 This implied that it was a high performing service with a robust performance management structure and a 'light touch' approach based on self-assessment was agreed with scrutiny limited to performance monitoring using COVALENT, the council's performance management system. It ensures that all performance indicators, actions and risks are developed to a consistent standard and up-to-date information about them is accessible.
- 2.5.18 The Planning & Economic Development Management Plan (2014-2015) (Annex k) contains a Calendar of Improvement and Efficiency Activity for Planning Services as a whole, but this can be disaggregated. The purpose of the management plan is to outline the specific activities and actions that the service intends to carry out through the year. It sets out activities and related performance measures.
- 2.5.19 In planning services staff are encourage to bring forward ideas for service improvements throughout the year and matters are often brought to the weekly team meetings. Officers are involved in discussing and writing the Customer Service action plan in response to the annual customer survey. Officers have also been involved in responding to the feedback from last year's *Planning Performance Framework* and in compiling this year's report.
- 2.5.20 In the last 12 months staff from Development Management have been involved in benchmarking with other local authorities, particularly with other authorities in Group 3,in our benchmarking family, as set up by HOPS and the Improvement Service. This has largely focussed on key performance indicators and staff ratios, in light of the feedback from last year's report. As set out above, further benchmarking will be carried out in relation to appeal decisions and the scheme of delegation.
- 2.5.21 The council's development management manager continues to chair the Development Management subcommittee of Heads of Planning Scotland and shares knowledge in particular with other councils on mining and renewable energy matters. Other members of development management have been closely involved with Fife and the City of Edinburgh Council over the Forth Replacement Crossing; with Pentland Hills Regional Park, South Lanarkshire and North Lanarkshire on cross border interest relating to windfarms; Development Planning staff have specific and key responsibilities for engaging with SESplan, the strategic planning authority for South East Scotland.
- 2.5.21 To aid performance management, a review of the council's performance indicators has been carried out: case study 7 illustrates this.



Ensuring structures and processes are proportionate

- 2.6.1 The management structure of the Planning Services has been reviewed in order to achieve £172,000 of budget savings.
- 2.6.2 The Development Planning Manager's post was vacated in December 2013. A senior officer has been 'acting up' in the interim but the creation of a new, enhanced post with additional responsibilities is currently being advertised.
- 2.6.3 The restructuring of development management has led to the creation of two principal planner posts, each managing an area based team. The current senior's post continues to oversee householder and enforcement cases.
- 2.6.4 Development Management have a regular weekly team meeting to discuss internal management tissues, agenda setting, cases and professional development. Development Planning has reinstated its programme of monthly team meetings.
- 2.6.5 A number of individual officers and small groups of officers within Planning Services report direct to the Head of Planning and Economic Development rather than through a service manager. The proposed structure redirects these reports to the Development Planning Manager. In particular, the Education Planning team and the environment grouping which covers the individual functions of environmental planning, access, contaminated land and climate change / carbon management, together with the existing development planning team will report to a single service manager. The group will be led by a new post to be called the Development Planning and Environment Manager.
- 2.6.6 Some of the managerial and co-ordination roles previously performed by the Planning Services Manager will be undertaken by the three service managers in Planning Services under the revised structure. This will place additional duties on service managers, but additional support will be provided through increased delegation to the direct reports for each service manager.
- 2.6.7 The three service managers in the planning services group are standardised at Band L. The three service managers (covering Building Standards, Development Management and Development Planning) in are part of the P&ED Management Team.
- 2.6.8 In June 2015 the council carried out an independent review of the planning service and will access its implications and implement its findings where necessary in 2015 2016.

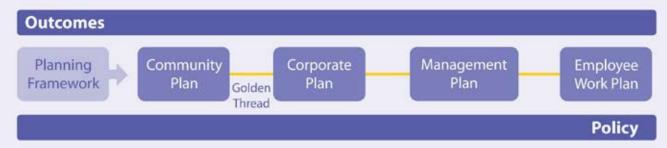


Financial management and local governance

- 2.7.1 In 2014 2015 the financial settlements that local government received continued to be very challenging and Planning Services has not been exempt from the consequences. Budgets have been capped and finances are having to be managed. Nevertheless fees received by West Lothian Council in 2014/2015 have seen a 30% increase from £638,305 to £912,506. This is a 102% increase from the £450,685 received in 2012-2013.
- 2.7.2 In September 2014 the council, along with all other local authorities took part in the Sottish Government's 'Costing the Planning Service' project. From an analysis of the results the following conclusions can be drawn.
- 2.7.3 Of the 30 authorities which took part in the CTPS exercise, the results show that the average cost per application based on the total number of applications received against the total cost of the development management service (excluding trading income) lies between £1,300 and £1,400. West Lothian's cost per application lies a little below this national average where the cost to process applications ranges from approximately £600 to around £2,400. This places West Lothian mid table and operating at a slightly more cost effective level than the Scottish average.
- 2.7.4 In respect of Development Management alone, the fee income covers around 59% of the service cost where only four other authorities better this level of cost recovery. The national average of fee income as a percentage of total planning service costs is 26.5%. West Lothian's planning fee incomes covers some 36% of the planning service (including policy). 11 other authorities cover more than the national average percentage of service costs with West Lothian being 6th from the top. This is likely to be due to various factors such as the scale of fees received coupled with staffing levels and the level of efficiency which the service in West Lothian operates at compared with other authorities
- 2.7.5 Where fee income as a percentage of application costs are concerned, West Lothian covers around 95% of these costs. The national average is 63.1% and West Lothian is 4th from the top in respect of this comparison.
- 2.7.6 The cost for processing a householder planning application on average in Scotland is a little over £150 with the planning application fee being £202. In West Lothian, the cost of processing a householder application is just under £50. This demonstrates the staff cost to fee income ratio and the efficiency of the householder application officer is extremely high. Only Moray Council manages to process householder applications at a lower cost than West Lothian.

Culture of continuous improvement

- 2.8.1 West Lothian Council has put the delivery of excellent services to the local community at the heart of its activity. From the development of long-term strategies and plans to daily tasks we are building services and a dedicated workforce that is committed to the population of West Lothian. As the council's Planning Service looks to the future, we must consider the next steps we will take on the Excellence journey. Recognition of past and present success has established with our customers, partners and stakeholders an expectation that the Service will continue to realise improvement and innovation. This is evidence in Chartermark, Investors in People and the council's own West Lothian Assessment Model. (Annex m)
- 2.8.2 Through annual management planning, the Planning Service aligns priorities of the council and Community Planning Partners with service activities and service level targets. This is known a identifying the 'golden thread' between outcomes and the delivery of performance focused, effective and efficient services and also helps to ensure that there is good governance of service and clear accountability.



2.8.3 Continuous improvement in Planning Services has been, and will continue to be underpinned by five over-arching thematic activities:

Planning:	Planning Services follows a framework that identifies key strategic outcomes, the links to services and the activities and resources that will deliver them. Management information from performance and improvement processes will inform this process.
External Assessment:	Planning Services is subject to external scrutiny, the recommendations of which will inform service planning and improvement.
Consultation and Engagement:	the Service engages customers, staff, partners and stakeholders to identify service improvements.
Self-Assessment:	the Service undertakes self-assessment to identify service improvements and improve performance.
Performance Management:	the Service follows a framework for managing performance and this provides vital management information that is used in service planning and improvement and as evidence of impact in external and internal assessment



- 2.8.4 This is evidenced in WLAM Review Panel Feedback and Compliance Audit Feedback (Annex n)
- 2.8.5 West Lothian Council's Planning Service is a high performing service with a robust performance management structure, and a 'light touch' approach based on self-assessment was agreed with scrutiny limited to performance monitoring using COVALENT, the Council's performance management system. It ensures that all performance indicators, actions and risks are developed to a consistent standard and upto-date information about them is accessible. Monthly Performance Review & Monitoring Meetings take place with the Head of Service and Performance Officer and Performance is a standing item at Team Meetings.
- 2.8.6 The Planning & Economic Development Service Management Plan (2014-2015) (Annex j) contains a 'Calendar of Improvement' and 'Efficiency Activity' for Planning Services as a whole, but this can be disaggregated. The purpose of the management plan is to outline the specific activities and actions that the service intends to carry out through the year. It sets out activities and related performance measures.
- 2.8.7 In Planning Services staff are encouraged to bring forward ideas for service improvements throughout the year and matters are often brought to the weekly team meetings. Officers are involved in discussing and writing the Customer Service action plan in response to the annual customer survey. Officers have also been involved in responding to the feedback from last year's Planning Performance Framework and in compiling this year's report. Moreover, in February 2015 Planning Services staff attended a 'Service Planning Development Day' which aimed to focus on what the service does well, what the service does poorly, what the service should start doing and what the service should stop doing. As an Outcome of this session an Action Plan was created identifying areas for improvement. By using different improvement tools and techniques the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery will be evaluated.
- 2.8.8 In 2014-2015 staff from Development Management continue to be involved in benchmarking with other local authorities in the benchmarking family as set up by HOPS and the Improvement Service. This has largely focussed on key performance indicators and staff ratios, in light of the feedback from last year's report.
- 2.8.9 The council's development management manager continues to chair the Development Management subcommittee of Heads of Planning Scotland and shares knowledge in particular with other councils on development management practice. Other members of development management have been closely involved with Fife and the City of Edinburgh Council over the Forth Replacement Crossing; with Pentland Hills Regional Park, South Lanarkshire and North Lanarkshire on cross border interest relating to windfarms; Development Planning staff continue to play a key role in SESplan.

Part 3: Supporting evidence and case studies

List of Annexes

- (a) Project Plans
- (b) Negative EIA screening
- (c) Outstanding legal agreements
- (d) Enforcement charter
- (e) Development Plan Newsletter
- (f) Dialogue with Key Agencies and local members
- (g) SG Planning for Nature
- (h) Benchmarking Family minutes
- (i) Legacy cases
- (j) Planning and Economic Development Management Plan
- (k) SG Wind Energy
- (I) Liason Groups Minutes
- (m) Chartermark, Investors in People and WLAM accreditation
- (n) WLAM Review Panel and Compliance Audit Feedback

List of Case Studies

- (1) Buchannan House, Livingston
- (2) Positive Enforcement: small business/residential amenity case
- (3) Joint working with Police Scotland
- (4) Householder Design Improvements
- (5) Winchburgh delivery
- (6) Design changes to council house building programme
- (7) Performance Management: Review of Performance Indicators
- (8) Whitburn charette

This information is enclosed in the folder accompanying this report.

Part 4: Service improvements 2015-16

In the coming year we will:

- Complete the implementation of the restructuring of Development Management and Development Planning
- Monitor the impacts of transferring calls to the customer service centre and withdrawing from pre-application advice
- Increase the use of project plans for major and local applications
- Review the scheme of delegation for decision making in relation to local and major applications.
- Undertake analysis of appeal decisions where the reporter has allowed the appeal
- Continue the preparation of the local development plan
- Monitor the requirements, collection, trigger points, payment collection and expenditure on planning obligations
- Review the scheme of delegation and the remit of the development management committee and other recommendations in the review of the planning service.
- Dispose of legacy cases

Part 5: Official statistics

A: Decision-making timescales

	Total number of	Average timescale (weeks)		
Category	decisions 2014-2015	2014-2015	2013-2014	
Major developments	13	48.2	102.1	
Local developments (non-householder)	316	11.9	13.5	
Local: less than two months	73.4%	6.6	7.0	
Local: more than two months	26.6%	26.7	26.2	
Householder developments	256	5	6.0	
Local: less than two months	96.1%	4.7	4.5	
Local: more than two months	3.9%	183	18.8	
Housing developments				
Major	4	41.5	111.1	
Local housing developments	52	27.3	21.8	
Local: less than two months	63.5%	7.0	7.3	
Local: more than two months	36.5%	62.5	38.1	
Business and industry				
Major	4	13	15.6	
Local business and industry	60	8.0	8.6	
Local: less than two months	81.7%	6.8	7.2	
Local: more than two months	18.3%	13.6	12.9	
EIA developments	0	N/A	243	
Other consents*	104	7.1	9.7	
Planning/legal agreements**	21	63.1	98.6	
Major: average time	3	48.4	-	
Local: average time	18	65.6	-	
Local reviews	15	7	6.7	

^{*} 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.

B: Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

		Original decision upheld			
Туре	Total number of decisions	2014-2015		2013-2014	
	uecisions	No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	16	12	75	6	50
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	19	5	26.3	9	40.9

^{**} 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

C: Enforcement activity

	2014-2015	2013-2014
Cases taken up	269	111
Cases resolved	270	44
Notices served***	65	26
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	1	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.

Part 6: Workforce and financial information

The information requested in this section is an integral part of providing the context for the information in parts 1-5. Staffing information should be a snapshot of the position on 31 March. Financial information should relate to the full financial year.

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

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

		DM	DP	Enforcement	Other
Managers	No. Posts	1	-		
	Vacant	-	1		
Main grade posts	No. Posts	4	3.6		0
	Vacant				
Technician	No. Posts	3.92	5.5	1	
	Vacant	-	-		
Office Support/Clerical	No. Posts	3			
	Vacant				
TOTAL		11.92	10.1	1	0

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

Staff age profile	Number		
Under 30	4		
30-39	5		
40-49	6		
50 and over	8		

Committee and site visits*	Number per year		
Full council (Planning) meetings	4		
Development Management committees	10		
Area committees (where relevant)	0		
Committee site visits	40		
LRB**	10		
LRB site visits	10		

Notes:

- * References to committees also include National Park Authority Boards. Number of site visits is those cases where visits were carried out by committees/boards.
- ** This relates to the number of meetings of the LRB. The number of applications going to LRB are reported elsewhere.

	Total Budget	Costs		Income***	Total
		Direct*	Indirect**		
Development Management	-144,559	438,520	122,358	-930,651	-369,774
Development Planning	1,120,705	380,167	790,873	-55,401	1,115,630
Enforcement	21,273	21,404	0	0	21,404
Other	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1,006,420	840,091	913,231	-986,052	767,270

Notes:

- Direct staff costs covers gross par (including overtime, national insurance and superannuation contribution). The appropriate proportion of the direct cost of any staff member within the planning authority spending 30% of more of their time on planning should be included in costs, irrespective of what department they are allocated to (for example, legal advice, administration, typing). Exclude staff spending less that 30% of their time on planning.
- ** Indirect costs include all other costs attributable to the planning service. Examples (not exhaustive) include accommodation, IT, stationery, office equipment, telephone charges, printing, advertising, travel & subsistence, apportionment of support service costs.
- *** Include fees from planning applications and deemed applications, and recharges for advertising costs etc. Exclude income from property and planning searches.