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# **FOREWORD**

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the Planning Performance Framework (PPF) for Aberdeen City Council's Strategic Place Planning Service. In last year's PPF I reflected 'on a year like no other' and sadly, since then, circumstances have not greatly improved, though this has not detracted from our ability to deliver a high-quality planning service for the public and stakeholders.

I want to express my heart-felt thanks to all colleagues who have and continue to maintain the diverse threads of our planning service. Their unfaltering agility in balancing the most challenging of circumstances with exemplary support to our development partners and colleagues and a 'do what you can when you can' approach has shown tremendous resilience in balancing a world akin to living in the office.

Aberdeen enjoys the opportunity the PPF gives us to formally record and reflect on the processes and outcomes of high quality placemaking within our framework of statutory duties, and to learn how all participating Local Authorities are performing. Good planning has, however, to be more than a procedural function for statutory determination, and in Aberdeen we are lucky to have attracted and retained a diversity of teams and talent across the service to be inclusive, give added value and seek best practice in delivery with the passion and openness we have.

In the years ahead I am especially keen that we promote greater appreciation and celebrate local and regional distinctiveness through our sustained vision of high quality placemaking. Whether this be through the place specific processes, policies and guidance that we take forward in the proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan; the support of investment in time and capital to have places that meet everyone's needs; or the importance of strengthening an Aberdeen 'look' or a way of doing business that remains clear, consistent and inclusive.

Quality places are only created with collaborative team players with the necessary qualities and skills and who are enabled with opportunities to influence, lead and achieve. Looking to the future we need to be vigilant in continuing to attract and retain talent with a service provision which reflects the city demographic and that we continue to foster the culture for our people to grow, achieve and support the city to be a place where all people can prosper.

This year's PPF report provides a clear summary of achievement and demonstrates the diverse talent and resilience sustained to support Aberdeen to grow in what are truly remarkable times.

M Ball

Councillor Marie Boulton Convenor, Planning Development Management Committee

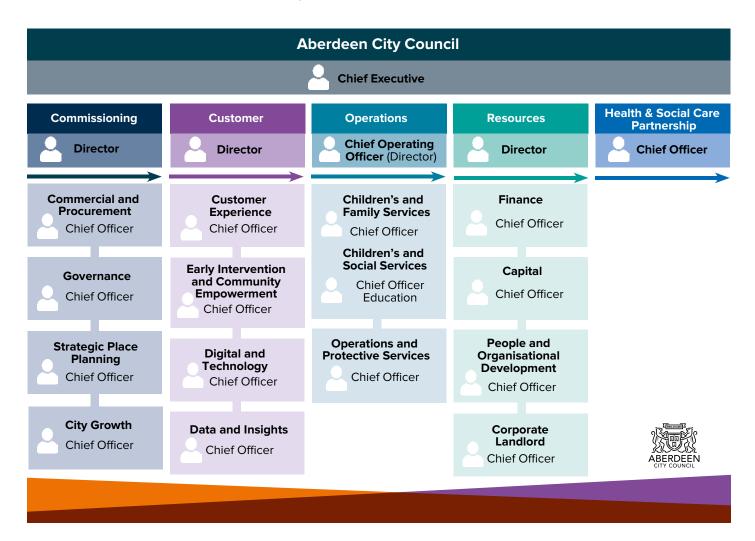
# Introduction

This is Aberdeen City Council's tenth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) in which we record, highlight and celebrate our achievements. The reporting year, from 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, illustrates our collective resilience in sustaining high quality performance during the pandemic, as well as the process of the PPF supporting our monitoring, reflection and identification of Service Improvements and Actions for the year ahead.

Compilation of the PPF is lead by senior managers encouraging all officers across the Planning Service to bring forward their achievements and exemplar case-studies enabling everyone to have ownership and pride in the content of this annual report.

# **Our Planning Service**

Aberdeen's Planning Service is part of the Strategic Place Planning cluster, led by a Chief Officer, and within the Council's Commissioning Directorate.





#### **Context**

Although one of the most frequently used tools to assess the planning process is the speed of decision making for planning applications, this report goes further to examine other factors that influence the quality of place-based decision making across Aberdeen – for example added value, workload, resources, organisation, improvements and outcomes.

Unless otherwise stated, all the activities / service actions detailed in the previous years' PPFs are still being undertaken. Where actions or initiatives specified in this report demonstrate alignment with the key performance markers, this has been clearly cross-referenced in the text (e.g. **PM1**), and Performance Markers are defined in **Appendix 2**.

We have a number of achievements and triumphs to highlight in our PPF this year, despite challenging circumstances, and we look forward to sharing these with you throughout the report.

#### Resilience

Our Case Studies demonstrate the diversity and quality of our skills, as well as the broad reach of the Planning Service and the value planning adds. Given the impact the COVID-19 public health emergency has had on working practices this year, at Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) request, a number of specific Case Studies have been included in this report to demonstrate our resilience. These highlight the adaptions the Planning Service has made to working practices and digital processes, as well as examples of where the Service has been directly involved in public health support, for example through the **Spaces For People** project. As highlighted in last year's PPF, even before the COVID-19 outbreak our Planning Service has had health and wellbeing at its forefront for many years. The pandemic has affirmed the role and necessity of town planning for successful living and served as a stark reminder that, a little over 100 years ago, statutory planning was borne out of society's need to design out continual health crises and to secure better and more equitable places.

A national lockdown commenced in Scotland on 23 March 2020. The lockdown required the closure of all Council offices and libraries and for staff to work remotely. Aberdeen City began its first phased exit from lockdown on 28 May 2020. The second phase of exiting lockdown commenced on 18 June 2020 and the third phase began on 9 July 2020. During all three phases it was advised that Council offices and libraries remain closed and that staff work remotely.



In April 2020 Aberdeen City Council's Incident Management Team identified which Council services, and staff involved in their delivery, were deemed critical to the City's immediate response to the public health emergency. The corporate priority at that time was to "lean in" behind these services to ensure as much resilience as possible could be provided. Planning was not deemed a critical service in this context but, as we shall go on to demonstrate throughout this report, that did not mean that the service was not considered important or would stop being delivered. What it did mean, however, was that staff from non-critical services such as Planning were asked to volunteer for temporary redeployment duties to assist colleagues on the "front line". This, along with additional pressures as part of the Spaces For People project, resulted in resourcing implications for the Service which impacted on both statutory and non-statutory processes throughout the year. This will be discussed further in Sections 1.3 and 1.4.

Case Study 7 discusses the changes to working and digital practices that the Planning Service has had to embrace over the last year to continue to fulfill our customer service objectives.

#### Recovery

As well as developing corporate resilience, work has also been undertaken this year on a framework for recovery. A Socio-Economic Rescue Plan 2020/2021 for Aberdeen was approved by the Council's Urgent Business Committee (COM/20/098) on 30 June 2020, and by the Community Planning Aberdeen Board on 01 July 2020. An Implementation Group was formed to oversee the delivery of actions across the three themes - Business, People and Place. The Implementation Group met monthly and was attended by Officers of Aberdeen City Council, including the Planning Service, and representatives of Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE), the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, VisitAberdeenshire, Scottish Enterprise, Business Gateway, Skills Development Scotland, ACVO (Aberdeen Council of Voluntary Organisations), Aberdeen Inspired, North East Scotland College (NESCOL) and Culture Aberdeen.

Key outputs from the Place theme this year specifically related to Planning have included:

- Delivery of the <u>Spaces for People</u> project to allow people to safely move around the City, with relaxed planning controls for businesses, particularly restaurants and pubs to maintain deliveries, as well as the temporary relaxation of planning controls for street occupation.
- Additional cycle parking, at locations identified by members of the public, officers and schools, to encourage greater active travel and distanced out-door exercise.
- Development of the Go ABZ web app a Smart Journey Planning Tool.
- Development of digital City Centre & Open Space Tours e.g. Nuart, heritage walking tours, coast & country.

The <u>Socio-Economic Rescue Plan</u> was intended to be a short term 'rescue response' to the immediate effects of the economic crisis as a result of COVID-19 and was scheduled to end on 31st March 2021. As the crisis continued, and lockdown was extended, the impact on the City's economy has continued. Going beyond 31st March 2021, the need and demand for recovery will remain and, in this sense, the focus will shift from 'immediate response' towards medium- and longer-term recovery actions. This, and the important role of Planning Service in these wider recovery actions, will be reported on in our next PPF.

# Service Highlights / Development on the Ground

### **Examples of highlights from this reporting year include:**

- Enabling and supporting 89 Officers across the Planning Service to work from home during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Ensuring a "business as usual" service for our customers in the context of Scottish Government restrictions around work and travel.
- Successful roll out of a development management improvement project to introduce monitoring of 'added value' in decision making (**PM6**).
- Review of the development management pre-application advice service (PM3, PM6), including the initiation of charging.
- Virtual consultation on the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan (from 20 May 31 August 2020).
- Assessment and summary of unresolved issues to the Proposed Plan consultation and preparation of associated 'Schedule 4' documents.
- Approval by Scottish Ministers of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan 2020.
- Publication of the Aberdeen City and Shire Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy 2020.
- Approval of a revised Development Framework for the Loirston site to the south of the city.
- Preparation of, and consultation on, the Draft City Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal.
- Preparation of Draft Planning Guidance on planning requirements required for the newly listed Aberdeen City Centre Multi-Storey blocks.
- Approval of the Climate Change Plan and Biodiversity Duty Report.
- Implementation of the Spaces For People project to help provide space for people to physically distance and to support increased active travel during the pandemic.
- Implementing temporary tactical urbanism measures to soften areas and to encourage everyone to feel safe and comfortable in using the urban built environment.
- Supporting businesses back by offering a pragmatic and flexible approach to planning enforcement in relation to outdoor seating and trading.

# **Approval of significant Major planning applications:**

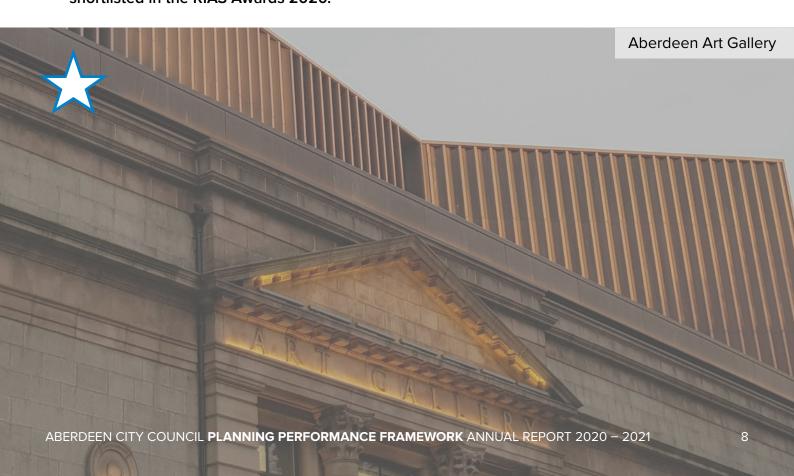
- City Centre: Aberdeen Market Demolition / redevelopment to form a mixed use office-led development with retail, financial, professional, food and drink, public house, leisure uses and public realm.
- City Centre Residential redevelopment of Greyfriars House (140 flats).
- City Centre: South Esplanade West Residential led development of approximately 258 flats, retail space and riverside park/open space.
- Rubislaw Quarry: residential development of 245 private rented sector flats, including public bistro and promenade with views of the quarry.
- Cloverhill: residential led, mixed use development of 550 homes, community sports facilities, retail and associated open space.
- Tillydrone primary school and 3G pitch.
- Foresterhill Health Campus: erection of 5 storey Bio-Therapeutics Hub.
- Stationfields, Cove 167 affordable homes.

### Other key achievements:

- Scottish Government Customer Service Excellence re-accreditation was achieved for the 9th year running. One additional 'compliance plus' was awarded for design and conservation surgeries, CPD and staff training, increasing the total 'compliance plus' awards from 13 to 14.
- Virtually hosting students from the University of South Florida as part of the 5th Collaborative
   Urban Path project (Aberdeen CUP) from May August 2020
- Investors in People Gold accreditation achieved in March 2020

#### Other Awards for Aberdeen 2020-21:

- Aberdeen City Council awarded <u>Local Authority of the Year 2020</u> in the Municipal Journal Achievement Awards
- Aberdeen City Council's COVID-19 response shortlisted for the PMI UK National Project Award (only UK local authority and only Scottish organisation in the running for the award)
- Aberdeen Art Gallery announced as a winner of <u>Art Fund Museum of the Year 2020</u> and shortlisted in the RIAS Awards 2020.





# Part 1: Qualitative Narrative

The Case Study examples in this year's PPF demonstrate how the Service has lead through change during the COVID-19 public health emergency and managed to actively deliver and support considerable achievements in placemaking and health and wellbeing across the City. They also illustrate examples of how we have continued to engage with, listen and support our customers, despite the challenging circumstances, in order to maintain delivery of an efficient and effective service.

The headings for the qualitative narrative section are:

- Quality of Outcomes
- Quality of Service and Engagement
- Governance
- Culture of Continuous Improvement

# 1.1 Quality of Outcomes

Despite the pressures of the past year, the Planning Service has remained committed to high quality placemaking in open, engaging and inclusive ways. This has been predominantly achieved by working collaboratively with other Council departments to transform the City into a place that fundamentally enables safe physical distancing for our communities as well as balancing business need during the pandemic.

The Team has also continued working to shape the future of the city, and to consider the recovery and prosperity of Aberdeen post-pandemic. The need to create a high quality, well connected, natural and built environments where people and businesses want to be and can prosper has never been more important.

All areas of the Planning Service have contributed to the achievements detailed in this report, and the Senior Management Team would like to express their sincere thanks to everyone who worked so hard this year in such challenging circumstances.

### **Local Development Plan Team**

The Local Development Plan Team's primary role is the production and review of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (PM7). The adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 (ALDP), constituting a Written Statement, Proposals Map, Constraints Map, City Centre Map and associated supplementary guidance, provides a land-use framework for the City to support Aberdeen as a sustainable city at the heart of a vibrant and inclusive City Region. It continues to help deliver high quality development on the ground by providing a clear framework for the assessment and determination of applications for planning permission.



The Team also undertakes detailed and regular monitoring of policy performance and key indicators and produces housing and employment land audits. The onset of the pandemic and the need to move to remote working coincided shortly after the **Proposed Local Development Plan** was approved by Council Members in March 2020. Development Planning is a collegial process and the Team transitioned admirably to this new environment of remote working while ensuring that both internal and external lines of communication were maintained to ensure continued sharing of information. The period of representations on the Proposed Plan was undertaken from May to August 2020. The process was adapted to be undertaken in a predominantly digital manner (refer: Case Study 5), and was aligned with the Team's strong ethos of customer service excellence and the need for timely responses to general queries and the queries of consultees. Despite the challenges of this year, the forthcoming Local Development Plan remains on track to meets its target for adoption in Quarter 1 of 2022 as outlined within the **Development Plan Scheme** (**PM7**) (**PM8**).

Along with the progression of the Proposed Local Development Plan, the Team have also played a key role in producing the Aberdeen City and Shire Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy (**PM13**). The Team has also responded to numerous consultations for the emerging National Planning Framework 4 relating to: candidate national projects, housing land supply, open space and play space.

### **Development Management Team**

As with the rest of the Planning Service, the entire Development Management Team moved rapidly and effectively to full home working by the end of March 2020. However, this resulted in little to no interruption or disruption to the service, or the quality of our outcomes.

As presented in Case Study 1, this year saw the introduction of a new monitoring procedure to capture the 'value added' by Development Management through negotiations and planning conditions at the pre-application (**PM3**), application and discharge of conditions stages of all proposals. This system was designed, consulted and implemented between July 2020 and April 2021. The output will be used to:

- measure the quality of outcomes of planning applications through the planning process;
- capture the value added by the pre-application enquiry service; and,
- capture potential consistent issues with applications, which could be used to inform the production of future planning guidance (PM11).

The results will provide an evidence base to form a balanced qualitative counterpoint to the standard quantitative performance measures such as speed of decision making. The findings of the initial few months of recording are discussed further in Case Study 1.

Although many elements of the workplace and everyday life changed over this PPF year, there was no significant slowdown in the cumulative volume of applications and enquiries received. Application numbers fell dramatically at the beginning of the COVID emergency when there was greatest uncertainty, and then picked up to something approaching pre-pandemic levels. Over the course of the year, the volume of applications received (819) was only 21% down on the number received during 2019-20 (1032). A more fundamental difference was the number of informal enquiries that were received. In July 2020, 150 informal enquiries were received by the Minor Applications Team, compared to 63 received in July 2019. The conversion of garages into living accommodation; the erection of summerhouses and home offices; and garden works such as the erection of decking and fencing, have all been popular developments, likely reflecting the fact more people have been spending time at home and considering home-working options. These informal enquiries – along with formal householder pre-application enquiries – do not generate any fee yet do present a pressure on our resources. The volume of these enquires and live planning applications, coupled with a decline in staff numbers as Officers have been redeployed to other COVID duties across

the Council, has meant that there has been an even greater pressure on the Team, and the Team's performance, than just those pressures more commonly recognised as a result of the pandemic. Officers have also continued to work closely with, and given guidance to, applicants at the Pre-Application Consultation stage of proposed Major development applications in order to enable effective online and virtual consultation with the public and community groups at that stage of the application process (**PM3**).

No Planning Development Management Committee, Pre-Application Forum, Local Review Body meetings or Pre-Determination Hearings were cancelled or postponed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, all these meetings were successfully held electronically and broadcast online with Elected Members, Officers and members of the public (where relevant) participating from their homes.

Neighbour notification, newspaper advertising and display of site notices also all continued uninterrupted.

The move to homeworking also triggered a significant systems change whereby all submissions to the Planning Authority, including new applications and any representations made in relation to applications, were required to be submitted online – removing the option of paper copies (**PM6**). Additionally, any fee associated with an application was also required to be paid online, creating a contactless system like many others seen across society. Furthermore, due to restrictions, Officers were unable to carry out site visits for applications unless they were deemed essential. Site visits were vital in a limited number of cases and in these circumstances they were undertaken in accordance with strict approved COVID protocols rapidly put in place early in the pandemic.

Latterly, in acknowledgement that some staff have been struggling for a variety of reasons to work from home, the Council has shown flexibility in terms of facilitating and enabling those individuals to return to Marischal College whilst observing physical distancing measures.

# Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team

The Masterplanning, Design and Conservation (MDC) Team sits within the wider Development Management Team. MDC Officers providing the interface between a number of corporate and strategic place planning projects and policies, as well a liaison role with external parties and interest groups.

The MDC Team Leader and Senior Planners provided considerable support to the ever-changing context of the City for a significant portion of the PPF year by acting as advisors to the City Council Governance Board responsible for implementing the **Spaces for People** project. The aim of this project was to secure space for physical distancing and encourage active travel in and around the City Centre and local neighbourhoods. As part of this project, MDC Officers led the re-working of the Council's historic 'pavement café guidance' (**PM11**) to enable the use of external space for business and hospitality use under temporary planning relaxations to support businesses to diversify. The new **Guide For Businesses** was subsequently published online and is regularly updated.

MDC Officers also designed and delivered Scotland's first use of the temporary 'parklet' concept as a key tactical urbanism intervention to manage spaces and humanise the City Centre against the background of a number of significant road and street physical infrastructure interventions. This is discussed further in Case Study 3.

This work has been in addition to day-to-day duties in supporting the wider Development Management Team, either as a lead collaborator to development proposals on design and conservation matters, or project managing the delivery of masterplanning and development frameworks. This year this has included proposals at Provost Skene's House (see Case Study 2), King's College in the Aberdeen University complex and the discharge of Conditions related to

the Listed Building and Planning Consents for Union Terrace Gardens. This site is a fundamental part of City Centre transformation and will see the historic park regenerated with three contemporary pavilions as a remodeled, fully accessible, recreation destination for residents and visitors. The project is due to complete later in 2021 and will be fully reported on in our next PPF.

The Team has also had a strong role in the refresh of the pre-application process which will introduce a fee charging and a formal management system from 1st April 2021 (PM3) (PM6). This process is discussed further in Case Study 4.



Officers with a specialism in Conservation have also continued to engage with key stakeholders, including Historic Environment Scotland, to ensure the protection of the historic environment (PM9). The review of the Union Street Conservation Area, to become a proposed new City Centre Conservation Area, has proceeded despite the challenges of working from home. As part of this review a Conservation Area Character Appraisal has been prepared, reported to Committee (PLA/21/002), and published for public consultation (PM11). In addition, a specialist Technical Advice Note was drafted and reported to Committee (PLA/21/053) to provide advice and clarity to both the Council as Building Owner and all residents of the eight multi storey tower blocks listed by Historic Environment Scotland this year as Category A (PM11). Outcomes of the public consultation exercises on both documents will be reported on in the next PPF.

As reported in PPF9, the <u>Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme</u> (CARS) is a £2.4 million building conservation scheme for Aberdeen's Union Street which launched in November 2017 (**PM11**). The project is led by a dedicated Project Officer in the MDC Team, the role of which had to be recruited during the year, with interviews taking place via Microsoft Teams calls. Progress on



CARS has been impacted this year due to COVID-19 and, as a result, Historic Environment Scotland has granted an extension to the scheme (now due to complete in June 2023). Activity is now increasing again as restrictions ease and good progress is being made in all areas, with the Priority Projects continuing to be developed.



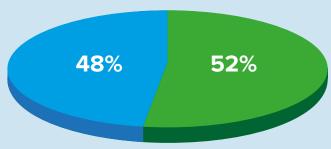
# **Environmental Policy Team**

The Environmental Policy (EP) Team co-ordinates and leads the Council's work in relation to outdoor access, natural heritage, tree protection, open spaces, climate change, Fairtrade and a food growing strategy. Just like other Teams across the Planning Service, the Environmental Policy Team had to adapt to working exclusively from home during the pandemic. This has raised many challenges, but the Team has continued to deliver its wide remit of work. Some highlights from the past year include:

Council Climate Change Plan 2021-2025: Towards a Net Zero and Climate Resilient Council: The purpose of the plan is to set out the Council's approach, pathway and actions towards net zero and climate resilient Council assets and operations by 2045. This was approved at Full Council in March 2021 (COM/21/047), and full details can be found in Case Study 6 (PM11).

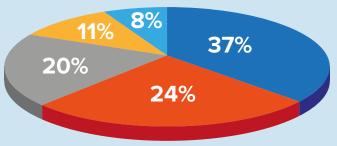
<u>Biodiversity Duty Report</u> 2020: This document, which is a statutory report, was completed during the pandemic and was a great example of virtually collaborating to pull together the report with input from across the Council. Work is currently ongoing to turn this into a more publicly accessible document to allow the good work carried out to be promoted and to help further in raising awareness of biodiversity and its importance (**PM11**).

# CASE STUDY 1: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES



#### Chart 1

- Applications with no 'added value'.
- Applications with 'added value' from amendments requested at pre-application or application stage.



#### Chart 2

- Layout
- Built Elements design
- Historic Environment External and Internal
- Materials
- Shop Fronts and Adverts

# **Case Study Title:**

# Measuring the "Value Added" by the Development Management Process

#### **Location and Dates:**

City Wide, July 2020 to April 2021

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	Key Markers:
<ul><li>Quality of Outcomes</li><li>Culture of Continuous Improvement</li></ul>	3, 6, 9
Performance Markers:	Stakeholders Involved:
<ul><li>Development Management Processes</li><li>Performance Monitoring</li><li>Process Improvement</li></ul>	<ul><li>Local Developers</li><li>Authority Planning Staff</li></ul>

#### **Overview:**

In July 2020, the Planning Service undertook internal consultation with all Development Management Team Leaders and Manager to establish a set of "added value" markers. A guidance note was then produced and circulated advising that it was now a requirement for all planners to record "added value" data on Uniform for all applications. This data is now monitored regularly by senior staff members with end of year reporting and reviewing in place.

#### **Goals:**

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) aims to create a more successful country through increasing sustainable economic growth. Historically, the measurement of planning performance has been unduly skewed towards data related to the speed of decision making, which can only be viewed as a crude indicator of the contribution of the Development Management process to economic growth. However, SPP and the Local Development Plan also require planning to promote sustainability by supporting development that is designed to a high-quality and which demonstrates the six qualities of a successful place: places that are distinctive, safe and pleasant, welcoming, adaptable, resource efficient and easy to move around and beyond. With this in mind, in July 2020 it was decided that Development Management would record the contribution that Officers make to successful

places in terms of "added value". This data, when set alongside decision making timescales, is intended to give a more even handed and holistic view of planning performance in terms of national and local planning policy.

#### **Outcomes:**

The project shows that the Development Management process "added value" to 48% of all applications. The applications with no "added value" were considered acceptable as submitted and no changes were necessary to the proposal.

Where value was added (48% of all applications), the most common enhancements and improvements were related to various design aspects, with almost half of those applications (approximately 49%) being amended in terms of one or more of the criteria below.

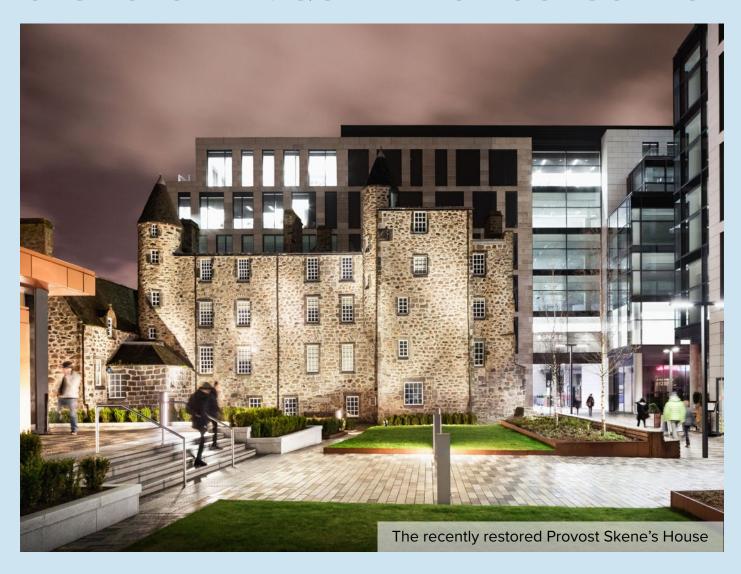
This analysis shows that Case Officers have successfully negotiated significant positive amendments, particularly in terms of design – with improvements often a process of refinement and iteration throughout the lifetime of the proposal from pre-application to final decision. One of the areas of enhancement that was least attained was in terms of health and wellbeing. This is, however, expected to change with the implementation of the relevant sections of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and the adoption of the Proposed Local Development Plan, in which health and wellbeing is a more significant policy consideration.

What cannot be accurately measured is the undoubted role played by the planning policy framework and application process as a deterrent to the progression of unacceptable proposals and as a guide in shaping applicants' proposals before active engagement with the Planning Service. For instance, the role of the Local Development Plan, planning guidance, masterplans and planning briefs is an unquantifiable, but nevertheless significant, influence on development form, design and layout that is taken into account by applicants at that formative stage.

# Name of key officers

Aoife Murphy and Daniel Lewis

# CASE STUDY 2: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES



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# Provost Skene's House

Location and Dates:				
Broad Street, Aberdeen July 2019 – Present				
Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	Key Markers:			
<ul><li>Quality of Outcomes</li><li>Quality of Service and Engagement</li></ul>	3, 12			
Key Areas of Work	Stakeholders Involved:			
<ul><li>Conservation</li><li>Collaborative Working</li></ul>	<ul><li>Authority Planning Staff</li><li>Authority Other Staff</li></ul>			

#### **Overview:**

The Category A listed Provost Skene's House museum space and has undergone a £1.87 million renovation and restoration. Built in the 16th century, Provost Skene's House is one of Aberdeen's few remaining examples of early burgh architecture. The project involved substantial internal and external works including complete repointing in lime mortar, replacement of substantial quantities of leadwork being and a new internal fit-out to allow for new exhibits to be displayed. This involved considerable upgrade of the climate control and electrical services. The building will be used to house new displays exploring the life and achievements of inspirational people from Aberdeen and North East Scotland, and will offer ways to explore the rich history, international connections and ingenuity of the City and Region.

#### **Goals:**

To work with the applicant's Design Team to ensure the works were carried out to the highest possible standard, whilst still allowing the building to be sensitively adapted for its new use. This new use will allow the building to continue to be used and enjoyed for many years to come.

#### **Outcomes:**

Regular contact with the Design Team and a good working relationship meant that any issues which involved input from the Planning Service could be dealt with quickly and efficiently. The use of the Audit Bricks App meant that Conditions for internal works could be purified accurately and efficiently.

# Name of key officers

Ross Wilson & Lucy Greene

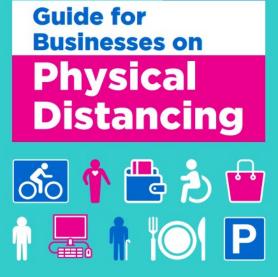
# CASE STUDY 3: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES



## **Case Study Title:**

# Spaces for People – 'Temporary Urban Interventions'

#### **Location and Dates:** Aberdeen City Centre, April 2020 - present **Key Markers: Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service** this study relates to: **Quality of Outcomes** 2, 10, 12, 13 **Quality of Service and Engagement** Governance **Culture of Continuous Improvement Key Areas of Work Stakeholders Involved: Town Centres Authority Other Staff** Collaborative Working **General Public**



Covid-19

#### **Overview:**

In May 2020, Aberdeen City Council was awarded a £1.76 million grant from the Scottish Government's ringfenced Spaces for People programme to provide temporary interventions to allow people to walk, cycle, and queue for buses and shopping while adhering to physical distancing guidance. Measures implemented included pedestrianisation, pavement widening, temporary bike lanes, and one-way walking. The need to "humanise" the temporary road, street and traffic interventions in order to encourage people back into the City Centre, and to make them feel both safe and welcome there, became a priority as businesses across the City began to reopen and lockdown measures eased.

Installed in key areas of the City Centre during the Summer of 2020, the 136 temporary parklets and bus boarding infrastructure created space for physical distancing, supported businesses by providing space for outdoor hospitality, and encouraged active and sustainable travel and recreation in the City Centre – a place historically dominated by private car use. Fully designed and procured over only 2 weeks using decking timber, the parklets have three simple variants based on a 2.4 metre square to fit a carriageway lane and have no level change from the footway to ensure accessibility for everyone.

#### **Goals:**

The primary goal of the Spaces For People project has been to provide temporary interventions to allow people to walk, cycle, and queue for buses and shopping while adhering to physical distancing guidance.

The goal of tactical urbanism initiatives such as the parklets has been to create temporary interventions that are accessible to everyone and which "humanise" the City Centre. The parklets and bus boarding modules are in specific locations to assert and encourage confident pedestrian use of the coned-off areas of traditional carriageway space, introduce queuing areas off the footway, offer some extension to business use for alfresco dining, as well as introducing seating and soft-landscaping with a legible suite of simple street-furniture.

#### **Outcomes:**

The temporary works associated with the Spaces For People project help to protect public health by reducing COVID-19 transmission in the City, which in turn reduces the number of cases NHS Grampian's contact tracing team have to cope with, making their intervention easier and more effective. The measures further help the economic recovery of the City by allowing people to continue to use active travel such as walking and cycling.

The introduction of simple, yet effective, tactical urbanism measures into this wider project also demonstrates exemplary contextual awareness and sensitive placemaking, high calibre resourcefulness and project management skills. Key outcomes also include partnership working with the Disability Equity Partnership in sharing, sense-checking and delivering quality placemaking. It is hoped that the interventions lead to re-imagining possibilities of our City Centre for post-pandemic living. Officers were delighted to be approached by Sustrans and other local authorities across Scotland to share our learning and experiences.

# Name of key officers

Nigel McDowell, Robert Kerr & the ACC Spaces for People Governance Board

# 1.2 Quality of Service and Engagement:

Throughout the PPF year the Planning Service has engaged with stakeholders both inside and outside the Council with the aim of delivering a high-quality service and a positive customer experience. This year stakeholder engagement has been particularly challenging given Scottish Government restrictions on events and the need to continue working from home, and the Team has had to consider different ways to undertake consultation and engagement. This has included the following:

## **External Liaison and Engagement**

# **Delivering a Positive Customer Experience**

#### **Business-As-Usual**

Officers continue to work in accordance with the <u>Development Management Service Charter</u>. This document is available on our website and makes clear the level of service that customers can expect from the Development Management Team. The Charter also helps our customers find out what we expect from them so that they can help us deliver that service and achieve specified service standards. <u>Processing Agreements</u> are available for all Major Development proposals, and this is publicised on our website (**PM2**).

At the start of the transition to home working an **interim update** to the Development Management Service Charter was placed on the Planning pages of the Council's website to explain to customers how the service would endeavour to operate as close to business-as-usual as possible, and the main changes to service delivery. This will continue to be updated as required.

This update indicated that all Officers across the Planning Service were supplied with Microsoft (MS) Office enabled laptops with full access to the Council computer systems and mobile phones to which all work landline numbers were diverted. Staff therefore remained contactable via email, telephone and Microsoft Teams – ensuring they continued to be both engaged and responsive, while balancing work and life at home. Officers also continued to hold face-to face meetings with colleagues and external agents using Microsoft Teams such as:

- · Regular team meetings and 1-2-1s,
- Informal Chat Rooms and wellbeing sessions (coffee breaks, time outs etc)
- Weekly Conservation and Design Surgeries between Masterplan Design and Conservation (MDC) Officers and Planning Case Officers.
- · Application related meetings with agents and applicants.

This full digital service delivery has enabled a flexible approach to working that has benefited both staff and the service. Our approach has demonstrated that assessment of planning applications can be successfully carried out remotely with on-site assessment facilitated by pre-existing knowledge, proxy visits by colleagues, use of photos and videos submitted by applicants, and by reference to Google Streetview and other satellite imagery. This approach also enabled the successful temporary recruitment of a former employee who now lives in Calgary, Canada using 3CX software to enable phone contact and MS Teams for meetings and day to day interaction with colleagues.

#### **Customer Service Excellence**

Despite the challenges of the year, we were delighted to be reaccredited with our Customer Service Excellence award, and to gain one further "compliance plus", giving us a total of 14 "compliance plus" awards (up from thirteen last year). This year the Audit was carried out virtually for the first time, and we were able to showcase the public realm transformation of Schoolhill linked to the reopening of Aberdeen Art Gallery as the case study. A small number of customers joined the Auditor via Microsoft Teams to give their feedback on the service received. Although a Virtual Audit brought new challenges, the Audit took place in October 2020 after six months of lockdown so we were also in a strong position to reflect how we had dealt with the changes the pandemic had brought to working life.

Areas of "compliance plus" identified as part of the external audit this year included consultation techniques, building on customer feedback, introduction of service improvements, partnerships, benchmarking, communication channel analysis, empowering staff, working with disadvantaged customers, customer journey mapping and further development of the customer engagement strategy (**PM9**).

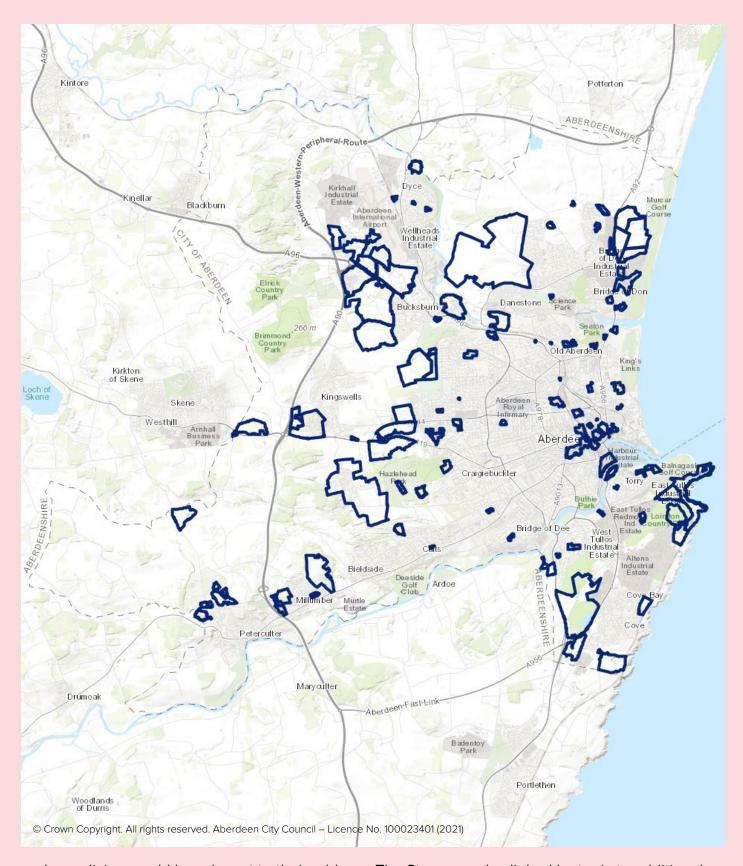
## **Local Development Plan Engagement**

The programming and project management of the Local Development Plan review is outlined within the Development Plan Scheme (DPS). Within the PPF reporting period <u>DPS 2020</u> was published. The Development Plan Scheme provides an effective tool to manage the progress and maintenance of an up-to-date Local Development Plan. At the start of the review process an initial DPS is published (<u>DPS 2017</u>), with an annual DPS published to show the current review stage and work to come (<u>PM7</u>) (<u>PM8</u>).

The Participation Statement which accompanied DPS 2020 set out how the Planning Service would undertake engagement on the Proposed Local Development Plan and in the context of a pandemic (PM9) including involvement of elected members (PM10). The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 required the Service to consider whether any of its actions would be likely to impede its ability to take effective action to prevent, protect against, delay or otherwise control the incidence or transmission of coronavirus. This required the Planning Service to promote the national policy of physical distancing. In order to compensate for the disruption caused by the pandemic, the period for representations on the Proposed Local Development Plan was extended to over 14.5 weeks between 20 May 2020 – 31 August 2020. This was eight weeks more than the statutory minimum.

It had initially been hoped that extending the period for representations on the Proposed Plan would allow an opportunity to engage directly with the public as lockdown restrictions were sequentially eased over the summer months. In July 2020 the Local Development Plan Team began to investigate the possibility of undertaking face-to-face engagement events. At this point it was hoped that Scotland would soon transition from Phase Three to Phase Four of the Route Map out of Lockdown. However, on the 30 July 2020 the First Minister announced that Scotland would remain in Phase Three. A 'local lockdown' commenced again in Aberdeen City on 5 August 2020, with the lifting of restrictions on 23 August 2020 - only one week prior to the end of the period inviting representations.

As a result, online meetings continued to be offered to all relevant stakeholder groups via Microsoft Teams (PM10). These sessions involved a focused presentation on the Proposed Local Development Plan and a question-and-answer session. A **Storymap** of the Proposed Local Development Plan had also been launched on the Council's website at the start of the period for representations in order to make online material easier to understand and navigate in the absence of face-to-face events. The Storymap offered an overview of the Proposed Local Development Plan and all map related policies. It included a 'search by address' function so that those interested could ascertain what proposals



and or policies would be relevant to their address. The Storymap also linked by topic to additional supporting documentation to allow ease of navigation.

An <u>Advice Note</u> was also published on the website in order to clearly explain to the public how they could make a representation and what would happen if they did submit a representation on the Proposed Plan. A specific Consultation Portal, <u>Citizen Space</u>, was also available for the public to use throughout the consultation period to make electronic submissions. Hard copy submissions could also be submitted via post to the Council's offices, although these were discouraged.

February 2020		LDP <b>E-Newsletter</b> published					
LDP <b>E-News</b>		LDP <b>E-Newsletter</b> published					
March 2020		Proposed Plan, Proposed Delivery Programme, SEA Report and associated background documents <b>published online</b> .					
	Development Plan Scheme published						
		LDP <b>E-Newsletter</b> published					
		Public notice in the Press and Journal and Evening Express newspapers					
May 2020	$\Box$	Social Media posts					
		Key Agencies and interested groups notified by email					
	×ot ×o	<u>StoryMap</u> launched					
	735	<u>CitizenSpace</u> Online Consultation portal launched					
		Neighbour Notification letters sent					
June 2020	735	Online meeting with Torry Locality Partnership					
	$\Box$	Social Media posts					
		LDP <b>E-Newsletter</b> published					
July 2020	<b>38</b> 5	10 online meetings with Community Councils					
	$\Box$	Social Media posts.					
August 2020		LDP <u>E-Newletter</u> published.					

## **Housing Land Audit Consultation**

The <u>Housing Land Audit</u> is jointly undertaken annually with project management alternating between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council (**PM13**). The Draft Audit consultation process was unavoidably delayed this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. An extended online consultation took place in the Autumn of 2020 so as to account for many development industry staff being on furlough over the summer months when the Audit would otherwise have been prepared.

Aberdeen City Council's Local Development Plan team were responsible for managing the production of a Draft Housing Land Audit, as well as its consultation and ultimate agreement. An online 'round table' event was held on 10 November 2020 to discuss outstanding issues and move towards an agreed position on audit sites. The event was facilitated and chaired by David Miller of the Hutton Institute to ensure a balanced and fair discussion. It was attended by a number of housebuilders and agents, a representative from Homes for Scotland, a representative from Scottish Gas Network, and Officers of the two Councils. Some general issues relating to the Audit were discussed at the meeting and there was detailed discussion on individual sites in a range of locations. A joint position was agreed on all sites and the Audit was not disputed. The Audit was approved for consultation at a specially convened virtual meeting in December 2020 of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority.



# **Newsletter and Agents Forum**

Despite the limitations on public meetings, the Planning Service continued to reach out to actively engage with customers (**PM9**). A virtual Agents Forum was held via an MS Teams Meeting in September 2020 and was attended by 18 agents/applicants and 12 Planning Officers. Subsequently, a comprehensive Strategic Place Planning **Newsletter** was published on the Council website and sent to all agents/developers. Both methods of engagement served to keep customers up to date on the measures put in place to adapt to the pandemic and new initiatives such as the Spaces for People and Biodiversity Net Gain projects and the introduction of charging for pre-application advice (**PM3**).

# **Measuring Customer Feedback**

Despite our positive feelings about our relative ease of a transition to virtual service delivery, we considered it important that we took stock of how customers viewed the changes that we had had to make. In Autumn 2020, we sent out a questionnaire to all agents and developers and gathered their views over the first six months of lockdown - 86% of our key customers were still operational at this time, with 76% of their work dealing with pre-lockdown applications and warrants. The main change to their work was that no site visits or face to face client meetings were taking place.

We also took the opportunity to ask about our customers capacity to respond to consultations such as the Local Development Plan. The response was that 76% of customers were able to respond, although an extension to the consultation period was suggested by many customers and such an extension was subsequently allowed, as discussed above.

Many customers highlighted the value and importance they placed on the continuity of all the planning services. Here are a few extracts:

- \*\*The planning service has an important role to help the economy recover post-lockdown. It is essential that the facility to submit and process applications is there, albeit it is accepted that timescales will likely be extended, there are limitations around site visits and the like.
- The technical support that has been available whilst they have been working remotely from home has worked well. The approval documents I have received from the department has assisted me in continuing my business.
- \*\* It is important that all planning including the development plan proceed as planned to ensure new sites are available in support of the construction industry when lockdown ends.\*\*

- Whilst live developments have been halted due to coronavirus, future developments which are dependent on consultations like the LDP and local authority approvals such as Planning and Building Warrants can still proceed and should do to ensure a future workstream for all businesses.
- Any form of shutdown in the planning or building warrant system would have a negative impact on development related businesses and would not be welcome.
- We very much appreciate that the service is still running at this time as it allows some key processes to progress in good time for picking works back up again.

# **Engaging on Strategies, Advice and Guidance**

In order to assist with the provision of effective and useful guidance and advice to stakeholders, both at pre-application stage and during application assessment, the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team this year researched, prepared and developed a new <u>City Centre Conservation Area Character Assessment</u> and a <u>Technical Advice Note</u> on the recently listed Inner City Multi-Storey Tower Blocks (PM11). These documents were prepared in the context of <u>Aberdeen Local Development Plan</u> (2017) Policies D1 – Quality Placemaking by Design and Policy D4 – Historic Environment to help ensure high standards of design and built heritage management across the City:

City Centre Conservation Area Character Assessment – the Union Street Conservation Area was reconsidered within the context of the City Centre Masterplan, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and will be a key document for informing decisions made regarding future development within the City Centre from small alterations to historic buildings to larger new developments. The document will also offer key guidance for development taking place as part of post-pandemic recovery initiatives. The previous Conservation Area Character Appraisal had not been updated since 2007 so the new document needed to take into account recent developments and be developed in line with the suite of other Conservation Area Character Appraisals across the City. The name change (from Union Street Conservation Area to City Centre Conservation Area) reflects the increase of the area covered by the Conservation Area since it was designated in 1968. The structure of the document was simplified with fewer character areas, but more detailed analysis to allow for more efficient and informed assessment of development in the City Centre. Boundary extensions have also been made to include buildings that contribute to the character of the Conservation Area and are desirable to preserve and enhance. These changes allow for efficient informed decision making for future developments in the City Centre as well as informing the general public about the significance of the City Centre Conservation Area.

Technical Advice Note: Inner City Multi-Storey Tower Blocks — Eight inner-city multi-storey blocks of flats across Aberdeen City Centre were designated as Category A listed buildings by Historic Environment Scotland on 18 January 2021. These concrete buildings were constructed as part of the city's post-Second World War housing programme and are considered by HES to be of significant architectural interest and outstanding examples of Brutalist architectural style in multi-storey housing. The document attempts to answer a number of expected common questions that homeowners and other stakeholders may have regarding the need for listed building consent and/or planning permission for works to these multi-storey buildings. A 'traffic light' system has been used to show how proposed works to these listed buildings will be categorised by the Planning Authority (Green, Amber, Red). We hope this easy-to-use format will be useful for homeowners, planning officers and other stakeholders and will ensure a consistent approach to decision making across the affected blocks.

The Environmental Policy Team have this year also completed on a Food Growing Implementation Plan:

Food Growing Implementation Plan – The Granite City Growing Implementation Plan was completed in September 2020 and captures a range of actions discussed during the preparation of the strategy. The actions are assigned to 17 stakeholders made up of a mixture of partnerships, third-sector organisations and Aberdeen City Council teams. The implementation plan is designed to be a live document over the life of the strategy and is regularly updated and made available to the stakeholders to inform work plans.

## **Delivering the Action Programme**

In order to help deliver the actions set out in the Local Development Plan's <u>Action Programme</u>, the Masterplanning Design and Conservation Team continues to foster strong collaborative working relationships with external masterplanning consultants, their agents and volume housebuilders with the aim of facilitating engagement and delivering high quality places. The process of holding "Design Workshops" has continued this year, albeit via Microsoft Teams rather than face-to-face workshop sessions.

During the past year larger housing projects at both Countesswells (OP38) and Loirston (OP59/60/61) have continued to be delivered and supported by the Development Management Applications and Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Teams (MDC). At Countesswells this has included 200195/MSC for 131 new houses on Blocks C1 and C2. The Countesswells Draft Phase 2 Masterplan was also submitted to the Planning Service by the client team in December 2020 (PM11) and the new year saw the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team move engagement with key agencies and colleagues into a virtual environment. An MS Teams Project Channel was created to share files, news and key milestones for the project whilst also providing a secure space where comments on the Draft Masterplan could be shared and compiled. Part of this engagement process included an entirely virtual workshop hosted alongside Architecture & Design Scotland in February 2021 to discuss the Phase 2 elements of the project through a 'Carbon Conscious Places' lens. The client team also undertook their own public consultation exercise utilising virtual exhibitions, feedback forms and interactive live Q&A sessions to answer public questions. Engagement also continued through the strategic City Council led 'Countesswells Placemaking Group' meetings held quarterly where key projects such as the Countesswells Community Campus have been the focus of discussion.

For Loirston, the summer months of 2020 were the focus of additional engagement undertaken by the lead masterplanning consultants with all landowners/interested parties within the **Loirston Development Framework** Opportunity Site boundaries. Due to COVID-19 restrictions this included sending letters to respective property owners to ensure engagement and continued progress on an



updated Development Framework. The outcome of this process was approval of the Development Framework to the virtual Planning and Development Management Committee on 10 December 2020 (PLA/20/233) (PM11). This has ultimately kept progress on overall site delivery on track with the land recently being advertised for sale.

#### **Aberdeen CUP**

The annual Collaborative Urban Path (Aberdeen CUP) was held over 13 weeks between 19 May to 14 August 2020. This summer workshop was first established in 2016 and has been running as a collaboration between the University of South Florida (School of Architecture and Community Design), the Development Management Team and Aberdeen City Heritage Trust ever since. This collaboration is an innovative education programme for postgraduate architecture students pioneered by local authority town planners and is part of a long-term vision by the Council to produce good practice in effective collaboration and innovative engagement with academic institutions.

This year, as a result of COVID-19 restrictions, the format of the event was changed into a virtual event. The 13 weeks of workshop created a platform for the students to investigate new opportunities for regeneration of the City Centre and expand ideas and design strategies based on the City Centre Masterplan 2015. The 2020 Aberdeen CUP program focused on the Castlegate area and the lanes to the north, including the historic St Andrews Cathedral. Following a combination of online presentations delivered by Planning Service and Aberdeen City Heritage Trust Officers and local partners (including a local conservation architect), the 12 students had the opportunity to develop their proposals in Tampa, Florida and give a presentation at the end of their semester. A

number of previous graduates who had visited Aberdeen in past years as part of this programme were involved to provide additional feedback and guidance for students. Local stakeholders from the study area, including St Andrews Cathedral, also attended the final presentation. Further information including works and reflections from previous years can be found on the project website: www.collaborativeurbanpath.com

### **Internal Liaison and Engagement**

### **Assessment of Planning Applications**

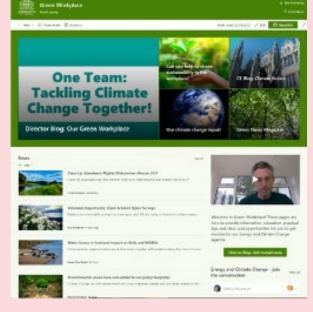
Development Management case officers have continued to consult digitally on planning applications with internal consultees in the Roads, Environmental Health, City Growth, Housing, Local Development Plan and Environmental Policy Teams of the Council as well as continuing regular scheduled management-level meetings with legal services that have helped resolve and expedite negotiation on problematic and complex legal agreements (**PM4**) (**PM12**).

## **Green Workplace**

The Green Workplace is a new site that has been launched by the Environmental Policy Team on the Council's intranet to engage with staff from across the Council. The site is regularly updated with articles, videos, upcoming events etc. on a whole range of topics about our environment. Topics have included energy usage, climate change, Fairtrade and biodiversity, amongst many others. These can be to raise awareness, inform staff on relevant topics and issues or to challenge staff to consider behaviours and the effect they can have on the environment.

# **Council Capital Projects**

As discussed in the Introduction to the Report, in April 2020 Aberdeen City Council's Incident Management



Team identified which Council services, and staff involved in their delivery, were deemed critical to the City's immediate response to the public health emergency. Council Capital Projects were included on this list so as to ensure a focus on socio and economic recovery.

In considering Capital Projects, Officers from across the Development Management Team needed to ensure an effective working relationship with Officers in the Council's Capital Projects Team (as 'client'), whilst also maintaining the impartiality and non-political nature of the Planning Authority.

Given the current scale of Council led or co-ordinated initiatives, regular scheduled liaison meetings with both the Council's Assets and Housing Projects Teams have been re-introduced this year via Microsoft Teams to help ensure a pro-active, collaborative approach to the planning process for these projects (**PM12**).

Projects this year have included Provost Skene's House, a £1.87 million restoration project which will see the building brought back into use as a museum and gallery space (refer: Case Study 2), and Union Terrace Gardens. Union Terrace Gardens is located in Aberdeen City Centre and is one of the Council's Priority Projects as set out in the Corporate Plan. Given the important nature and timescales of the project a dedicated Case Officer within Masterplanning, Design and Conservation was assigned to ensure the timely purification of Conditions for both the Listed Building Consent and Detailed Planning Permission (PM12). Weekly meetings were arranged between the internal and external teams, and specific trackers have been set up to ensure timeous responses and to monitor

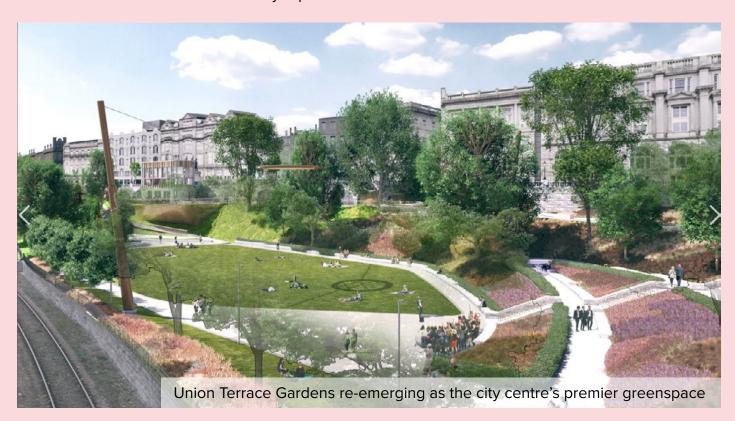
expected workload levels. The designated officer meets regularly with colleagues across City Council services to ensure efficient communication and agreement ensuring agreed timescales are met.

# **Engagement on the Spaces For People Project**

The **Spaces for People** project has been co-ordinated by the Strategic Place Planning Policy and Strategy Manager and has been a exemplar of resilient matrix working from the inception of the draft bid to project implementation, monitoring and maintenance. A partnership was formed across the Council's Capital, Operations, Communications and Strategic Place Planning services under the direction of the Spaces for People Governance Board chaired by the Director of Resources and supported by the service Chief Officers and their colleagues (PM12). The Board met twice weekly throughout the early stages of project delivery via Microsoft Teams. Officers tabled and openly discussed project need, deliverability and risk management inclusively within the group. Representatives from NHS Grampian and Police Scotland also attended Board meetings on a semiregular basis.

The immediacy and responsiveness in planning for, and delivering, this crucial project brought into focus the technical skills and abilities of those involved and their capacity to work collectively in partnership with colleagues, despite the challenges of home working. It was a rewarding opportunity to have the group's ideas and solutions tested and challenged by colleagues at different levels in the organisation who they may not typically have worked with.

In order to communicate and illustrate the temporary street and place changes, a specific page on Aberdeen City Council's webpage was created. The page evolved to encompass Environmental Health and Trading Standards business advice, as well as providing a direct link to the Scottish Government's advice, guidance and legislation. It also served as a one-stop location for posting all Spaces For People project information, supported by regular press releases and other social media communication. Two dedicated project emails were set up – one targeted at businesses and another targeted at wider stakeholders. The Inboxes for both accounts were monitored by Senior Officers to ensure detailed and timely replies.



The pandemic required an immediate response so no opportunity for formal external consultation on the physical Spaces For People interventions was possible. However, well-established relationships with key groups and external parties enabled limited discussion and dissemination of information to their memberships.

The Governance Board's primary consideration was to introduce and manage the temporary arrangements for streets and spaces and to try to balance this with the need to support the safe re-opening of businesses. In partnership with Aberdeen Inspired (AI) (the City Centre's Business Improvement District), Project Officers from the Planning Service attended and supported the regular Al business group briefings. Meetings were held on Zoom to communicate any further spatial changes, to discuss issues at specific locations, to signpost the economic development webpage for grants and loans, and to issue reminders to seek out specific information on the evolving Spaces for People website. The opportunity to play an ambassadorial role on behalf of the Council by identifying directly with people working to support

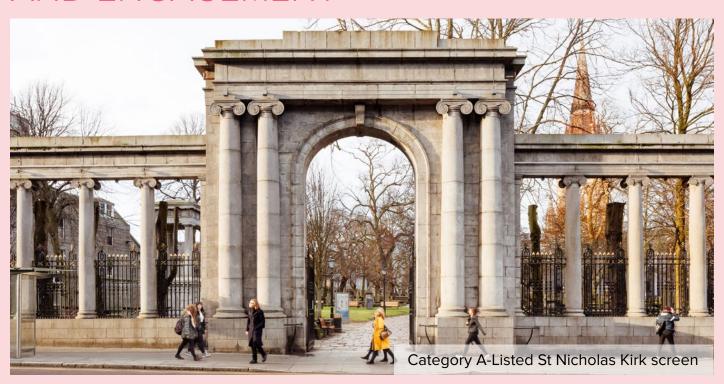


their businesses and providing information and advice helped "humanise" the local authority's endeavours to counter a context that no-one had previously envisaged.

As discussed in Case Study 3, the temporary parklets became a key urban intervention in the Spaces For People project. Building on positive relationships established over the delivery of previous projects, the lead Officer from the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team was able to discuss the parklet concept with the Chair of the Disability Equity Partnership in points of detail as a critical friend. After the initial success of the parklets, the need arose to distance bus stop stances and associated queues. Our strong relationship with the Disability Equity Partnership members, Stagecoach and First Bus enabled a trial of options of different ramps and helped the Project Team to settle on the most efficient use of the parklet concept to enable bus boarding, and to create a consistent legibility for the temporary street furniture.

To engage with wider service providers, a 'Public Transport Users and Operators' Group was established between Aberdeen City Council, NESTRANS, Grampian Cycle Partnership, the Disability Equity Partnership, First Bus and Stagecoach to communicate the temporary spatial measures and to discuss operational requirements monthly. Since January the Group, who see considerable merit in remaining in place permanently, are collectively focusing on improving City Centre transportation and accessibility.

# CASE STUDY 4: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT



## **Case Study Title:**

# Review of the Development Management Pre-Application Advice Procedure

#### **Location and Dates:**

City-wide. July 2020 - March 2021. In force from 1st April 2021.

,,,				
Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	Key Markers:			
<ul> <li>Quality of Outcomes</li> <li>Quality of Service and Engagement</li> <li>Governance</li> <li>Culture of Continuous Improvement</li> </ul>	3, 6, 9, 15			
Performance Markers:	Stakeholders Involved:			
<ul><li>Development Management Processes</li><li>Online Systems</li></ul>	<ul><li>Local Developers</li><li>Authority Planning Staff</li></ul>			

#### **Overview:**

The pre-application advice procedure is a key initiative in the <u>ACC Business Charter</u>. The review of the pre-application procedure came at a time when the wider and deeper economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were unfolding in a way that will affect every aspect of our city for years to come. Pre-application

engagement provides the opportunity for an early inclusive and collaborative approach between the planning authority and applicants. This means that development risks are minimised, certainty is increased, and the resulting investment creates high quality development on the ground. Whilst the service was valued by applicants and agents, the volume of pre-application advice dealt with



has increased significantly in recent years with the result that the team has been struggling to maintain the quality and consistency of the service whilst at the same time fulfilling the duty to deal with statutory applications.

#### **Goals:**

- Managing non-statutory demand on the service to enable delivery of the statutory duty to determine applications whilst improving the efficiency of the discretionary pre-application customer service.
- Collaboratively working across the Teams of the Development Management function enabling a wide range of perspectives to shape pre-application advice;
- Engagement and consultation with, and feedback to, the Agent's Forum as development partners;
- Introduction of a revenue stream with fees, supporting service delivery and offsetting impacts;
- Improved customer service standards with a streamlined procedure and a project management approach;
- Ensuring greater digital service management and agility in reception and recording.

#### **Outcomes:**

The service went live on 1st April 2021, introducing a new interactive webform, supported by clear guidance and a procedure note provided on the Council's website. The service is being monitored using Enterprise reports on the IDOX Uniform planning application system. A six month review is programmed to assess achievement of goals and to consider if any revision is required. This will ensure that the procedure continues to add value in terms of customer service for development partners and improved the quality of development on the ground and that it is an effective and proportionate approach to workload management. We intend to provide an update of the year's progress in the next PPF.

# Name of key officers

Daniel Lewis, Nigel McDowell, Scott Leitch, Garfield Prentice and Roy Brown

# CASE STUDY 5: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT



#### **Case Study Title:**

# Proposed Local Development Plan – Online Engagement

#### **Location and Dates:**

On	line	from	20	May	to	30	August
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Chime from 20 may to 30 August					
Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	Key Markers:				
<ul><li>Quality of Service and Engagement</li><li>Culture of Continuous Improvement</li></ul>	6, 7, 8				
Performance Markers:	Stakeholders Involved:				
<ul> <li>Local Development Plan &amp; Supplementary Guidance</li> <li>Community Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul><li>General Public</li><li>Local Developers</li></ul>				

#### **Overview:**

The <u>Proposed Local Development Plan</u> was approved for publication at Full Council on 3 March 2020. Officers were in the process of preparing for the subsequent period of representation when Scotland went into 'lockdown' due to the Coronavirus pandemic. At the same time national legislation and procedures were being prepared to guide

COVID secure consultations during the pandemic. Legislation was published in April 2020, and further guidance issued in May 2020, which allowed the majority of consultation material and engagement to be undertaken electronically.

As such, the programme was adjusted accordingly and proceeded on an electronic and postal basis only. As a result of awaiting

	2017 LDP	Proposed 2022 LDP	Increase		
Notification					
Community Council notified of consultation	<b>/</b>	<b>✓</b>			
Key Agencies notified of consultation	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b>			
Anyone who made a submission to the MIR notified of consultation	•	V			
Press Notices	<b>/</b>	<b>V</b>			
Online Notices	<b>/</b>	<b>✓</b>			
Neighbour Notifications	12,000	17,000	An Increase of 5,000 notifications or 30%		
		Engagemen	t		
Meetings with Community Council	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b> (Virtual)			
Meetings with Key Agencies	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b> (Virtual)			
Meetings with Development Industry	<b>/</b>	<b>✓</b> (Virtual)			
Community Groups	<b>✓</b>	✓ (Virtual)			
Consultation Events	<b>V</b>	X	Physical events replaced by virtual due to Covid.		
Online interactive consultation tool	×	<b>✓</b> StoryMap	Tool developed to make online material easier to understand in the absence of events (received over 3,200 hits)		
Outcomes					
Consultation Period	12	15	Increase of 3 weeks		
Representation Received	178	1,192	Increase of 1,0214 (670%)		
Points Raised	626	2,200	Increase of 1574 (350%)		



the guidance there was a 2-month delay in starting the exercise. In addition, the 10-week consultation period was extended by 5 weeks to allow respondents further time to make submissions. During the consultation, a number of measures were taken.

- All Community Councils and Key Agencies were notified.
- Everyone who made representations on the Main Issues Report were notified.
- A bespoke consultation hub and questionnaire were published on Citizen Space.
- Virtual meetings were arranged with Community Councils and community representatives, and the development industry. This included a detailed presentation of the Proposed Local Development Plan and a Q&A session.
- Multiple press and internet notices and Newsletters were issued.
- Numerous social media posts to remind the public the consultation was on-going (Facebook and Linkedin).
- LDP newsletter updates informing subscribers of the consultation and how to engage with it.
- Over 17,000 neighbour notifications were sent out to addresses in or alongside the proposed opportunity sites that

- are identified in the Proposed Local Development Plan.
- A <u>Storymap</u> interactive consultation tool was developed and launched.

#### Goals:

The primary function of the Local Development Plan team is to review and produce an up-to-date Local Development Plan. The engagement on the Proposed Local Development Plan needed to achieve a balance between giving consideration to the impact coronavirus restrictions would have and also not adversely affecting the timelines of the Local Development Plan's review. The engagement needed to be robust in order to maintain trust and interest in the review of the Proposed Local Development Plan and agile to respond to such exceptional circumstances.

#### **Outcomes:**

The consultation resulted in around 1,200 representations making around 2,200 individual points. This was a dramatic increase from the 178 representations submitted in response to the Proposed Local Development Plan in 2015. This shows that, despite the predominantly electronic format of the consultation, a very wide audience was reached which resulted in a high participation.

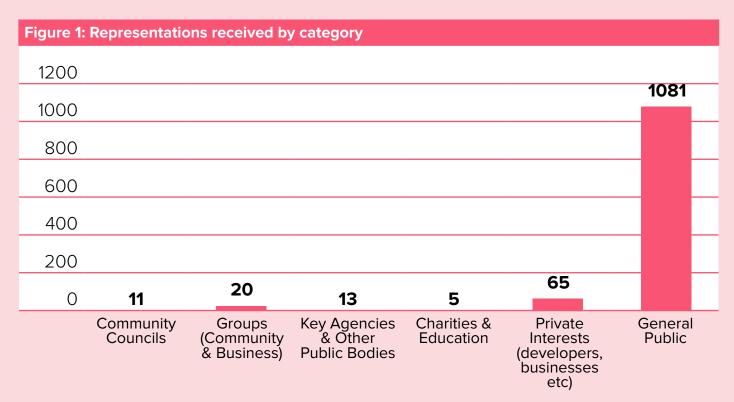


Figure 1 illustrates that the majority of representations were made by the general public at 91%. Private interests accounted for the second highest number of submissions with 5.4%. The engagement methods use during the consultation elicited a high number of responses from a broad spectrum of interested parties and stakeholders.

Upon reflection, future consultations, in a nonpandemic context, should incorporate elements of this exercise. During previous consultations, public drop in events were held in community halls or shopping centres. These were advertised through a newspaper notice. These were quite unstructured events and therefore questions from the public may not have been as informed as they could have been. During this exercise there was direct and focused engagement with stakeholders in the form of bespoke presentations which were Ward based. The presentations directly informed the Community Councils of the changes from the extant Local Development Plan and what was relevant to that area. This led to in depth question and answer sessions and detailed submissions from the Community Councils. These events were undertaken through MS Teams and recorded should attendees or apologies wish to watch them again. Follow up queries were responded to within a week.

During previous consultations, and also the publication of an adopted Local Development Plan, only a PDF version of the Proposals and Constraints Maps were available for inspection. There were limitations to these maps as they would become pixelated when zooming in for more detail. The creation of the Storymap allowed interested parties to review all proposals such as Opportunity Sites or Land for Transport and also understand what land use policies were applicable across the City. There was also an address-based search function for interested parties to understand what policies or allocations were relevant to their area. The site received over 3,200 hits. Feedback on the intuitiveness and interactivity of the Storymap was positive. As a result, the Local Development Plan team will produce an updated Storymap for the Local Development Plan once the Examination in Public has been completed and any Modifications are incorporated.

#### Name of key officer

Tom Walsh

# Compliments

- Many thanks for your prompt reply the information in which is just what I was looking for.
- Many thanks this is very helpful and clarifies everything.
- Both officers have been excellent at being open to our approach to the application and have taken on board what we have presented. Equally they have been unequivocal with their expectations and amendments they wanted to see as part of the application, making it easy for us to adapt and progress the application to a conclusion. I feel the need to write to you because all too often I have a grumble that our applications take too long to be progressed and the path is very uncertain, so when I believe that these are the most professional officers that I have encountered. I thought it only right to pass that on. All the best and keep up the good work \*\*

- Thank you. I just wanted to say thanks again to you and your Shire colleagues for another good consultation on the Audit. If only other authorities could do the same!
- Just a wee note to say a big thank you for your time and professionalism yesterday – it was very much appreciated!
- \*\* The service I have received from you both was very refreshing in this day and age and I promise to be a vociferous supporter of Aberdeen Council going forward. \*\*
- A good outcome. Well done to all those involved. The extensive discussion of Policy D5 and the Materials TAN and the related comments about sustainability will be useful in the consideration of future applications where re-use of granite is a determining issue.
- Thank you for your support and actually bringing the actions forward. We've consistently found you a supportive partner and one who delivers.





### 1.3 Governance

The Planning Service has continued to adapt structures and processes to ensure that these are proportionate, effective and fit for purpose.

#### **Alignment of Staffing Resource**

#### **COVID-19 Temporary Movement of Staff**

As highlighted in our last PPF Report, in the Spring of 2020 a Temporary Movement of Staff process was launched by Aberdeen City Council to support the city-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This process relied on Officers volunteering to undertake alternative roles or duties and being matched to where there is significantly increased need, e.g. as a result of increased demand in an area critical to the COVID-19 response; new requirements to support the city with the response; or critical areas experiencing reduced capacity due to the impacts of COVID-19 on their team or operations.

All Officers were encouraged to volunteer to move to critical roles or to do alternative duties to support the organisation at this time, and a number of Officers across the Planning Service were moved to different services on a temporary basis (either full or part time):

- Senior Planner and Technician from Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team to the Business Grants Helpline (City Growth)
- Planning Officer from the Development Management Applications Team to the Business Grants Helpline (City Growth)

These moves were in addition to the additional, and significant, Officer resource which was provided from across Strategic Place Planning to lead, manage and deliver the Spaces For People Project.

#### **Moving Staff Within Strategic Place Planning**

As discussed in Case Study 5, the volume of submissions to the Proposed Local Development Plan period of representations was far in excess of previous plans. To progress towards preparation for Examination in Public, all submissions had to be responded to via a 'Schedule 4' form. With approximately 1,200 submissions, some of them hundreds of pages in length, it was estimated that on average it would take 40 minutes per submission – equating to 800 hours or the entire Local Development Plan Team working on nothing else for 5.3 weeks. Additional officer resource was required to maintain the project milestones set out in the Development Plan Scheme and to ensure the Local Development Plan could be replaced within 5 years.

Officers were therefore temporary reassigned from the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation, Development Management, Environmental Policy and the Application Support Teams. Officers from these Teams supported the Local Development Plan Team on a part time basis for two weeks (PM12). Without such cross-team cooperation, it is unlikely that the Proposed Local Development Plan would have maintained the project timelines set out in its Development Plan Scheme (PM7).

#### **Secondments**

To ensure that Officers were encouraged to develop individual skill sets, specialisms and interests and ensure a flexible, proactive and efficient response to varying work demands, a number of staff within the Planning Service have taken up a Seconded position from their contracted role. This year this has included the following:

- Environmental Planner part-time seconded to the Scottish Government as a Senior Environmental Planner to assist in conducting the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the forthcoming National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (part-time)
- Senior Planner from Local Development Plan Team seconded to Team Leader of Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team
- Planner from Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team seconded to the role of Project Officer for the Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)
- Planner from Development Management Applications Team seconded to Masterplanning,
   Design and Conservation Team to specialise in built heritage and conservation
- Planner from Local Development Plan Team seconded to City Growth Hydrogen Team
- Planner from Local Development Plan Team seconded to Senior Planner in Local Development Plan Team

#### **Legacy Review Meetings**

Regular scheduled internal Legacy Review Meetings with Senior Managers have continued during the last year (**PM14**). These have helped to expedite and resolve problem or longstanding cases (**PM4**). It has, however, inevitably been more problematic to clear cases at a time when applicants' and agents' attention has been understandably focused elsewhere. A total of 22 legacy cases were cleared during the reporting period – almost double the previous year. Whilst there were 24 legacy cases remaining on April 1st 2021 this figure has subsequently been reduced further to 18 – meaning that the number is now below last year's figure of 19 residual cases.

#### **Developer Obligations**

Adopted Supplementary Guidance on <u>Planning Obligations</u> supports Policy I1 – Infrastructure Delivery and Planning Obligations of the adopted <u>Aberdeen Local Development Plan</u> in setting clear expectations for the scale and nature of developer contributions due for different types and scales of development (**PM15**)

Processes and procedures have been adapted to ensure that the Developer Obligations (DO) process has continued to run as efficiently as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic (**PM15**). This has involved a shift towards using online communication and virtual meeting technology to ensure the continuation of high quality service delivery. The DO Officer has responded to 125 requests for comments on planning applications, pre-application enquiries and follow-up queries during the PPF year. This represents only a modest reduction on the previous year's pre-pandemic figure of 136, when application numbers were generally higher. Consultation responses have all been issued within relevant statutory timeframes.

The DO Working Group, which comprises a series of Chief Officers within Aberdeen City Council, has continued to meet on a monthly basis using Microsoft Teams. The group is updated on all DO Assessment Reports issued in respect of live planning applications in order to ensure corporate awareness of the contributions being sought from new developments. It also makes decisions on proposals to spend existing DO funds, as well as providing strategic direction on other DO matters. This has enabled continued governance of the DO process and strategic decision making throughout the pandemic. In turn, this has allowed planning applications to progress to determination as normal, and has also enabled relevant Council services and external partners to continue to use existing DO funding to deliver improved services and facilities.

#### **Surgeries**

The Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team have continued to run 'Conservation and Design Surgeries' for Case Officers (PM12). This year the Team have utilised Teams to continue this 'drop-in' service despite home-working, with no noticeable difference in demand. The surgeries are held for one hour on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday morning and, as discussed in PPF9, provide the opportunity for Officers with Conservation and/or Design queries to discuss these either on a one-off basis or as the introduction to significant or continued support in all types of applications. This way of working enables the opportunity for an informal collaborative discussion with any interested officer of the Strategic Place Planning Service to share perspectives and agree a way forward which supports learning, gives clarity, and has efficiencies for everyone involved in the route to determination.

The Environmental Policy Team have temporarily suspended the holding of surgeries whilst working from home. Tree surgeries were regularly held in the office and the Officer responsible for these has instead encouraged colleagues to message at any time of the week through Teams to facilitate a discussion. This was highlighted to Development Management colleagues through the EP/DM cross-service group (PM12). The approach currently appears to be working well.

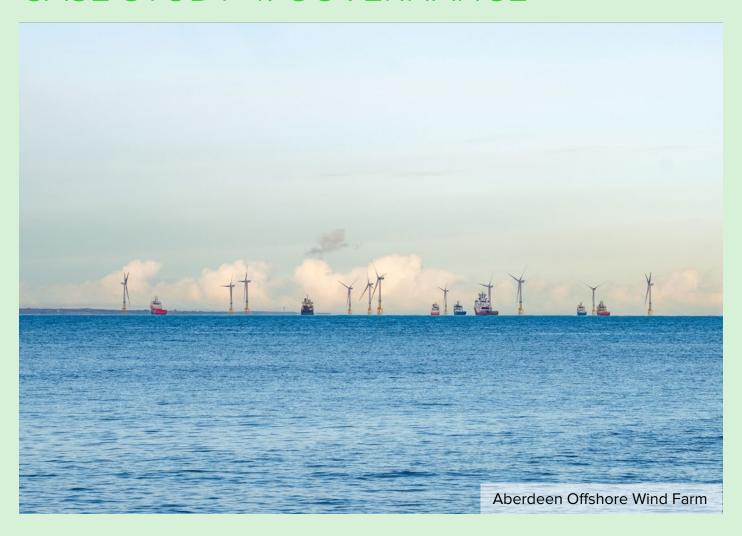
#### **Tree Preservation Order (TPO) Review**

To ensure the Councils Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) are regularly reviewed, a decision was taken last year to review the Councils TPOs on a rolling program rather than once every 10 years. This approach better matched the Environmental Policy Team's workload and other commitments. During the course of the last year, the desktop part of the review to verify the legal status of each TPO was completed. Through a desktop study using aerial and street view imagery it was possible to verify that the tree cover for each TPO remains principally intact. TPO's that have been affected by approved planning applications were identified. The number of tree work applications for each TPO was recorded. The next phase of the review will see the commencement in 2021/22 of on-site inspections to verify tree cover on site and identify any anomalies.

#### North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC) Agreement Refresh

A renewed agreement was signed between Aberdeen City Council and NESBReC to allow for continued collaborative working and provide the Council with access to local biological records (**PM13**).

## **CASE STUDY 4: GOVERNANCE**



#### **Case Study Title:**

## Council Climate Change Plan 2021-2025: Towards a Net Zero and Climate Resilient Council

#### **Location and Dates:**

City-wide. Approved by Council 3 March 2021

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	Performance Markers:		
<ul> <li>Quality of Outcomes</li> <li>Quality of Service and Engagement</li> <li>Governance</li> <li>Culture of Continuous Improvement</li> </ul>	6, 12, 13		
Key Areas of Work:	Stakeholders Involved:		
<ul><li>Environment</li><li>Process Improvement</li></ul>	<ul><li>Authority Other Staff</li><li>Other (relevant project partners)</li></ul>		

#### **Overview:**

The purpose of the <u>Climate Change Plan</u> is to set out the Council's approach, pathway and actions towards net zero and climate resilient Council assets and operations, by 2045.

Expanding on an initial **Routemap** approved in May 2020, the Plan aims to demonstrate leadership, state Council ambitions, and support progress with public sector climate duties and contribute our part to the delivery of the Scottish Government emission reduction target of Net Zero by 2045 (the "net-zero emission target") and Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

The Plan sets a target of net zero carbon emissions by 2045 at the latest with interim targets of at least a 48% reduction by 2025 and a 75% reduction by 2030 for Aberdeen City Council's own assets and operations. It drives a significant increase in actions to reduce carbon emissions and to build resilience, re-shaping our operational activity and defining approach to decarbonising our public buildings, council housing and fleet.

It is split into 5 main themes Buildings, Mobility, Other Operations (street lighting, blue green infrastructure, water management, internal waste, sustainable catering), Leadership and Governance, Awareness and Behaviour Change.

Cross service governance has been established to drive implementation of the plan; build knowledge on the barriers and opportunities; increase understanding of emerging drivers, such as the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill, Heat in Buildings Strategy, EESSH2 requirements, plans for LHEES etc etc) identify and plan for scalable solutions; and share information.

Actions will be relevant to, and can act as a point of learning for, future development and policy. Actions include but are not limited to:

 Project DORIC, a "whole house" retrofit demonstrator project, in 100 existing council properties to improve fabric and energy efficiency. Learning about the standards, timescales, cost of retrofit to inform the development of a future retrofit programme.

- Using smart modelling software and infrared survey techniques to better target resources, decisions, monitoring and analysis of energy use.
- Establishing cost effective solutions for a range of building types; and planning scalable solutions to phase out fossil fuels.
- Installing further renewables including; heat pumps and solar PV and trialling battery storage.
- Connecting identified schools, public buildings and new Council housing to onsite CHP energy centres and expanding existing CHP networks.
- Developing a Torry Heat Network with future links to heat from the Energy from Waste plant.
- Feasibility study on use of <a href="hydrogen">hydrogen</a> for heat.
- Trial of Next Zero Public Sector Building Standards
- Achieving Gold Standard for our Council House Building programme.
- Mapping blue/ green infrastructure areas suitable for installation and retrofit of blue green infrastructure, through partnership work on a Sustainable Growth Agreement.
- Installing CCTV and/or gauges as proactive measures to enable faster Council response and reduce risk and impact from flooding.
- Developing the Denburn re-naturalisation project to identify natural ways of providing flood storage areas in the Denburn Valley.
- Planning and implementing a phased installation of electric vehicle charge points at Council offices and identified locations, identifying opportunities for the use of renewables (eg solar canopies) for fleet electric vehicle charging.

#### **Goals:**

This project was developed and is now being implemented through collaborative working with other Council services and some projects will be delivered in partnership with other organisations. The approval of this plan supports the Aberdeen's Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) stretch outcome for addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.

Scotland's Fourth National Planning Framework Position Statement acknowledges the significant shift required to achieve net zero emissions by 2045. The update to Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan indicates the fast pace and scale of change of plans, legislation, standards, regulation and new technology across sectors to reach a place based green recovery and transition to net zero targets.

Public sector action is an important contributor to this either through direct action, building capacity and/ or through engagement with stakeholders that may be affected or who have a role to play. Planning is a key delivery mechanism for many of the policies within this Climate Change Plan update, across all sectors. In the development of the plan information has been gathered on the emerging landscape which has been shared with colleagues in the planning service, with further information exchange planned.

#### **Outcomes:**

The Plan was approved in March 2021 and is in the early stages of implementation. Work has already progressed on Project DORIC, a whole house retrofit for 100 Council houses with surveys are using thermal imaging technology to identify the houses suitable for improvements. In addition, phase 1 of the Council Fleet Replacement Programme 2021/22 was approved giving approval for 22 dual fuel vehicles and a further 14 electric vehicles and mini buses. Phase 2 of the replacement programme will come forward later in the year.

A monitoring process has been established to capture monthly progress updates, quarterly reports and an annual summary.

Cross service working and dialogue on the delivery of actions within the plan is bringing different Council teams together enhancing learning, exploring new approaches and capturing this knowledge to inform the development of subsequent plans across all themes.

#### Names of key officers

Alison Leslie and Jenny Jindra



## 1.4 Culture of Continuous Improvement

This section details how the Service has progressed with the Service Improvement Commitments identified in PPF9 and highlights how we have worked to demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement over the last five years (**PM6**).

As discussed in the Introduction to this PPF, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a massive impact on our staff and our service this year, and this will likely result in different ways of working for many years ahead. A need to continue changes to the way we work is reflected in our future Service Improvement Actions for the year to come, alongside actions falling out of the implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

Our journey of continuous improvement over the last five years has delivered improved performance, greater efficiencies and increased collaboration across the planning service (**PM6**). Our strategy was predominately to digitalise – i.e. introduce end to end electronic processing, beginning with changeover of the casework system in 2016. This was played out by taking customers with us and collation of their feedback was part of the Customer Service Excellence accreditation. Changes were discussed and refined with customers in the Agents Forum, all whilst operating within a dynamic market and with increasing financial constraints and resourcing issues.

#### **Local Development Plan Team**

The period for representations on the Proposed Local Development Plan ran from May to August 2020 and resulted in 1192 responses. For data protection reasons all responses required to be redacted before publishing online. Publishing online is not a requirement of the LDP process, but for transparency and best practice the LDP Team took the decision to do this.

Redaction of the 1192 responses was slow with the majority done by one member of staff. The redaction process took over 3 months. The file sizes of the responses were considerable at times and owing to broadband speed limitations whilst working at home this often delayed progress and turned a relatively simple, yet time consuming, task into a frustrating one.

During this time the Team needed to establish how the files would be published online. Based on previous experience it was considered that it would take 2 staff working full time approximately 6 weeks to complete. Due to the substantial increase of files with the Proposed Plan compared to previous consultations it was decided that another solution would be required. The significant risk of delay was the main concern, time or cost aside, as spending time on file uploads risked the Local Development Plan going beyond its five-year review period if staff could not progress with the priority task of preparing to submit for Examination In Public.

It was recognised by colleagues in Digital & Technology that staff should not be spending considerable time on tasks which could be automated and examples of this are bulk uploads and other paid for processes. LDP Team staff are also not technically trained in these areas and whilst they have been able in the past to "get by" there was less staff resource in the team and also time constraints prohibited this.

Firstly, all files had to be renamed and this was completed by Digital & Technology colleagues using a mixture of Excel and DOS commands – the Local Development Plan Team would have otherwise needed to do this manually renaming every file individually with further time delays. To upload the files two options were initially considered:

- Bulk upload was not an option as there was no resource to do this
- Robotic Process Automation (RPA) however this would require external contractors and at a fee to the Council.

To justify the cost involved, the Team considered how long, and at what cost, it would likely take 2 members of staff to undertake this process using previous methods. Given that the Team requires to undertake public consultation 3 times during the LDP process, we estimated this would be a cost of £30k per Local Development Plan just spent on file uploading. Unfortunately, despite this cost and time implication it was considered that there was insufficient return on investment (ROI) to justify an infrequent activity.

The end solution was adapting an existing online system which met our need to publish online but was not tailored to our specific requirements and required reverse engineering. The files went <u>online in February 2021 – 6 months</u> after the consultation period ended and 2 months after engaging assistance from colleagues in Digital & Technology. It was advised that the Team should not follow this process in the future and that it was in need of a redesign going forward.

The result of a 'digital first' consultation was a higher number of submissions than any previous Local Development Plan consultation. It is likely that this will be the case for other consultation as digital engagement becomes more common. The Scottish Government has set out a digital strategy for the planning system and the efforts being made by the improvement service to implement this. Given that the new planning system could result in a high number of Proposed Local Development Plan consultations and Examinations running concurrently a unified platform for both consultations and the publication of submissions would be both more efficient but also cost effective. The Local Development Plan team will be engaging with the Improvement Service on this matter in the future (PM6).

#### **Development Management Applications Team**

Performance in terms of timescales for dealing with all types of planning and other applications (**PM1**) has been affected adversely this year by the Team's ability to progress applications timeously due to a number of factors including:

- the COVID-19 pandemic, which has meant that many agents were furloughed or, otherwise, had limited capacity to make the amendments required to progress applications – especially in the first part of the reporting period. Some applicants required to review whether they wished to progress with particular development proposals already in the planning system.
- a number of significant applications were not fully in line with the Development Plan Strategy and required careful consideration prior to Officers reaching a recommendation.
- Officers were reallocated to deal with COVID-19 related priorities such as the Spaces for People Project and manning the emergency business support grant helpline.
- as anticipated in last year's PPF, staff capacity caused by 8 vacancies in the Applications
  Team meant high workloads for remaining staff affecting their ability to deal with applications
  timeously and, consequently, determination times. This was exacerbated by an increase
  in workload caused by a surge in pre-application and Member enquiries as well as general
  enforcement work during COVID. For instance, 227 enquiries were received during July 2020
  compared to 73 in January 2020 and 100 in October 2019.
- remote working meant reduced ability for managers to actively supervise and manage staff workload
- the need to ensure staff wellbeing and positive moral, accommodate for those having to selfisolate, and to understand the pressures of home-schooling and emergency childcare.

Despite these difficulties the Team has worked hard to minimise the impact of these barriers and, consequently, performance has not slipped significantly since last year, as shown in the table of National Headline Indicators below. In terms of a Scotland-wide comparison, Aberdeen's determination times for major and local non householder applications were faster than the national average and the householder figure was marginally slower.

							Scottish Average
2015-16 2016-7 2017-18 2018-19 2019-20 2020-21							
Major Developments	24.1	43.9	23.1	19.9	28.1	31.4	41.3
Local NHH Developments	14.3	13.0	10.2	8.1	8.6	10.6	12.4
Householder Developments	12.8	8.7	7.3	6.8	6.9	8.3	8.1

With regard to specific applications with particularly long determination times (PM4):

#### 180079/S42: Major mixed use development at South Esplanade West.

A combination of factors led to a long determination time including the heavy workload of the Case Officer, lack of access to the original paper file (due to COVID restrictions), delays awaiting submission of additional information from the applicant, and the requirement to get the Section 75 legal agreement varied before determination.

#### 191171/PPP: Mixed use community of circa 550 houses

Time was proportionate to the work involved in dealing with a very substantial major development on a non-allocated site zoned for business and industrial use. This required significant negotiation and delay for a "virtual" public Pre-Determination Hearing as well as considerable negotiation on the complexities of the associated legal agreement.

#### 190312/DPP: Redevelopment of Aberdeen Market (office, retail, restaurant, café use)

Time taken for protracted negotiations and workshop sessions with developer to ensure a suitable proposal at an important highly visible City Centre site within a Conservation Area and associated delays awaiting design amendments.

Despite COVID-19 the Development Management Applications Teams have however successfully advanced two significant continuous improvement projects – a review and amendment of the preapplication advice service (**PM3**) (Case Study 4) and recording and monitoring of added value (Case Study 1).

#### **Environmental Policy Team**

**Development Plan:** the cross-service group with Development Management continues to run providing a forum for discussion on issues affecting both teams and allows possible solutions to be considered and worked on (**PM12**). Over the past year this forum has moved to virtual meetings, and this has allowed it to continue its work. During the last PPE year a similar cross-service group has

**Environmental Policy Cross-Service Groups with Development Management and Local** 

this has allowed it to continue its work. During the last PPF year a similar cross-service group has been set-up with the Local Development Plan Team. Whilst working in the office the Environmental Policy and Local Development Plan Teams were physically located beside each other which naturally allowed for good information sharing and discussion on joint work between the teams. With the switch to working from home it was felt that setting up a cross-service group, meeting approximately every 6 weeks, would ensure this collaboration was not lost.

#### Training, Secondment and CPD

#### **Elected Member Briefings**

Officers from the Local Development Plan, Development Management and Legal Services Teams carried out Elected Member training in December 2021 following a by-election in the Kincorth/Nigg/Cove Ward (**PM9**).

#### **Professional Development**

The Local Development Plan Team organized a regional virtual training event with the Improvement Service and the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division on the Development Plan Examination process.

Officers have learned from, and shared experiences with, other local planning authorities across Scotland by continuing to virtually attend Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) Sub Committee meetings and conferences to discuss and collaborate on new ideas via digital platforms such as the Knowledge Hub (**PM13**). This has included supporting various Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) subgroups, such as Development Planning, Open Space Strategies, Local Place Plans and Play Sufficiency Assessments.

In addition, a member of the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team was a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Scottish Executive Committee until the end of December 2020, and Officers across the Service contribute to both the RTPI's Scottish Young Planners Network and the RTPI Grampian Chapter.

The Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team Leader was also invited to present to the RTPI Scottish Young Planners Network via a <u>Webinar on Post Pandemic Placemaking</u>. A related presentation was also given to the Aberdeen 'Build It!' construction and property conference.

In November 2020 the position of Convenor for the RTPI Grampian Chapter transferred from a member of the Local Development Plan Team to a member of the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team. A number of our Officers also volunteer with Planning Aid Scotland in their own time.

In February 2021 a Senior Planner from the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team accepted an invitation from SUSTRANS to present on 'Designing For Everyone' and talk about our local delivery of the Spaces for People project as part of SUSTRANS' national Inclusivity Awareness webinar programme.

#### **Other Development**

A Planner within the Local Development Plan Team undertook a 2 day in person training course to become an accredited Mental Health First Aider. The Mental Health First Aider (MHFA) role is to act as a point of contact and reassurance for a person who may be experiencing a mental health issue or emotional distress. The MHFA encourages a person experiencing mental health issues to talk, accept what they are feeling and then to seek professional medical help. This is an unpaid volunteer role and the MHFA is available to any members of Aberdeen City Council staff. This role has been of great value during the ongoing COVID pandemic which has impacted on staff's mental well-being in varying ways.

#### **In House Training**

A series of in-house Continuous Professional Development (CPD) presentations have been organised by a planner in the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team on topical planning issues, involving both external and internal speakers. The CPD sessions have been undertaken virtually using MS Teams and have been a great way for colleagues to keep in touch during an extensive period of homeworking. The sessions have typically featured a 30-45 minute presentation followed by a Q&A session, on the following topics:

- Passivhaus Standard by Matthew Clubb (BSc Architecture MEng (Hons)) and a Certified Passive House Designer
- BIM 'Building Information Modelling' in Practice by Blair Milne from MAC Architects
- Traditional Roof Slating virtual recording by Grame Millar of Bain and Irvine, by the Scottish Traditional Building Forum
- Spaces for People Projects Claire McArthur & Nigel McDowell from the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team
- Urban Realm Manual Nigel McDowell from the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team
- Adaptation & Re-use of Historic Buildings in Urban Centre Locations by Blair Smith (Architect) and Ross Cathcart (Senior Architectural Technician) from Jon Frullani Architect Ltd

#### Recruitment

Three new staff joined the Environmental Policy Team in the last PPF year: a Sustainability Trainee, a Trainee Environmental Planner and a Climate Change Officer, all commenced in homeworking conditions. To help to integrate these new staff and assist them settling into their new team and jobs as quickly as possible, all members of the Environmental Policy Team arranged individual video calls with the new staff. These "meet and greet" sessions allowed the Team to introduce themselves and their work areas.



In addition, new members of staff were welcomed this year within the Local Development Plan, Masterplanning Design and Conservation and Applications Teams. A 'new starts' group was formed on Microsoft Teams for everyone new across the Service to join to allow them to share experiences and ask questions. The Chief Officer of Strategic Place Planning also arranged a session with this group to ensure they were all properly welcomed to the Aberdeen City Council Team.

#### **Twinning Partnership**

The Twinning Partnership meeting this year was with Dundee City Council (DCC) and was held virtually for the first time. There were 9 attendees from Dundee and 13 from Aberdeen (**PM13**).

Discussion opened on the structure of both Councils and notably the different team structures.

Operation of the Local Review Body (LRB) followed. Both Councils review LRB cases monthly and the importance of member training was highlighted. One key difference is that the Aberdeen City reviews are recorded and broadcast online. In 2019-20, 80% of officer decisions were upheld by the LRB in Dundee City in contrast with only 28% of the Aberdeen City decisions. However, the percentage upheld this year from Aberdeen's LRB is significantly higher, as illustrated on page 65.

Aberdeen was interested in learning more about the Dundee waterfront development. The Dundee Waterfront Masterplan is a simple short document and, with DCC being the landowner, Dundee can ensure further development does not undermine their City Centre aspirations. The development boasts an active travel corridor with a large network of paths and an urban beach under development with expected completion by Summer 2021.

A detailed discussion followed on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – the geographical location, the demand, policy, legal opinion and percentage of over provision. It was concluded the balance was between the need for HMOs, support for the policy, the evidence base and the views of the local residents in the proposed area.

Aberdeen then discussed the recent (July 2020) introduction of qualitative measurement of added value (**PM6**). This included how the information is being captured, used and what the plans are for analysis and evaluation as a counterweight to rebalance a historic overemphasis on speed of decision making as the only measure of planning performance.

Aberdeen shared the background on the pre application service. The balance, it was agreed, was between performance, resources and income. Dundee is also at the early engagement stage and is considering not charging for City Centre development and charging a smaller fee for brownfield sites.

The afternoon began with Aberdeen updating on their progress with the Local Development Plan. Discussion then turned to the emerging Local Place Plans, and both authorities noting that they had concerns about how these plans would be resourced. Aberdeen shared their experiences to date and the process of developing their own "how to" guide to assist communities in the absence of Scottish Government secondary legislation and guidance.

A presentation was given by Aberdeen on their approach to preparing a <u>food-growing strategy</u> and a comparison of how the opportunities and challenges differed between the cities. Dundee has a higher density of households per hectare than Aberdeen and therefore potentially less private garden space for food-growing. Dundee have had notable success in identifying and building new food-growing spaces, engaging with the local community and has invested £100k over a two-year period in support of this initiative.

Dundee gave an informative presentation on their extensive work on public art. A dedicated Officer works with developers to advise and help them to get in touch with local artists and choose the art they will include in their development. Dundee fund public art out of their regeneration fund. Examples of public art were shown, including: polar bear, bronze penguins, bronze monkey, benches with poetry carvings, sculptures relating to the jute industry, a kinetic curtain, kinetic waterfall, coloured columns, stone carvings on walls, acorns and sycamore seeds.

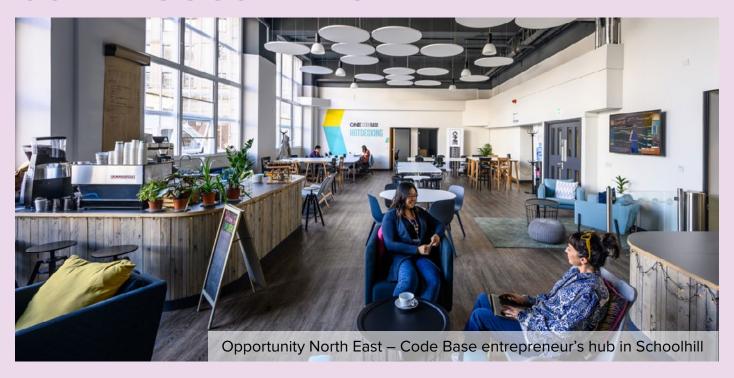
Aberdeen explained it is part of North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership (NESBiP) aimed at making information developers and planners in the three local authorities which NESBiP cover need more easily accessible.

Naturalised areas were then touched upon, with Dundee running a consultation from mid-October – December on 75,000 meters of grass areas that have been identified as biodiversity areas.

Insight into the partnership venture with the Eden project followed, and Dundee gave an interesting overview of the Eden project partnership venture. The Eden project have approached Dundee about opening a new facility in Dundee.

Dundee and Aberdeen have many similarities but also some interesting differences. It was agreed that the day had been very successful given the virtual limitations on engagement and that conversations had started between the two local authorities and links between officers established and that there would be further conversations and sharing of best practice over the coming year.

## CASE STUDY 7: CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



#### **Case Study Title:**

## Changes to Working and Digital Practices

#### **Location and Dates:**

March 2020 - present

Watch 2020 - present	
Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	Key Markers:
<ul><li>Quality of service and engagement</li><li>Culture of continuous improvement</li></ul>	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13
Key Areas of Work:	Stakeholders Involved:
<ul> <li>Planning Applications</li> <li>Collaborative Working</li> <li>Community Engagement</li> <li>Skills Sharing</li> <li>Staff Training</li> <li>Online Systems</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Authority Planning Staff</li> <li>Planning Committee</li> </ul>

#### **Overview:**

The year 2020 created new opportunities to think differently, solve problems and find insights into issues that have existed for some time. During March 2020, the start of the pandemic, the entire workforce moved rapidly to homeworking. This case study looks at how both work and digital practice has changed over this time.

#### Goals:

The goals were to provide a seamless continuation of service delivered by home working, to provide new methods of meeting remotely and to continue the cross-service collaboration digitally. Changes to Working Practice

#### **Changes to Working Practice**

Prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency all planning staff had remote access and equipment to work from home. This was encouraged one or two days per week as part of the smarter working initiatives, which introduced reduced desk capacity across the whole service. Take up across the service was generally low.

Microsoft Teams had been introduced at the start of 2020, however meetings were not carried out over Teams until the service moved to home working at the end of March 2020. All internal meetings and those with external agent and applicants moved online, as did weekly design and conservation surgeries and staff training events which continued to build capability remotely. Team meetings, 1-2-1's, coffee breaks and Town Hall meetings all moved to the virtual world and although we could not be together physically, we have all worked hard to ensure that our formal and informal connections and morale remain high.

An initial staff questionnaire was developed to help both understand the health and capacity of all staff to continue to undertake their duties in pressurised circumstances, but also to determine if everyone who could work from home was doing so in a space that was comfortable and fit for purpose. For colleagues unable to work from home a designated area withing Marischal College was, and remains, available to any staff who cannot work from home or who would benefit from a touch-down area at any time.

All Team Leaders checked in with their team members to know that everyone had the space, capacity and technical resources, as well as the confidence to use the technologies to enable successful home working. The Chief Executive's approach of "do what you can when you can" removed the expectation of a typical 9-5 day routine in order to accommodate wider personal needs and introduced greater flexibility. The ability to take additional screens and chairs away from the office, added to the roll-out of new surface laptops, supported the additional resources for homeworking requirements.

The continuity of Team Meetings and the use of informal and formal Chat rooms using Microsoft

Teams has meant that we remain connected, often with greater accessibility, and that we are operating very strong service delivery in the circumstances. In our forward planning we are considering the long-term needs of service delivery. The challenge is to creatively use new technology to balance the need to maintain physical distancing whist facilitating the vital face to face contact that is an integral part of teamwork and service delivery. However, it is fair to say that all colleagues have risen to the challenges and have demonstrated tremendous resilience in adapting and continuing our operational needs, as well as fusing the opportunity to try to achieve an optimal work/life balance.

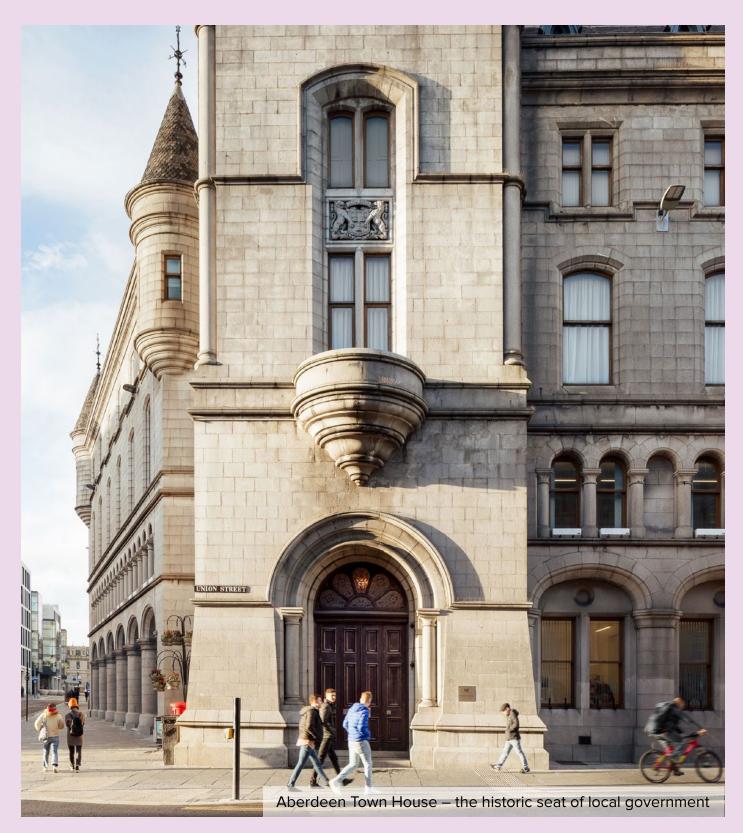
A second staff questionnaire was issued at the start of 2021 to ask for views on how changes to working life were bedding in and seek suggestions on how the work of the future might change. The outcomes from this second questionnaire are currently being considered corporately.

Overall, the change to working practice driven by the pandemic, built on the change that had already started, introduced greater agility which also extended to the competition for talent — today we have remote workers across the United Kingdom and in Canada, Greece, and the United Arab Emirates.

#### **Changes to Digital Practice**

The convergence of new laptops, increased network capacity, removal of physical office boundaries and collaboration through Microsoft Teams all resulted in enhancing shared identity and redefined the shape of our working life in a digital world. The increased workforce agility has been reflected by digitalisation, remote collaboration, and movement of resource to ease pressure, particularly in the Local Development Plan area. On-site assessment has been facilitated by pre-existing knowledge, proxy visits by colleagues, use of photos and videos and by reference to satellite imagery.

The annual Agents Forum, Customer Service Excellence external audit, Planning Performance Framework Twinning and working group/ partnership meetings were all successfully run



virtually. As were the Planning Development Management Committee, Consultations, Preapplication Forums, and Local Review Body meetings. Pre-determination Hearings had Elected Members, Officers, and members of the public participating from their homes.

We issued a questionnaire to Agents and Developers to get feedback on the changes to our service delivery due to the move to home working. Feedback was positive, we were commended for keeping the work moving and for providing virtual meetings. All applications since March 2020 have been electronic only and we changed our payment methods to no longer accept cheques, to accommodate home working.

#### Names of key officers

Daniel Lewis, Garfield Prentice, Scott Leitch, Claire McArthur, and Pauline Wilkinson.

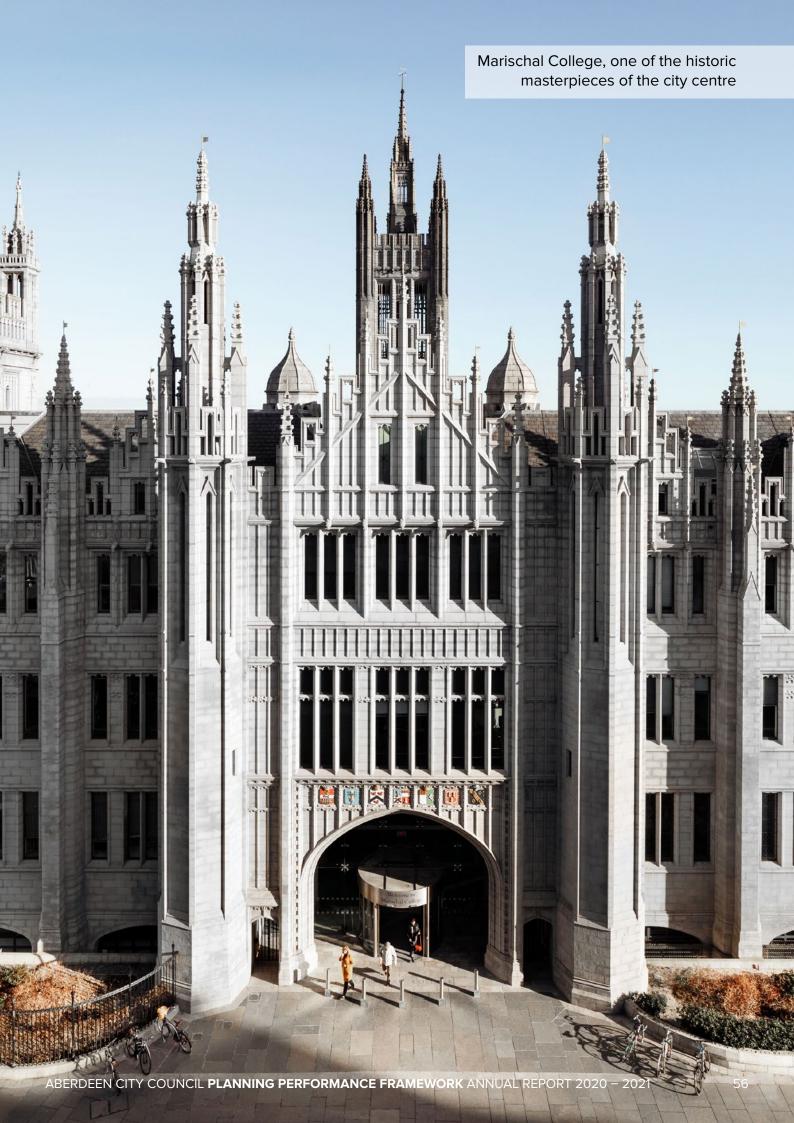
## Part 2: Supporting Evidence

Wherever possible supporting evidence is contained throughout the report in the form of hyperlinks to websites. There are no other documents to support the evidence in the report this year.

#### **Checklist for Part 2: Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies**

The table below relates to issues covered by the Case Studies in Part 1. This supports the promotion of collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst planning authorities.

Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study (page number)	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study (page number)
Design	<b>✓</b> (pages 15-16)	Interdisciplinary Working	
Conservation	<b>✓</b> (pages 17-18)	Collaborative Working	<b>✓</b> (pages 52-54)
Regeneration	<b>✓</b> (pages 17-18)	Community Engagement	
Environment	<b>✓</b> (pages 42-44)	Placemaking	<b>✓</b> (pages 15-16)
Greenspace		Charrettes	
Town Centres	<b>✓</b> (pages 19-20)	Place Standard	
Masterplanning		Performance Monitoring	
LDP & Supplementary Guidance	<b>✔</b> (pages 34-37)	Process Improvement	
Housing Supply		Project Management	
Affordable Housing		Skills Sharing	
Economic Development		Staff Training	
Enforcement		Online Systems	
Development Management Processes	✓ (pages 32-33)	Transport	<b>✓</b> (pages 19-20)
Planning Applications	<b>✓</b> (pages 15-16)	Active Travel	<b>✓</b> (pages 19-20)



## Part 3: Service Improvements

#### 3.1 Report on our Service Improvement Actions in 2020-2021

This section summarises our progress in the last year in delivering the Service Improvement Actions committed to in PPF9:

Committed improvements and actions	Complete?
Service-Wide	
<ul> <li>Analyse and improve remote working resilience across the service as a result of Covid 19 pandemic.</li> <li>This has been achieved through weekly team meetings, two staff questionnaires and Town Hall meetings (Open Forums) giving all our staff the opportunity to be part of the changing working world and to work differently and reimagine how work is done. Overall, the change to working practice driven by the pandemic, built on the change that had already started, has introduced greater agility and has also extended the competition for talent. Organisational success forged during COVID-19 needs to be hardwired into a new operating model bringing together new ways of working and new experiences with tangible benefits.</li> </ul>	Yes
Maintain the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation Service-wide. • We were delighted to be reaccredited this year and to gain one further 'compliance plus' giving us a total of 14 'compliance plus' awards. This year the audit was carried out virtually for the first time and we were able to showcase the public realm transformation of Schoolhill and reopening of Aberdeen Art Gallery as the case study. A small number of customers joined the auditor on Microsoft Teams to give their feedback on the service received. Although a virtual audit brought new challenges, the audit took place after six months of lockdown and we were in a position to reflect how we had dealt with the changes the pandemic had brought to working life.	Yes
Local Development Plan Team	
<ul> <li>Innovate consultation processes for the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development plan adapting to Covid 19 restrictions.</li> <li>As set out in Case Study 5, the standard consultation events which would have been undertaken for a Proposed Local Development were not Covid secure. The consultation was therefore undertaken predominantly digitally which comprises three main strands;</li> <li>1. Use of social media, newsletters and press releases to offer timely reminders that the consultation was ongoing.</li> <li>2. Neighbour notification was sent to over 17,000 properties in relation to the 150 Opportunity Sites or Land for Transport Proposals in the Proposed Plan.</li> <li>3. The development of an interactive Storymap of the Proposed Local Development Plan which included an address search function to enable users</li> </ul>	Yes

#### Digital consultation drop-in events. Yes Rather than undertake face to face drop in events as had been the case for previous Local Development Plan's, virtual engagement events were arranged. The LDP Team produced bespoke presentations for each of the City Council's Wards. These presentations were then given to Community Councils and community partnerships using MS Teams. Additional presentations were undertaken for Key Agencies and the development industry. The focused nature of the presentation resulted in more informed question and answer sessions at the end of the engagement events. Continue to foster close working arrangements with community organisations. Yes The Local Development Plan Team has presented regularly to Community Councils and at the Community Council Forum on both the Local Development Plan, regional planning matters and the emerging National Planning Framework 4 Continue to foster close working arrangements with Aberdeen City Health and Yes Social Care Partnership and NHS Grampian. The Local Development Plan Team has engaged with these stakeholders in the development of the Proposed Local Development Plan's policies and **Delivery** Programme. There will be regular engagement through the development of Aberdeen Planning Guidance to support the adopted Local Development Plan. Wholesale review of Supplementary Guidance documents to produce suite of Ongoing Aberdeen Planning Guidance (APG) (PM11). Aberdeen Planning Guidance will be produced parallel to the Examination of the Proposed Local Development Plan. The Guidance will be published for consultation after the Examination has been completed and any Modifications required will have been made to the adopted Local Development Plan. **Development Management Applications Teams** Introduce changes to processes and procedures to accommodate the requirements Yes of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and enabling legislation including consideration of charging for pre-application enquires and advice. A significant project to comprehensively review and revise the approach preapplication advice (including the introduction of charging for the service) was successfully rolled out. This is fully reported on in Case Study 4 (PM3). In light of the Covid 19 pandemic, facilitate and enable more effective home and Yes remote working to improve crisis resilience and move towards more agile, resource efficient service delivery. This was successfully achieved and is fully reported on in the body of the PPF Report and in Case Study 7. Progress the alignment of the Planning and Roads Construction Consenting Process within the framework of Scottish Government Policy 'Designing Streets'. Early in the reporting year the Council decided to transfer the Roads Development Management and Roads Construction Consent Teams from Strategic Place Planning into the Operations Directorate. There they will be part of the Roads Operations and Infrastructure Team which has a much wider remit (including flooding, structures and maintenance). The transfer is due to occur in summer/autumn 2021. It is important that Roads/Planning process alignment is co-ordinated with the active

involvement of the whole of the new team to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach from all relevant staff. With this in mind, the full roll out of this service improvement has been rescheduled to occur when the aforementioned transfer is complete. However, proactive engagement has already taken place including initial meetings that have secured "buy in", and commitment, to the proposed approach from the future manager of the Roads/RCC team.

#### Ongoing

#### Implement a process for measuring the quality of outcomes from the application process ('value added').

Yes

This was successfully completed and monitoring is ongoing. A full report is given in Case Study 1.

#### Masterplan design and Conservation Team

#### Consult on a Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Union Street/ Aberdeen City Yes Centre.

An eight week consultation was carried out from 19th February to 16th April 2021 as part of the review of the City Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal and the proposed Regulation 11 Direction for the removal of permitted development rights for large projecting to let/for sale signs. The findings of this consultation will be reported back to Committee in the summer of 2021.

#### Review of Aberdeen Masterplanning Process document to become Aberdeen Planning Guidance (APG) (PM11).

Ongoing

Aberdeen Planning Guidance will be produced parallel to the Examination of the Proposed Local Development Plan. It is envisaged that the revised Aberdeen Masterplanning Process document will include advice on preparation of Local Place Plans, once the Regulations and national guidance for such have been prepared by the Scottish Government.

#### **Environmental Policy Team**

#### Raise awareness throughout the wider Council of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) process i.e. why HRA may be required, how to complete a HRA and where assistance can be sought.

This has not been progressed this past PPF year and will therefore be carried forward into next. It was felt that during the COVID-19 pandemic, with most Council staff working from home and focusing on essential tasks, that awareness raising efforts around HRA as planned may have become lost. Within the Planning Service (the main area of the Council likely to require the completion of HRAs) training, awareness raising, and the production of templates and guidance has already been carried out (as discussed in last year's PPF submission).

#### Deliver the Food Growing Strategy Implementation Plan.

The Granite City Growing Implementation Plan was completed in September 2020 and captures a range of actions discussed during the preparation of the strategy. The actions are assigned to 17 stakeholders made up of a mixture of partnerships, third-sector organisations and Aberdeen City Council teams. The implementation plan is designed to be a live document over the life of the strategy and is regularly updated and made available to the stakeholders to inform work plans.

#### 3.2 Service Improvement Actions for 2020-21

This section sets out our planned Service Improvement Actions for the year ahead:

#### **Planned improvements and actions**

#### **Service-Wide**

- Analyse and improve remote working resilience across the service as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Maintain the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation Service-wide.

#### **Local Development Plan Team**

- Undertake a lessons learned and reflection process into the successes, failures and limitations of the consultation of the Proposed Local Development Plan
- Establish an opensource platform on the Council's website for planning datasets to be downloaded
- Establish a post examination storymap for the adopted Local Development Plan to improve accessibility to information for interested parties.

#### **Development Management Applications Teams**

- Progress the alignment of the Planning and Roads construction consenting process within the framework of Scottish Government Policy 'Designing Streets'
- Introduce any necessary changes to processes and procedures to accommodate the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
- Review the Pre-application Charging Procedure
- Bring forward Elected Member training on high-quality placemaking, LRB, etc.

#### Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team

- Offer place-based support to the post-pandemic recovery of Aberdeen City Centre
- Offer place-based support to the reimagining of Aberdeen Beachfront
- Finalise internal technical planning advice on City Centre Conversions to support the City Centre Masterplan objective of promoting city centre living.

#### **Environmental Policy Team**

- Raise awareness throughout the wider Council of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA)
  process i.e. why HRA may be required, how to complete a HRA and where assistance can
  be sought.
- Set up cross-service group between Environmental Policy team and Transport Strategy & Programmes team to facilitate knowledge sharing and better collaborative working.

## Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI)

The National Headline Indicators (NHI) provide a detailed list of work programme information and allow for ongoing measurement of performance as can be found in the table below.

#### A: NHI Key outcomes - Development Planning:

Development Planning	2019-2020	2020-2021
Local and Strategic Development Planning:		
Age of local/strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period. Requirement: less than 5 years.	3 years and 3 months	4 years and 3 months
Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	Yes	Yes
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	No	Yes
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	No	Yes

Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs <sup>1</sup>	2019-2020	2020-2021
Established housing land supply	19,911 homes	21,331 homes
5-year effective housing land supply programming	10,816 homes (6,242)	10,675 homes (6,542)
5-year effective land supply total capacity	10,816 homes	10,675 homes
5-year housing supply target	7,509 homes	7,509 homes
5-year effective housing land supply (to one decimal place)	7.2 years	7.1 years
Housing approvals	2,015 homes	887 homes
Housing completions over the last 5 years	4,704 homes	4, 949 homes
Marketable employment land supply	210 hectares	210 hectares
Employment land take-up during reporting year	12 hectares	0 hectares

#### Commentary

The publication of the Proposed Local Development Plan was postponed primarily for two reasons. Firstly, the Local Development Plan Team were awaiting the publication of the Report of Examination on the Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan. It was not considered prudent to publish a Proposed Local Development Plan until there was awareness of any potential Modifications to the Strategic Development Plan. The Report of Examination was received in late January 2020, however the Strategic Development Plan was not approved by Scottish Ministers until August 2020. Secondly, there needed to be greater understanding of the potential impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic on undertaking a consultation during 2020. This is set out in detail in Case Study 5 relating to the Proposed Local Development Plan consultation.

With regard the housing land supply, the 5-year effective supply has continued to be robustly maintained. Housing approvals have reduced on previous years however given the scale of both

the 5-year and post 5-year effective land supply in combination with the established land supply there is confidence that there is a constant pipeline of development sites for both the medium and long term. Employment land take up has reduced and a clearer picture as to the reasons for this will emerge when the next Employment Land Audit is undertaken.

#### **B: NHI Key outcomes – Development Management:**

Development Management:	2019-2020	2020-2021
Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	13.6% (187)	12.65% (73)
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	16.6% (2)	61.5% (5)
Decision Making		
Application approval rate	95.0%	94.1%
Delegation rate	95.9%	98.6%
Validation	67%	58%
Decision-making Timescales		
Major Developments	28.1 weeks	31.4 weeks
Local developments (non-householder)	8.6 weeks	10.6 weeks
Householder developments	6.9 weeks	8.3 weeks
Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	12	22
Number remaining	19	24

#### **Commentary**

Performance in terms of average time to determine applications dipped during the reporting year as fully explained on page 47.

Approval and delegation rates remain high.

#### **C: Enforcement Activity**

	2019-2020	2020-2021
Time since Enforcement Charter published / reviewed. Requirement: review every 2 years	1 month	13 months
Complaints lodged and investigated	229	191
Breaches identified – no further action taken	163	103
Cases closed	115	139
Notices served	22	7
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	1	0
Prosecutions	1	0

#### **Commentary**

Enforcement continues to operate with only one Planning Inspector, however inspections are assisted on a part time basis by a Senior Planner. The Council's **Enforcement Charter** – updated in 2020 (**PM5**) – prioritises the most significant breaches of planning control to ensure the most effective use of the staff resource available in the long-term public interest. These identified priorities are cases of significant negative effects on public amenity (particularly in the City Centre), breaches of condition for major developments, damage to listed buildings and damage to trees protected by tree preservation orders. A notable issue within the reporting period has been the number of complaints and enquiries received related to the formation of new, temporary, outdoor seating areas, enclosed structures, or areas of decking related to existing cafes, restaurants and pubs as a result of the relaxation of planning controls as part of the Spaces for People project.

Of the 191 cases taken up and investigated across the City in this PPF year, 103 were identified as having planning related breaches. These required further action to resolve either through negotiation, submission of planning applications or formal enforcement action. The remaining 88 cases were, after investigation, identified to be 'permitted development', or works/activities established to be in compliance with a valid planning approval or permitted planning uses.

## Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics

#### A: Decision-Making Timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Timescales	2020-2021 Number or %	2020-2021 Average Weeks	2019-2020 Average Weeks
Overall			
Major developments	8	31.4	19.9
Local developments (non-householder) Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months	191 70.2% 29.8%	10.6 6.0 21.2	8.6 6.4 17.3
Householder developments Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months	271 82.3% 17.7%	8.3 7.0 14.5	6.9 6.5 13.9
Housing Developments			
Major Local housing developments Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months	4 22 54.5% 45.5%	45.9 15.2 6.3 25.8	29.8 13.5 6.5 18.9
Business and Industry			
Major Local business and industry developments Local: less than 2 months Local: more than 2 months	N/A 1 N/A 100%	N/A 27.1 N/A 27.1	30.4 9.8 6.5 18.9
EIA Developments	0	N/A	N/A
Other Consents	146	10.8	7.0
Planning/legal agreements Major: average time Local: average time	3 5	37.1 36.3	29.5 17.9

#### Commentary

See page 47.

#### **B:** Decision-Making: Local Reviews and Appeals

		Original decision upheld			
		2020-21 2019			9-20
Туре	Total number of decisions	No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	26	15	<b>57.7</b> %	6	28.6%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	9	5	55.6%	9	64.3%

#### **Commentary**

The Local Review Body reversed 15 (42.3%) of the 26 delegated decisions that it considered in 2020-21 – a considerable improvement on the 71.4% figure for 2019-20. In line with a PPF action from last year's report, the planning reasons for delegated refusals in 2019-2020 were carefully considered by the Team Leader (Applications) before sign-off to ensure the consistency and planning rationale for decision making. Further LRB Member engagement and training will be undertaken on the Council's planning policies and guidance, with an emphasis on householder applications, which are the predominant application type at LRB.

## Part 6: Workforce Information

#### **Our Planning Service**

Aberdeen's Planning Service is part of the Strategic Place Planning cluster, led by a Chief Officer, and within the Council's Commissioning Directorate. The Planning Structure of the Strategic Place Planning Service is illustrated as:

Chief Officer						
	Development Management Manager	Policy and Busines Strategy Suppor Manager Manage				
Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team	Major Applications Team	Applications Team	Local Development Plan Team	Environmental Policy Team	Application Support Team	
Team Leader	Team Leader	Team Leader Team Leader Team Leader		Team Leader		
Senior Planner x 3	Senior Planner x 5	Senior Planner x 2	Senior Planner x 1	Senior Environmental Planner x 1	Application Support Officer x 1	
Planner x 2	Planner x 1	Planner x 2	Planner x 3	Environmental Planner x 5	Application Support Assistant x 11	

	Tier 1 Chief Executive		Tier 3 Head of Service	Tier 4 Manager
Head of Planning Service	_	_	1	3

Staff Age Profile	Headcount	RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount
Under 30	3	Chartered staff	22
30-39	17		
40-49	18		
50 and over	3		

#### **Commentary**

The Workforce information above is a snapshot of the planning staff in position on the 31st of March 2021. The figures given take account of Officers from Development Management, Local Development Plan, Environmental Policy and a proportion of the Application Support Team (which is shared with Building Standards).

## Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committee & Site Visits	Number per year
Full Council meetings	3
Planning committees	10
Pre-Determination Hearings	2
Area committees	N/A
Committee site visits	0
Local Review Body	13
LRB site visits	0



## Appendix 1: Scottish Government Performance Summary

#### **Performance Markers Report 2019-2020**

In January 2021, the Scottish Government published its official feedback on Aberdeen City's planning performance for 2019-2020, as shown in the table below. This feedback included an assessment against performance markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action.

This feedback was reported to Members of the Planning Development Management Committee as a Service Update in May 2021. We believe this is a useful process in order to ensure that Councillors are aware of the Scottish Government's comments and feedback and can contact the Chief Officer of Strategic Place Planning to discuss any gueries, concerns or suggested future improvements.

The Planning Service gained 12 green indicators (targets met or exceeded/ performance improvement), 3 amber (targets not fully met) and no red indicators (targets not met/ declining performance).

No.	Performance Marker	RAG Rating	Comments
1	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Amber	Major Applications Your timescales of 28.1 weeks is slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 33.5 weeks. RAG = Amber Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your timescales of 8.6 weeks is slower than the previousyear but faster than the Scottish average of 10.9 weeks. RAG = Amber Householder Applications Your timescales of 6.9 weeks is slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 7.3 weeks and faster than the statutory timescale. RAG = Green Overall RAG = Amber
2	<ul> <li>Processing agreements:</li> <li>offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and</li> <li>availability publicised on website</li> </ul>	Green	You promote the use of processing agreements to prospective applicants and we note that there has been an increase in their use. <b>RAG = Green</b> You state that processing agreements are available on your website and provided a link. <b>RAG = Green</b> Overall RAG = Green
3	<ul> <li>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees</li> <li>availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and</li> <li>clear and proportionate requests for supporting information</li> </ul>	Green	You have provided examples of applications which have been subject to pre-application discussion. You have prepared 3 non-statutory advice documents during the year to assist with the provision of effective ad useful advice to stakeholders at pre-application stage. RAG = Green  You are working on a project to record the value added by the planning team and this will include during pre-application discussions. RAG = Green  Overall RAG = Green

4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Green	Your timescales for concluding legal agreements is faster than last year and faster than the Scottish average. You have processes in place to monitor progress.
5	Enforcement charter updated / republished within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was 22 months old at the end of the reporting period.
6	<ul> <li>Continuous improvement:</li> <li>progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and</li> <li>progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report</li> </ul>	Amber	Your decision making timescales are all slower than last year, your LDP and Enforcement Charter are up to date and but the number of legacy cases has increased.  RAG = Amber  You have completed 8 out of 15 improvement commitments and identified a good range of commitments to take forward in 2020-21.  RAG = Green  Overall RAG = Amber
7	<b>Local development plan</b> less than 5 years since adoption	Green	Your LDP was 3 years and 3 months old at the end of the reporting period.
8	<ul> <li>Development plan scheme – next LDP:</li> <li>on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and</li> <li>project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale</li> </ul>	Green	Your LDP is due to be replaced within the required timescale. <b>RAG = Green</b> It is clear from your report that you are project managing the replacement of your LDP to ensure the timescale for adoption is met. <b>RAG = Green</b> Overall RAG = Green
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation — if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year	Green	You report that elected member involvement (through member briefings) has been undertaken including sessions with the City's 13 Ward Members on the results from the MIR and intended content for the Proposed Plan.
10	Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation — if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year *including industry, agencies and Scottish Government	Green	You provided good evidence of engagement with crosssector stakeholders on the MIR through the use of an online consultation platform, newspaper articles, newsletters and social media posts which led to 633 representations being submitted.
11	Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on information required to support applications	Green	Your LDP remains up to date and contains a suite of associated supplementary guidance providing a land use framework for the City. You have prepared 3 non-statutory advice documents during the year to assist with the provision of effective ad useful advice to stakeholders at preapplication stage.

12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint preapplication advice)	Green	You provide examples of the engagement you have undertaken with other services on the development of your proposed plan including the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Grampian. Another example provided is the work with the Council's City Growth Service in assessing the Energy Transition Zone. Other examples provided includes working with SPEA, Scottish Water and SNH on strategic flooding, drainage and water abstraction issues on the River Dee.
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Green	You have shared examples of sharing good practice for instance through your Twinning Partnership with North Lanarkshire Council and included the range of subjects covered. You also participate in HOPS committees and conferences, a team member sits on the RTPI Scottish Executive Committee and contribute to Scottish Young Planners network and RTPI Grampian Chapter.
14	Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Amber	You have cleared 12 cases during the reporting year however, that means that 19 cases remain to determined which is an increase on last year.
15	<ul> <li>Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations</li> <li>set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and</li> <li>in pre-application discussions</li> </ul>	Green	Processes and procedures are in place to ensure that obtaining developer contributions runs efficiently. You have a Developer Obligations Officer who has responded to 136 requests for comments on planning applications, preapplication enquiries and follow up queries.  Your LDP, supported by supplementary guidance and masterplans, sets out expectations for developer contributions.  RAG = Green  Expectations for developer contributions are clarified in your pre-application discussions by the Developer Obligations Officer RAG = Green  Overall RAG = Green

## Appendix 2: Performance Marker Checklist

Where sections of this report demonstrate compliance with the performance markers this is clearly indicated in the text e.g. **PM1** 

	Performance Marker	Measure	Policy Background to Marker	Part of PPF report best suited to evidence this marker
DRI	VING IMPROVED PERFORMANCE			
1	Decision making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types	_	Official Statistics and PPF reports	NHI Scottish Government Official Statistics
2	Project management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and availability publicised on planning authority website	Y/N	Modernising the Planning System (Audit Scotland); SG website / template	NHI Quality of Service and Engagement;
3	<ul> <li>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications:</li> <li>availability and promotion of preapplication discussions for all prospective applications</li> <li>clear and proportionate requests for supporting information</li> </ul>	Y/N Examples	White Paper; Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps	NHI Quality of Service and Engagement
4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant <sup>3</sup>	Reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from same time last year)	Official statistics; PPF reports; evidence of delays to major developments	Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
5	Enforcement charter updated / re-published	Within 2 years	Planning Act (s158A)	NHI
6	<ul> <li>Continuous improvements:</li> <li>show progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators</li> <li>progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report</li> </ul>	Progress on all commitments	Delivering Planning Reform; PPF Report	Culture of Continuous Improvement Service Improvement Plan
	OMOTING THE PLAN-LED SYSTEM			
7	LDP (or LP) less than 5 years since adoption	Y/N	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy	NHI Quality of Outcomes Quality of service and engagement

8	<ul> <li>Development plan scheme demonstrates next LDP:</li> <li>on course for adoption within 5-year cycle</li> <li>project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale</li> </ul>	Y/N Y/N	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy	NHI Quality of Outcomes Quality of service and engagement
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Evidence of activity		Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
10	Cross-sector stakeholders, including industry, agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Evidence of activity		Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
11	Production of regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through supplementary guidance, on information required to support applications	Evidence of activity		Quality of Service and Engagement
SIM	PLIFYING AND STREAMLINING			
12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint preapplication advice)	Examples from the year		Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Evidence of activity to pass on and adopt good practice	Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps	Culture of continuous improvement
DEL	IVERING DEVELOPMENT			
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases: conclusion/ withdrawal of planning applications more than one-year-old	Reducing number of applications more than one-year-old (from same time last year)		Governance
15	Developer contributions: clear expectations  • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and  • in pre-application discussions	Y/N Examples		Quality of service and engagement

# Appendix 3: Training and Continued Professional Development (CPD)

Internal CPD is co-ordinated by the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team and arranged at a lunchtime using Teams to bringing everyone interested in the topic together to share learning, awareness and thoughts.

#### Passivhaus Standard (Matthew Clubb) 01/07/2020

Matthew Clubb <a href="http://mwclubb.co.uk/">http://mwclubb.co.uk/</a> about Passivhaus standard. The Passivhaus standard was first written in 1996 and was based on research on thermal comfort. Using the Passivhaus standard results in a house with no draughts and a stable temperature throughout. A mechanical ventilation system circulates warm fresh air throughout the building which guarantees high indoor air quality. A wonderful by-product of this approach is that very little energy is required to heat the home, most of the energy to heating comes from the sun, the appliances and the occupants living in it. Given the current climate crisis the Passivhaus standard is really the only way we can build new and reach net zero carbon. Matthew Clubb (BSc Architecture MEng (Hons)) is a Certified Passive House Designer, with previous extensive experience as a mechanical engineer, Matthew has a hands-on approach to design. Understanding how things are made makes for better design. He currently has a range of small projects across North East Scotland and works with specialist trades to deliver high quality designs and beautiful spaces.

#### BIM 'Building Information Modelling' in Practice (Blair Milne) 15/07/2020

Blair Milne (Director) from MAC Architects on the Building Information Monitoring (BIM) concept, which was featured as part of the 'Build It' conference in November last year, where the topic was 'embracing innovation, technology and skills development to achieve a sustainable future'. MAC Architects were founded in 2011 and are based in Newmachar with the company ethos to offer a constantly evolving pro-active approach to produce buildings of the highest design standards in close consultation with clients. The presentation provided a concise background to the Building Information Modelling concept, demonstrating the differences between Traditional and BIM project approaches, whilst also highlighting the challenges of implementing BIM to everyday working practice. The key benefits and possibilities of collaboration between professions, suppliers and contractors were also be discussed. Interspersed throughout the presentation were interactive demonstrations of BIM software in action including integration of structural, mechanical & electrical, supplier information, as well as export of scheduling and quantitative data.

#### Traditional Roof Slating – Virtual Recorded CPD 29/07/2020

Graeme Millar from <u>Bain and Irvine</u> delivered a CPD on Traditional Roof Slating for the <u>Scottish</u> <u>Traditional Building Forum</u>. The CPD was delivered online and was therefore recorded and available for a lunchtime session. The CPD was hosted on the Architecture and Design Scotland website, under their 'Material Considerations: A Library of Sustainable Building Materials' web resource – which showcases sustainable, traditional, innovative, recycled and low carbon building materials <a href="https://materials.ads.org.uk">https://materials.ads.org.uk</a>

## Spaces for People Project: Temporary measures for: physical distancing, supporting business back, etc. 10/12/2020

Presented by Claire McArthur and Nigel McDowell to discuss the various City Centre interventions and public realm projects in direct response to the Covid-19 pandemic and social distancing measures. Aberdeen successfully bid for £1.76M of SUSTRANS Spaces for People funding to enable physical distancing, encourage outside exercise and support business throughout the waves of the pandemic and the levels of restrictions in the city. The temporary measures introduced across the city are a mix of physical infrastructure predominantly carving space from carriageway using bollards as extensions of the footway, introduction of parklets, bus stances to control the temporary space and provide opportunities for queuing, seating and some soft landscaping, pedestrianisation of part of Union St and Belmont St to allow greater movement, as well as a holistic review of temporary café permit requirements to support business back and supporting senior management in communicating project awareness and public liaison.

#### Urban Realm Manual 10/02/2021

Presented by Nigel McDowell Senior Planner within the Masterplanning Design & Conservation team on the draft Urban Realm Manual which was read at the Council Management Team in February 2020. The draft manual is considered to be worthy as a Corporate Standard going forward and introduces to Aberdeen the concept of placemaking by reading existing streets and places, as well as planning for new development, on the basis of a planned structure of primary, secondary and tertiary place and movement hierarchy. The Standard considers the colour and detailing of Aberdeen's historic urban realm and translates this into an urban realm specification for the City Centre and all residential areas to balance aesthetic and practical considerations and therefore reduces demand management, provides a better self-serving approach with consistency in knowing future resource need.

## Adaptation & Re-use of Historic Buildings in Urban Centre Locations (Jon Frullani Architects) 24/03/2021

Blair Smith (Architect) and Ross Cathcart (Senior Architectural Technician) from Jon Frullani Architect Ltd. <a href="www.jfarchitect.co.uk">www.jfarchitect.co.uk</a> The presentation drew on Jon Frullani Architects' knowledge from Aberdeen and other locations, to give experiences on the various aspects associated with adapting existing buildings, specifically those that are listed, into residential projects. With the consideration of surplus office accommodation in the City Centre and the desire to see greater number of high-quality residences within the City Centre the practical examples and issues of conversion were a useful introduction to securing an appropriate methodology for an important part of creating sustainable places.

#### EIA, SEA, HRA & Energy, Sustainability, Policy and Planning

ACC Environmental Planner lecturers to the University of Aberdeen School of Biological Sciences MSc Students, and lecture by an Environmental Planner at Imperial College London to Aberdeen's MSc students in March 2021.

