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Angela Scott  
Chief Executive  
Aberdeen City Council

11 February 2020

Dear Angela,

## **PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FEEDBACK 2018-19**

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's 8<sup>th</sup> PPF Report for the period April 2018 to March 2019.

I believe that good progress continues to be made by authorities. Although there has been a small drop in the number of green ratings awarded this year and there remains some variation across some authorities and markers. I have been particularly impressed by the speed of determination of major applications in some authorities.

We are now pressing ahead with our programme of reform. In September 2019 we published "Transforming Planning in Practice" our work programme for implementing the provisions of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and wider planning improvements. We have also just launched our [www.transformingplanning.scot](http://www.transformingplanning.scot) website where you can keep up to date and involved with Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4), Digital Planning and the Planning Reform programme.

This is an exciting time for the planning system in Scotland with the preparation of NPF4 underway and the changes to the development planning and management systems to follow. We really value the input of your staff as expert users of the system and welcome their continued support in developing and implementing the planning system that we all want to see.



One of the first things I'm keen to address is planning resources, which is why we are consulting on increasing planning fees, moving them towards covering the full cost of determining applications and extending the range of services which authorities can charge for in exercising their planning functions. The consultation is due to close on 14<sup>th</sup> February and I hope that you will submit your views. I know applicants will expect to see continued improvement in performance and those increased fees invested in the planning service. This is why we are also consulting on how we measure and monitor the performance of the planning system at the same time.

If you would like to discuss any of the markings awarded below, please email [chief.planner@gov.scot](mailto:chief.planner@gov.scot) and a member of the team will be happy to discuss these with you.

Kind Regards



**KEVIN STEWART**

**CC: Gale Beattie**

## PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2018-19

Name of planning authority: **Aberdeen City Council**

The High Level Group on Performance agreed a set of performance markers. We have assessed your report against those markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action. The high level group will monitor and evaluate how the key markers have been reported and the value which they have added.

The Red, Amber, Green ratings are based on the evidence provided within the PPF reports. Where no information or insufficient evidence has been provided, a 'red' marking has been allocated.

No.	Performance Marker	RAG rating	Comments
1	<b>Decision-making:</b> continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Green	<p><b>Major Applications</b> Your timescales of 19.9 weeks are faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 32.5 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Local (Non-Householder) Applications</b> Your timescales of 8.1 weeks are faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 10.7 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Householder Applications</b> Your timescales of 6.8 weeks are faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 7.2 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
2	<p><b>Processing agreements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and</li> <li>availability publicised on website</li> </ul>	Amber	<p>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></p> <p>You state that processing agreements are available on your website however you have not provided a link. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Amber</b></p>
3	<p><b>Early collaboration</b> with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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	<p>Since the middle of last year, you began offering a pre-application advice service and validation guidance. Both of which are available online. You note the advice service in particular has received positive feedback from stakeholders and you are working on a customer charter/applications processing protocol. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>You provide case studies which demonstrate a clear and proportionate approach to requesting supporting information. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>

4	<b>Legal agreements:</b> 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 and help ensure conclusion within 6 months of reaching the minded to grant stage.
5	<b>Enforcement charter</b> updated / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was 10 months old at the end of the reporting period.
6	<b>Continuous improvement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>	Green	Your decision making timescales are all faster than last year, your LDP and Enforcement Charter are up to date and you have cleared a good number of legacy cases.  <b>RAG = Green</b>  You have completed 13 out of 18 improvement commitments and identified a good range of commitments to take forward in 2020-21. <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Green</b>
7	<b>Local development plan</b> less than 5 years since adoption	Green	Your LDP was 2 years and 3 months old at the end of the reporting period.
8	<b>Development plan scheme</b> – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>	Amber	Your LDP is due to be replaced within the required timescale. <b>RAG = Green</b>  It is not clear from your report how you are project managing the replacement of your LDP to ensure the timescale for adoption is met. <b>RAG = Red</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Amber</b>
9	<b>Elected members engaged early</b> (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>	Green	You report that elected member involvement (through member briefings) has already been initiated in preparation for the development of the MIR and the service shall consult with elected members at key stages of the bill. For example, the Place Standard tool was used to help community councils identify a broader range of issues.
10	<b>Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early</b> (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i> <i>*including industry, agencies and Scottish Government</i>	Green	You provided evidence of early engagement with cross-sector stakeholders in advance of the preparation of the MIR. Community organisations were targeted for this along with cross-service interdisciplinary teams.
11	<b>Regular and proportionate policy advice</b> produced on information required to support applications	Green	Your placemaking review to assess your master planning process has taken place to develop the services understanding of policy and practice requirements, this will translate into policy next year. Elsewhere, you began to offer a Pre-Application Advice service and Validation Guidance both of which are published and promoted online.
12	<b>Corporate working across services</b> to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)	Green	You provide examples of corporate working across services, seen in the Union Terrace Gardens case and listed building conversion case studies. In these cases, the services worked with other services and more effective protocols for service delivery were created. Elsewhere, you appointed the Planning Advisory Service to conduct an independent service review. This was used to inform an action plan focused on

			service improvement with some actions completed and others underway.
13	<b>Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge</b> between authorities	Green	You share good practice through peer reviews, with Edinburgh City Council acting as a PPF twinning authority. For the third year, you hosted students from the University of South Florida and other institutions for a collaborative workshop on urban regeneration.
14	<b>Stalled sites / legacy cases:</b> conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Green	You have cleared 32 cases during the reporting year however, that means that 20 cases reached legacy status during the reporting period. We note the number has been halved as per your improvement commitment.
15	<b>Developer contributions:</b> clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and</li> <li>• in pre-application discussions</li> </ul>	Green	Your LDP, supported by supplementary guidance and masterplans, sets out expectations for developer contributions. The recruitment of an in-house Developer Obligations officer should assist in making expectations clearer to developers. <b>RAG = Green</b>  Expectations for developer contributions are clarified in your pre-application discussions. Your pre-application advice note enshrines this in your teams protocols. <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Green</b>

**ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL**  
**Performance against Key Markers**

Marker		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
1	Decision making timescales							
2	Processing agreements							
3	Early collaboration							
4	Legal agreements							
5	Enforcement charter							
6	Continuous improvement							
7	Local development plan							
8	Development plan scheme							
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR)			N/A	N/A	N/A		
10	Stakeholders engaged early (pre-MIR)			N/A	N/A	N/A		
11	Regular and proportionate advice to support applications							
12	Corporate working across services							
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge							
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases							
15	Developer contributions							

**Overall Markings (total numbers for red, amber and green)**

<b>2012-13</b>	2	3	10
<b>2013-14</b>	1	4	10
<b>2014-15</b>	1	3	9
<b>2015-16</b>	0	2	11
<b>2016-17</b>	0	5	8
<b>2017-18</b>	0	2	13
<b>2018-19</b>	0	2	13

**Decision Making Timescales (weeks)**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2018-19 Scottish Average
Major Development	87.8	88.6	47.6	24.1	43.9	23.1	19.9	32.5
Local (Non-Householder) Development	16.2	15.9	16.6	14.3	13.0	10.2	8.1	10.7
Householder Development	9.8	10.0	12.8	12.8	8.7	7.3	6.8	7.2