

SERVICE UPDATE

<u>Name of Function:</u>	Strategic Place Planning
<u>Date:</u>	3 June 2021
<u>Title of Update:</u>	Planning and Development Management Committee: Scottish Government feedback on Aberdeen's Planning Performance Framework Report 2019/20
<u>Report Author:</u>	Daniel Lewis
<u>Chief Officer:</u>	Gale Beattie
<u>Contact Details:</u>	Email: dlewis@aberdeencity.gov.uk

UPDATE:

This Service Update Report:

- briefs Members on the highlights of the Aberdeen City annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF) 2019-20 submitted by the Chief Officer - Strategic Place Planning to the Scottish Government in July 2020. The PPF is a benchmarking annual service improvement and performance review undertaken by all Scottish local planning authorities.
- brings to Members' attention the extremely positive and welcome feedback received from Scottish Government in December 2020 on the content of Aberdeen's PPF 2019-20.

Members are encouraged to read the full PPF 2019-20 report which can be found at:

[planning-performance-framework-report-2019-20-aberdeen2.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](#)

(The Scottish Government feedback is appended to this report).

The PPF demonstrated the impressive diversity and scope of work carried out by the Council's Strategic Place Planning Service during 2019-20 in sustaining and delivering improved performance for quality placemaking in what was an operationally challenging year.

In addition to the key areas of workstreams showcased, by in-depth case studies, some notable highlights include:

- Uninterrupted ability to maintain the planning service utilising Teams technology at the onset of the pandemic. The agile use of technology through use of 'virtual' on-line meetings ensured our continued connectedness to one another and the communities and industries that we serve.

- The re-opening of the remodelled Art Gallery, the Music Hall and the inauguration of TECA/P&J Live in the Autumn 2019 - bringing to a successful conclusion the role planning played, from inception to conclusion, in supporting the creation of these world-class destinations in the city.
- The introduction of a health and wellbeing focus in the proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2022 thereby embedding the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Planning Act 2019 and the public health priorities for Scotland within our land use planning framework directing development and shaping sustainable communities.
- Approval of 'Aberdeen Adapts' the climate framework for the city as a pre-cursor to our Carbon Zero Strategies and following the opening of the AWPR. The continued focus on sustainable transportation is delivering inherent reduction in private and freight traffic within the city centre area as a key milestone in improving our infrastructure connections and enabling City Centre Masterplan vision for Aberdeen to be a local, regional and national destination.
- 2020 saw the conclusion of the European 5-year funded Civitas Portis (City Vitality and Sustainability in Port Cities) programme. Aberdeen is classed as an 'Advanced City' by introducing active and sustainable travel integration with physical infrastructure, technologies and communication to support better and more sustainable use of our urban environment, and the attractiveness of the city region as a place to be in.
- The responsive and collaborative pre-application and application procedures that we introduced supported delivery of the planning approvals associated with the Aberdeen City Early Learning and Childcare expansion programme. This programme responded to the Scottish Government commitment to expand the provision of childcare and prioritise a high-quality experience for early learners in order to contribute to better development and attainment in life.
- The promotion of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan Main Issues Report through a diversity of communication media prompted over 600 representations helping ensure that the LDP provides primacy as the land-use framework for the city.
- Committee approval was given for 3 non-statutory advice documents - 'Development Along Lanes', 'The Use of External Cladding Materials in Aberdeen' and the 'Loirston Development Framework'. These documents will help support placemaking, strengthen diversity in the built environment and encourage local distinctiveness in development.
- The timescales for concluding legal agreements associated with planning applications was faster than the previous year and by

comparison to the Scottish average. There has also been an increase in the use of processing agreements and the average speed of determination of all application types was better than the Scottish average.

- A peer review was undertaken virtually with Dundee City Council. Whilst the virtual opportunity lacked the immediacy of visiting Dundee and seeing their projects, we provided a full day programme of discussion on our service improvement and best practice.

Summary of Scottish Government Feedback

In December 2020, the Scottish Government published official feedback on the Strategic Place Planning Service performance and our overall markings were:

- 12 'Green' indicators - targets met or exceeded/ improved performance.
- 3 'Amber' - targets not fully met, &
- 0 'Red' indicators - targets not met/declining performance.

(All 3 'Amber' markings are under the headings '**Decision Making Timescales**', '**Continuous Improvement**' & '**Stalled sites / Legacy Cases**):

1) Decision Making Timescales - The Development Management Teams endeavoured to maintain performance against a backdrop of decreased staff resource (there were eight unfilled case officer vacancies as of 31 March 2020). As a direct result, planning performance in terms of speed of decision making for Major Development applications took a dip in 2019-2020. Nonetheless, taking into account the staffing situation outlined the Team did exceptionally well to maintain a similar performance level to the previous year in all other application categories. Performance was better than the Scottish Local Planning Authority average in all three of the National Headline Indicator categories of planning applications.

2) Continuous Improvement – is measured as an aggregate of the 'Decision Making Timescales, the relevance of the current Aberdeen Local Development Plan and the Enforcement Charter, both of which are up to date, as well as the statistics on the Stalled Sites & Legacy Cases.

3) Stalled Sites & Legacy Case – The number of legacy cases (those undetermined for more than a year) increased in 2019-2020. In the year 12 cases were cleared with 19 remaining to be determined, comparing 2018/19 in which 32 were cleared with 12 legacy cases remaining. The dip in performance can be explained in part by the staff resourcing issue outlined above.

Drafting the Planning Performance Framework for 2020-21 is currently ongoing and will be submitted to Scottish Government for assessment in July 2021.