



T: 0300 244 4000

E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Angela Scott
Chief Executive
Aberdeen City Council

17 December 2020

Dear Angela,

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FEEDBACK 2019-20

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's ninth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, for the period April 2019 to March 2020.

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for enabling planning services to continue to operate during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been a difficult year for so many, and our planning system has a vital role to play in Scotland's green recovery. The impact which the pandemic has had, has demonstrated how valuable planning is from ensuring that businesses can operate flexibly to the contribution that it can make to the Places that are so important for our communities in terms of having access to the services they need, to greenspace and other areas where families can walk, wheel and cycle safely.

Turning to the 2019-20 PPF reporting year, I believe that good progress continues to be made by Scotland's planning authorities. Overall, there has been an increase in the number of green ratings awarded this year, with a subsequent reduction in red ratings, however, there remains some variation across some authorities and markers. I have been particularly pleased to see improvements in the speed of determination of major planning applications in some authorities.

When I wrote about performance reporting last year, I indicated that a consultation on Planning Performance and Fees was underway, including preparations for the new performance arrangements being introduced through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019; with our intention at that time being that the proposed changes would be implemented in Summer 2020. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has required a rethink about the timing and a wider reprioritisation of our work programme.

I would like to reassure you that, while we have paused the changes to the fees and performance legislation, I am committed to ensuring that planning authorities are properly resourced and that planning fee levels are proportionate. We will pick this up again when the timing is more appropriate.



Finally, although the Covid-19 pandemic will have impacted on the tail end of the 2019-20 reporting year, I appreciate the impacts on service delivery will show through more in the 2020-21 reporting year. The Planning statistics for the first 6 months of the reporting year are due to be published in January, which will provide the first indications of how the pandemic has affected the ability of authorities to determine applications. I would like to reassure you that I will consider, in liaison with the High Level Group on Planning Performance, how next year's reports will be assessed, so that authorities are not unfairly criticised due to circumstances outwith their control. It could also provide an opportunity to recognise the vital actions taken by planning authorities to maintain the planning system and its contribution to recovery.

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

Yours sincerely



KEVIN STEWART

CC: Gale Beattie

PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2019-20

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	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Amber	<p>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</p> <p>Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your timescales of 8.6 weeks is slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 10.9 weeks. RAG = Amber</p> <p>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</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
2	<p>Processing agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and availability publicised on website 	Green	<p>You promote the use of processing agreements to prospective applicants and we note that there has been an increase in their use. RAG = Green</p> <p>You state that processing agreements are available on your website and provided a link. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
3	<p>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information 	Green	<p>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 and useful advice to stakeholders at pre-application stage. RAG = Green</p> <p>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</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>

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 / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was 22 months old at the end of the reporting period.
6	Continuous improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	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	Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption	Green	Your LDP was 3 years and 3 months old at the end of the reporting period.
8	Development plan scheme – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and • project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	Green	Your LDP is due to be replaced within the required timescale. RAG = Green It is clear from your report that you are project managing the replacement of your LDP to ensure the timescale for adoption is met. RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green
9	Elected members engaged early (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 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 – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i> <i>*including industry, agencies and Scottish Government</i>	Green	You provided good evidence of engagement with cross-sector 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 and useful advice to stakeholders at pre-application stage.
12	Corporate working across services 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 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	Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions 	Green	<p>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, pre-application enquiries and follow up queries.</p> <p>Your LDP, supported by supplementary guidance and masterplans, sets out expectations for developer contributions. RAG = Green</p> <p>Expectations for developer contributions are clarified in your pre-application discussions by the Developer Obligations Officer RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL
Performance against Key Markers

Marker		12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20
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)

2012-13	2	3	10
2013-14	1	4	10
2014-15	1	3	9
2015-16	0	2	11
2016-17	0	5	8
2017-18	0	2	13
2018-19	0	2	13
2019-20	0	3	12

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)

	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	2019-20 Scottish Average
Major Development	87.8	88.6	47.6	24.1	43.9	23.1	19.9	28.1	33.5
Local (Non-Householder) Development	16.2	15.9	16.6	14.3	13.0	10.2	8.1	8.6	10.9
Householder Development	9.8	10.0	12.8	12.8	8.7	7.3	6.8	6.9	7.3