ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

Front Cover: New construction, North Esplanade West.

contents

Vision

The vision for Aberdeen is to be a city which is vibrant, dynamic, forward looking, where people can expect high-quality services that meet their needs. This means making a visible difference to the quality of the city's urban and natural environment by promoting high quality development and providing an effective infrastructure to make us a world class strategic location.

To do this we must think strategically, facilitate development, engage positively with communities and the business sector and be open and transparent in our decision making. We also have a key role in delivering the vision for the City and Shire as expressed through regional plans and strategies. We are tasked with seeing that Aberdeen stays at the forefront of planning for the future.

1 National Headline Indicators (NHIs)

Key Outcomes	2014-2015	2013-2014
Development Planning		
• Age of local/strategic development plan(s) (years and months) at end of reporting period. *Requirement: less than 5 years*	3 Years	2 Years
• Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	Y	Y
• Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	N	N
• Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	Y	Y
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs		
• Established housing land supply	21,406 units (City)	21,948 units (City)
• 5-year effective housing land supply	6,575 units (City)	6,287 units (City)
• 5-year housing supply target	7,827 units (AHMA*)	9,459 units (AHMA)
• 5-year effective housing land supply *(to one decimal place)*	7.7 years (AHMA)	6.2 years (AHMA)
• Housing approvals**	5805 units	2126 units
• Housing completions over the last 5 years	3208 units (to 1/1/14)	2874 units (to 1/1/13)
• Marketable employment land supply	140 ha	166ha
• Employment land take-up during reporting year	26 ha	26ha

Key Outcomes	2014-2015	2013-2014
Development Management		
Project Planning		
• Percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice	36%	38%
• Number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	3	3
• Percentage planned timescales met	0%	100%
Decision-making		
• Application approval rate	94.0%	95.8%
• Delegation rate	96.2%	94.3%
Decision-making timescales		
Average number of weeks to decision:		
• Major developments	47.6	88.6
• Local developments (non-householder)	16.6	15.9
• Householder developments	12.8	10.0
Legacy Cases		
• Number cleared during reporting period	48	N/A
• Number remaining	57	N/A
Enforcement		
• Time since enforcement charter published/reviewed (months) *Requirement: review every 2 years*	2***	1
• Number of breaches identified/resolved	175/121	160/121

Notes :
* AHMA = Aberdeen Housing Market Area.
** Housing Approvals total includes Planning Permission in Principle.
*** Planning Enforcement Charter (Revised May 2013).

Short Contextual Statement

The focus of effort in the last year has been to prioritise improvements to the speed and efficiency of dealing with major development applications in response to average determination times that were below the Scottish average in 2013-14 and the consequent identification of this as being in the "red" category in the Scottish Government's Annual Planning Performance Report. Determination times have improved from 88.6 weeks in 2013-14 to 47.6 weeks in 2014-15 – a figure that, whilst still very much a focus for further attention, is now better than the Scottish average for 2013-14 (Performance Marker 1). The recruitment of additional senior level staff (including two experienced Senior Planners) and more of a focus on project management by case officers, systematically monitored

by Team Leaders, has had a significant bearing on this improvement which is expected to continue as recently recruited staff gain workload and experience.

Conversely, there has been a small increase in the average determination time for local and householder development applications. Factors that contributed to this decline in performance include:-

- clearing of legacy cases – 48 in the year

- a period of unprecedented turnover of staff in the Application Support Team which has significantly slowed down the validation process (see supporting information[1])

- a very significant increase in the number of Local Review Body cases (from 7 to 25), combined with the introduction of pre-application forum meetings (27 proposals considered in the year) in line with a Scottish Government requirement/best practice: both of which have demanded considerable staff resource

- planning officer level vacancies in the applications team which have only recently been filled (including maternity leave)

- in common with previous years, the time taken to determine the legal agreements, whilst improving, had a significant impact on the figures and is a factor over which the planning service has limited control. It should be noted, however, that the average time from "willingness to approve" to decision on an application subject to a legal agreement has halved from 53.94 weeks (2013-14) to 26.75 weeks (2014-15)[2]

In the coming year it is expected that several factors will result in improved performance and a reduction in average determination times as detailed in the body of this report including:-

- introduction of Stop the Clock Procedure for the first time - as of April 2015

- implementation of new ICT processes and restructuring of administration

team, including the appointment of a Support Manager – from July 2015

- fully staffed Applications Team – as of May 2015

- recruitment of additional staff into the Applications Support Team

- contracting out of the majority of legal agreements.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is expected that the projected implementation of a new computerised applications system, which will ultimately provide an improved and more efficient application management, is likely to have an unavoidable short-term negative impact on processing times for a period of 2 or 3 months. Measures will be put in place to mitigate this impact as far as possible and the impact will be compensated for by long term permanent improvements in the speed of decision making in forthcoming years.

The production of the next Local Development Plan remains on target, with the Proposed Plan being published for a 10-week public consultation between March and June 2015. Therefore the next LDP remains on course to be adopted in 2016. The established housing land supply has remained broadly similar to the figure for 2013-14, as has the 5-year effective land supply which continues to show a healthy land supply in the Aberdeen Housing Market Area. In Aberdeen City, only a small number of new housing sites (of five units and over) have come forward this year. Progress has been made as expected on most existing sites with completions remaining broadly in line with figures from the last five years. There have been no significant changes to the proportion of effective and constrained sites.

2 Defining and measuring a high-quality planning service

The report focuses on the improvements and new developments in the planning service since the submission of PPF 2013-14. Unless otherwise indicated it should be taken as read that all the activities and service actions detailed the PPF 2013-14 are still being undertaken. In accordance with the request from the Planning Minister, Appendix 1 – Performance Markers cross references to relevant evidence in the main PPF report and service actions (e.g. PM1, 2, 3 etc.) to show how the planning service is specifically addressing each of the Performance Markers produced by the Heads of Planning Scotland High Level Group and, if not met, the steps being taken to meet the marker.

Open for Business

Local Development Plan

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan (ALDP)[1] was adopted in 2012 (PM7). It has a very strong focus on development delivery, providing the development industry and the general public with clear guidelines on the likely infrastructure requirements that are needed to support development. This level of transparency helps to promote certainty, trust and confidence that necessary infrastructure, such as new schools and medical facilities, will be delivered alongside development.

The ALDP identifies a number of masterplan areas within which developers are being expected to work together to prepare Masterplans for each zone and co-ordinate the delivery of associated infrastructure requirements. The requirements for each masterplan area have been set out in the ALDP Action Programme[2], a live document which is updated quarterly to reflect changes and to identify any new actions, keeping the development industry, Elected Members and the public as up to date as possible on the likely infrastructure requirements for development within masterplanned areas (PM9).

Since the ALDP's adoption in 2012, the Council has worked closely with developers to bring forward area-based Development Frameworks and masterplans. There are currently 34 such documents which provide clear and specific guidelines for the development of sites on the ground (PM10).

During the last year, a Proposed Plan and comprehensively revised Supplementary Guidance (SG)[3] has also been prepared, and was subject to public consultation between 20th March and 1st June 2015. This means that the Proposed Plan is on course for adoption in accordance with the planned timescales (PM8). The Proposed Plan includes a comprehensively reviewed and revised Infrastructure and Developer Contributions SG (PM11) which will facilitate reasonable and proportionate developer contributions to ensure that appropriate levels of infrastructure (schools, healthcare, community facilities, affordable housing etc) will be provided for all new development (PM15).

The Council is making progress on implementing the Strategic Infrastructure Plan (SIP)[4], which focuses on developing and enabling infrastructure to maximise growth and diversify Aberdeen's economy. The SIP brings together the work that is being delivered through a variety of plans and strategies and will help act as a mechanism for ensuring that the City has the infrastructure in place to support the delivery of the Development Plan. The SIP was an award winner in the 2014 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning.

Officers in the Planning Service are also actively involved in putting together Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Council's bid for a City Region Deal[5] which will potentially deliver up to £2.9 billion of investment in the region, again supporting the delivery of the Development Plan.
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Development Management

Officers have continued to work closely with colleagues from Asset Management, Education, Housing, Legal and other services to help deliver the sustainable economic development of the City. In the last year procedures have been put in place to consult Asset Management on all applications with a Council land ownership interest and with the new Head of Economic Development on all applications with potentially significant economic benefit to the City as a whole[6] (PM12).

In terms of prioritisation of workload it has been agreed at service-level that priority will normally be given to the following:-

• developments that are considered to have a significant City-wide economic benefit and that are in accordance with Development Plan policy as identified by Head of Planning and Sustainable Development in tandem with the Head of Economic Development

• developments that would make a significant contribution to achieving corporate strategic objectives including the objectives and aims of the Development Plan (Strategic and Local Development Plans), Strategic Infrastructure Plan, Smarter Aberdeen, Single Outcome Agreement and City Centre Masterplan etc. (eg affordable housing).

One example case study of collaborative working to deliver the sustainable physical development of the City is provided by the Countesswells Place Group which has been established to develop a partnership approach to placemaking on a significant site of 3,000 new homes, employment land and community facilities.[7,8] The Group includes the Planning Service, the Development Consortium, NHS Grampian, Scottish Enterprise, Education, Asset Management and other service providers as required. The remit of the Group is to explore new ways of public service delivery through the implementation of the framework and masterplan for the forthcoming mixed use community of Countesswells to the west of the City.

The Group has a strong focus on quality of place, as well as efficiencies in public and private sector delivery. The successful outcomes from the Group will be applied to other masterplanned areas of the city (PM3).

This year Team Leaders in the Applications Team have introduced scheduled workload meetings (every two or three weeks) with every case officer. These facilitate the active monitoring of performance and determination timescales and enable advice and instruction to be given to resolve any application related issues. All major and significant applications have not just an allocated case officer, but also a support case officer and a management contact[9]. The more important of these are included as part of a standing agenda item at the weekly Management Team meetings so that the management team has an overview of progress and can act to intervene or chase if required (PM6).

The more project managed approach to application handling facilitated by processing agreements continues to be actively promoted and developed (see Certainty section below) (PM2).

The Council (officers and elected members) has continued its active involvement in the Trinity Group: a high level partnership panel that provides a forum for public and private sector leaders to help facilitate the delivery of development in and around the City. Activity has included engagement with Scottish Water resulting in improvements to communication and customer service for the development sector in the City, and input into the Scottish Government's discussion paper on Planning Permission in Principle and Section 42 applications[10] (PM10).

As an example of partnership working - a joint workshop on Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems was held between SEPA, SNH, Scottish Water and officers from the Council's Roads Projects, Flooding and Planning Teams, resulting in a jointly agreed action plan[11] (PM12 and 13).

High quality development on the ground

The Planning Service has a Masterplanning, Design and Conservation (MDC) team that provides expertise on those matters to support the development management process and in developing policies in the ALDP (PM11).

Masterplanning

Development Frameworks are now adopted for all major allocated greenfield sites in the ALDP. Each of these is currently progressing through detailed phased masterplanning, planning permission in principle or detailed planning applications. All major development frameworks and masterplans are now adopted as supplementary guidance, providing certainty of quality in streetscape, townscape and landscape. The most recent are highlighted below:

Masterplan	Adoption
Persley Den, Woodside Masterplan[1]	May 2014
Countesswells Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan[2]	July 2014
Newhills Development Framework[3]	January 2015

In the last year the adopted masterplanning process has been refined to ensure that design quality parameters are explicit and ensure consistency. The masterplanning work has also provided an effective conduit for public engagement in the pre-application process[4] (PM3).

The Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan and Delivery Programme is nearing completion following extensive public engagement, key agency and stakeholder participation. The current draft masterplan contains a variety of projects that focus on quality of outcomes for the physical, economic and social regeneration of the city centre. The draft masterplan is supported by a business case and development programme that will ensure practical delivery and quality outcomes in a 25 year framework[5].

The Service continues to foster relations with the Scott Sutherland School of Architecture at the Robert Gordon University, this year jointly procuring a 3D city centre virtual model to support the development and delivery of the City Centre Masterplan.

The Nigg Development Framework has been developed in partnership with Aberdeen Harbour Board to facilitate the planned implementation of a new harbour for the City and deliver critical infrastructure identified by National Planning Framework 3[6]. A detailed Harbour

Illustration of proposed Nigg Bay harbour

Masterplan will be prepared following the completion of the development framework.

Craibstone and Rowett South Masterplans are nearing completion to support the Newhills Development Framework. Masterplans are also being co-ordinated for both the new and existing AECC sites at Rowett North and AECC Site, Bridge of Don respectively. Rowett North[7] presents proposals for relocation of the AECC. The existing AECC Site, Bridge of Don[8] is also masterplanned to co-ordinate its redevelopment once vacated.

Early engagement in the masterplanning process with key stakeholders, including Elected Members, SEPA, SNH, Historic Scotland, Scottish Water, Transport Scotland and Sportscotland, is facilitated through workshops (PM3 and 9).

Planning Briefs

There have been challenges to the development of quality places in the last year where design input has led to positive outcomes. One case study exemplar is the redevelopment of Cornhill Hospital[9]. The Service has used the skillset in the MDC team to generate a positive design quality outcome for the proposed development, helping to negotiate improvements to scale, massing, architectural detail, retention and refurbishment. Figure 1 shows the layout as first submitted and Figure 2 shows the final approved layout illustrating changes to improve the quality of the layout, including the introduction of a central avenue of open space, strong urban form with street facing blocks etc. Although a successful outcome, the protracted negotiation in this instance has highlighted the need to provide clearer guidance up front on the redevelopment of similar sites. With that in mind a programme of site specific planning briefs has been identified to ensure efficiencies in the development management process.

Placemaking

The Service has drafted the brief and co-ordinated procurement of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan, including PQQ, ITT, industry day, workshops with the City Centre Regeneration Working Group and inception. The procurement was evaluated on 70% quality against 30% cost and endorsed by Council.

The Countesswells Placemaking Group has been set up – see Open for Business section above.

Design Quality

The Service has developed a protocol for engagement between the MDC and Development Management (Applications) Teams and others in dealing with listed buildings, conservation areas, masterplanning and design quality in development (PM12). The team are actively involved in pre-application discussions to front-load design and placemaking advice to speed up the planning process (PM3). In an effort to develop this service further a weekly "design surgery" is being trialled with a senior urban designer[10].

A Local Design Review Panel is run jointly with Aberdeenshire Council and has considered 9 applications in Aberdeen City in terms of design and placemaking (PM13). In 4 of these, design improvements were negotiated through peer review. The quality in a further 4 projects presented was confirmed[11]. The Service is committed to carrying out a full review of the Local Design Review Panel to ensure relevance and improve efficiency, impact and outcomes.

The Service has provided specialist design advice to applicants, agents and Council colleagues, and in the procurement stages of Council projects, such as the development of Marischal Square, the new AECC and the City Centre Masterplan, as well as on planning applications and design policies and technical advice notes.

Figure 1: Cornhill Hospital, original proposed layout

Figure 2: Cornhill Hospital, revised urban layout

The Service is currently developing a streetscape manual to provide clear guidance and certainty in the delivery of masterplans. Led by MDC and involving the Roads Development Management and Construction Consent teams, this initiative supports the Scottish Government's Aligned Consents Project (PM11).

Conservation

Responding to the economic climate and in direct response to the volume and complexity of applications, Historic Scotland has this year commenced monthly visits to the City, similar to Edinburgh and Glasgow. Building on the "removal of duty to notify" procedure previously agreed with Historic Scotland the internal protocol adopted this year means that applications for listed building or conservation area consent are "signed off" by conservation accredited officers – with Aberdeen appearing to be the only authority in Scotland to have such a quality control system in place[12].

An additional planner has now been recruited in to the Service to provide a more effective link between development management and conservation functions, in an effort to address previously identified issues of a lack of capacity to process.

The Service will continue to support the IHBC accreditation of planning staff and deliver a programme of conservation and urban design CPD events to enable a broader understanding of specialist issues.

Building on the 6 Conservation Area Character Appraisals finished last year, Appraisals and Management Plans have been completed for a further 2 of 11 of the City's conservation areas to assist in decision making[13,14,15] (PM11). Two of the remaining three are programmed for completion by the end of 2015 with the final (Union Street) appraisal to be reviewed in conjunction with the delivery of City Centre Masterplan. The appraisals have developed early engagement protocols which have resulted in effective communication. For example,

in Old Aberdeen engagement on the draft appraisal led to early designation of extensions to the conservation area to prevent inappropriate development. Completed appraisals have also been cited in reporters' decisions, including in some detail 55 Carden Place (LBA-100-2002).

As the character appraisals near completion, the Service will develop and publish an historic environment strategy. To support this the Service will develop a series of Technical Advice Notes and develop and publish conservation area guidance for residents.

MDC participated in 2 national workshops on Historic Environment Scotland Act 2014: Secondary Legislation initiated by Historic Scotland. A consultation response on Secondary Legislation was approved by the Planning Development Management Committee on 19 March 2015.

The Service continues to support the Aberdeen City Heritage Trust to deliver conservation grant schemes in the City Centre and over the last year has been working with the Trust to apply for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme for the east end of the City Centre[16, 17].

Certainty

Aberdeen Local Development Plan

The ALDP is up to date and is robustly and consistently applied. In 2014-15 only 8 applications were recommended for approval by officers that were initially identified and advertised as being contrary to the adopted LDP. All were justified on grounds that they were no longer considered to be departures or that other material considerations outweighed the provisions of the Plan. In accordance with the up to date Development Plan Scheme, the review of the ALDP is on course to produce a revised document within the 5-year statutory time frame and involves collaborative working across the Planning and Sustainable Development Service as well as other Council Services (PM12). The Proposed Plan[1] was published for public consultation in March 2015. The ten week consultation began on Friday 20th March and is due to end on Monday 1st June 2015. Thereafter the Service will make formal responses to representations received and submit the Proposed Plan to the Scottish Government in late 2015 (PM7 and 8).

The Department for Planning and Environmental Appeals is updated on the progress of the Proposed Plan so that the Examination may proceed as smoothly and efficiently as possible. A meeting has been arranged to discuss requirements for the Examination, which is due to begin at the end of 2015.

Environmental Policy

A review of Tree Preservation Orders has been carried out in the last year and is ongoing, to ensure that all historic TPOs have been confirmed and that they are valid, accurate and relevant.

Development Management

Service protocols are in place with all key internal and external consultees to ensure consistency and reliability of application advice (MDC, Roads, Environmental Health, Legal Services, Planning Obligations Team and Key Agencies). Regular scheduled liaison meetings are held between the Development Management Manager and the legal, asset management and environmental health team leaders (PM12).

Action has been taken to address the concerns identified in last year's PPF and PPF report about the time taken to deal with legal agreements due to resource constraints within the Council's Legal Service (PM6). As of March 2015 a major Scottish law practice (Brodies) has been contracted to handle legal agreements on the Council's behalf - post willingness to approve. Brodies is also to finalise the Council's draft legal agreement template and provide legal agreement training to planning staff. These measures are expected to help ensure consistency and overcome current delays in finalising legal agreements. In the next year a process will be put in place for reconsideration of legal agreements within 6 months of resolving to grant (PM4).

An audit (by PWC) of the Council's process for dealing with Section 75 Agreements found that "generally the process for the management of S75 agreements was good". It identified a number of points of good practice, including the integration of the process into the LDP, alignment with relevant Circular 3/2012, recording of S75s on a central database and appointment of a single responsible officer to run the process. Actions identified to be addressed over the next year were the documentation and mitigation of risk of non-payment of developer obligations and more effective reconciliation of data to ensure that payments are not missed. Although these are not the responsibility of the Planning Service they do impact upon it.

Processing agreements continue to be actively promoted in pre-application discussions, on the website and in writing upon submission of all proposal of application notices[2] (PM2 and 3). Five applications with processing agreements have been approved - up from 3 last year but, disappointingly, only 3 of 17 major applications had processing agreements. One of the main factors affecting take up has been applicants' unwillingness to provide all the necessary supporting information up front at the time an application is lodged – an essential prerequisite of any processing agreement (PM15). It is acknowledged that more work is required from the planning authority to streamline and simplify the processing agreement template along with guidance and education to promote to officers, applicants and agents. This will be a priority of the first few months of 2015-16 (see DM Team Plan).

Progress has been made on the alignment of the Roads Construction Consent (RCC) and the planning process. The Council is now actively promoting a Stage 1 and Stage 2 RCC Process. The level of detail expected at each stage is documented and agents have been actively involved in developing the process. The management of the RCC process within the Roads Projects Team has been reconfigured under two team leaders responsible for the two stages. Planning applications are expected to be submitted at the same time as the associated Stage 1 RCC Process. The Roads officer responsible for the Stage 1 RCC is the same as the officer commenting on the associated planning application so that the two consenting processes run in parallel and inform one another. In tandem, the Council has continued to work collaboratively with the Scottish Government on its Aligning Consents project[3].

Customer satisfaction feedback obtained through questionnaires has identified the need to improve consistency of advice between pre-application and application stages as being paramount. With this in mind, an online pre-application form (with drag and drop functionality for sites without a street address) is in the latter stages of development. This should facilitate and improve customer service at the pre-application stage and help ensure consistency of advice throughout the planning process (PM3 and 6).

North Esplanade West

Communications, engagement and customer service

Customer Service Excellence Award (CSE)[1]

Development Management attained CSE accreditation in June 2013 and this was externally audited and reconfirmed this year with the number of partial compliances remaining at two. However, two compliance pluses were noted for the customer consultation strategy and action plan and the corporate social responsibility programme. CSE has been adopted as it provides a practical tool for driving customer-focused change and assesses areas that research has indicated is a priority for customers:

- Delivery
- Timeliness
- Information
- Professionalism
- Staff attitude

CSE also provides an effective management system by:

- Developing a framework for continuous improvement
- Providing a skills and assessment development tool
- Creating a benchmark via independent validation by which to assess if the services are meeting customers' needs and requirements.

Customer Service Charter and standards

Customer service targets in the Development Management and Enforcement Charters were reviewed in 2013 and will be reviewed in 2015/16 as Aberdeen City Council moves to develop a corporate customer charter. Performance has been monitored via mystery shopping using our library service and internal monitoring. The performance results have been publicised online (PM5). Examples of associated service improvements due to performance monitoring are as follows:

- Updated customer contact protocol[2],
- Smarter working protocol[3] designed to implement effective mobile working
- Introduction of smart phones.
- Shared access to staff voicemail

Translation and hard of hearing services are now available and if a customer is unable to visit the office, arrangements can be made for a home visit.

Customer feedback

The customer consultation strategy and action plan ensures that an annual programme of questionnaires, consultations, focus groups, workshops and feedback are scheduled with customer groupings.

The annual customer satisfaction figures for Development Management are high with 95% satisfaction for 2014 and 92% for 2015. Key areas of feedback are detailed in table 1 along with service improvements.

Customer feedback	Service improvements
Improve staff contact	• Updated customer contact protocol and smarter working protocol for mobile working • All staff have mobile / smart phones • Second point of contact for major applications • Team code of voicemail access if member off staff is unavailable
Consistency of advice	• Developing web based pre-application forms which will ensure consistency of advice recorded and accessible to all planning staff • Updating supplementary guidance, site briefs and masterplans in order to provide more certainty / consistency of advice
Improve response times	• Quarterly response times online • Improved internal monitoring for tracking applications • Admin review initiated Dec 2014 to streamline processes and procure a more fit for purpose IT system
Redesign website	• A planning web developer has been employed to redesign and implement work programme developed by customers

D2 Offices, Dyce. From Newhills.

Web site redesign

It has been acknowledged via customer satisfaction questionnaires and focus groups that the Council's planning web pages require to be redesigned. An Agent's workshop was held to assist with developing the web design brief and work programme. Community Councils have also been consulted and their suggested improvements have also been included in the work programme. In order to progress the project a planning web developer has been appointed and improvements to date include dynamic links between the planning register and committee reports along with a pre-application form system. The next stage will be to develop a 'Do I need planning permission?' interactive section. The aim is to encourage more customers to be able to self-serve on the website with a community and business portal (PM6).

It should be noted that the percentage of valid Development Management applications submitted online continues to increase (48% for 2014-15 – up from 36% for 2013-14) and there is a continuing trend for online submission of larger scale applications (online applications accounting 64% of all fees for 2014-15 compared with 44% in 2013-14).

Community involvement

A Community Council Processing Agreement has been developed and a liaison group established to ensure the development of productive partnership working and service improvements.

Learning from complaints

Planning and Sustainable Development collect level 1 complaints via a compliments, comments and complaints card available in all meetings rooms and main reception. Customer feedback can also be provided via a planning suggestions email address if customers would prefer to send in comments / complaints digitally. Staff are also encouraged to make suggestions to improve services through a corporate initiative, employee voice.

Communicating with customers

The Aberdeen Local Development Plan has a Facebook page[4], which is used to provide up-to-date information to a wide range of customer groups on consultation events and developments. A newsletter is also circulated to all customer groups and is available online.

The regular liaison meetings with the Community Council Forum have continued during the year and this relationship is now better than it has been since the Community Council Forum was first established. A major achievement resulting from this dialogue has been the agreement by both the Planning Service and the Community Council Forum of a Processing Agreement on the Planning Process – establishing mutually agreed procedures, expectations and terms of engagement.

Local Development Plan

Through consultation, community and business bodies are fully engaged in the Local Development Plan process, in accordance with the Development Plan Scheme Participation Statement.

Interested parties are kept informed of the process at all key stages, for example through the improved ALDP e-mail newsletter which continues to be an efficient and effective means of reaching stakeholders. The Service has also publicised public consultation events using social media, including Facebook and Twitter[4], which are regularly updated. The Service also make use of the Aberdeen City Council website, and placed a half-page colour advert in a local newspaper advertising events[5].

Statutory key agencies and internal stakeholders have been actively engaged in the production of the Proposed Plan. Three workshops[6] have been held in 2014/15, at key milestones in the Local Development Plan process. A presentation was given, followed by a roundtable discussion of the content of the emerging

ALDP. Issues discussed included major developments, specific sites and cross-boundary issues. Feedback was then used to update and amend the plan as appropriate.

Elected Members are also engaged regularly, at key milestones for the Local Development Plan. The Service has held two Members' Drop-in sessions where all Members' were invited to come and ask questions or discuss concerns about the progress and content of the Proposed ALDP (PM9). This 'drop in' format was arrived at as a result of direct feedback from Elected Members on how they wished to be involved in plan preparation. In addition, all Members were sent a hard copy of the Proposed Plan and given full details of consultation events being held around the city.

The Proposed Plan consultation involved 9 drop in sessions held around the city where members of the public could ask questions, discuss the ALDP, get advice on how to respond to the Proposed Plan and also hear about the next stages in the Plan process. The Service also produced an advice leaflet and easy-to-use response form to aid people in making responses. The LDP Team has also pioneered a pro-active engagement programme with schools for engaging young people in the local development plan process that was a winner in the 2014 Scottish awards for Quality in Planning[7] (PM10).

The results of all consultation exercises that are undertaken as part of the production of the Proposed ALDP will be reported to Committee later in 2015 and will be published online.

Efficient and effective decision-making

Aberdeen City Council is one of, if not the only, Scottish Council to fully implement all the key provisions of the Scottish Government "Guidance on Role of Councillors in Pre-Application Discussions" (February 2014) (PM3). A Pre-Application Forum was established this year as a separate committee of the Council to consider all major applications at the pre-application stage. The Forum constitutes members of the Planning Development Management Committee and relevant ward Members and operates according to clearly defined procedures[1]. Feedback indicates that the Forum is considered by officers, Members and applicants to be an effective mechanism for enabling members to raise concerns or make comment at the pre-application stage which inform the subsequent application (PM6).

The number of Local Review Body meetings has increased very significantly compared with last year from 7 to 25 with 72 percent of officer decisions upheld. LRBs are programmed to a frequent fixed schedule – but flexibility is also used to arrange these on an ad hoc basis in response to determination timescales.

Further systematic action has been taken this year to clear legacy applications with 48 cleared during the reporting period. Further effort will occur in the forthcoming year to determine, or prompt withdrawal, of the 57 remaining legacy cases that will have a positive impact on performance figures (PM14).

Ongoing action on review of the Administration and ICT Systems and reconfiguration of the validation function in relation to applications is reported in "Continuous Improvement" Section below.

Stop the Clock processes (based on HOPS draft guidance) were introduced for the first time late in the year and are expected to contribute towards improvements in average application determination times in the next reporting period[2].

The Scheme of Delegation has proven to be effective in streamlining the decision making process with 3.8 percent of all applications reported to Committee in the year (compared with 5.7 percent in 2013-14).

The percentage of valid Development Management applications submitted online continues to increase (48% for 2014-15 against 36% for 2013-14) and the continuing trend of larger scale applications (online applications accounting 64% of all fees for 2014-15 against 44% in 2013-14). Implementation of credit and debit card phone payment has been actively progressed and likely to go live in the next few months.

Over the coming year the Environmental Policy Team will be establishing regular open surgeries for Development Management professionals, to support effective decision making.

Reviews of the City's Open Space Audit and Core Paths Plan will take place to ensure planning decisions are informed with robust and relevant up to date information.

Effective management structures

Planning and Sustainable Development has now become part of a wider Communities Housing and Infrastructure Service providing new opportunities for joint working and integration with related services (eg Environmental Health)[1] (PM12).

At least 3 "Town Hall" Meetings are held every year involving all staff in P&SD to promote and facilitate staff engagement in service planning and partnership working[2].

All Team Plans are up to date and continuously reviewed with actions and timescale focussed on key priorities that are explicitly linked to the objectives of the Council's Five Year Business Plan and the Council's Vision of "Aberdeen — The Smarter City", as well as the main criteria of a high performing planning service laid down in the Planning Performance Framework.

For example the Development Management Team Plan reviewed and updated in March, has a suite of actions (and associated designated lead officers and timescales) that focus on three key priorities of speed, efficiency and consistency of decision making, customer service and improving the design quality of the built environment[5].

In response to the identified shortfall in staff resource identified last year, and utilising the additional fee income generated, additional posts have been created and filled, including two Senior Planners, a Planner and five administrative support staff in the DM Applications, MDC and Application Support teams.

All managers are the subject of '360 degree' feedback from their direct reports and other colleagues. Results from the process show a high level of confidence in the managers' leadership abilities.

Staff are encouraged to move within the service and the organisation to make best use of skill sets and tailor resources to workload priorities. As an example, staff from the LDP team are currently seconded to both the Development Management team and the Regeneration and Housing Investment Teams (PM12).

Some examples of collaboration with other business areas in the Council and other public bodies are detailed in the preceding sections of this report. In terms of collaboration with neighbouring authorities, joint working and liaison has continued to increase and become more integrated over the last year. A shared archaeological service has now been added to the existing shared service for developer obligations and strategic environmental assessment. Preliminary discussions have started on shared planning administration and ICT functions. A jointly agreed planning protocol for dealing with development proposals related to the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) has been agreed and both Councils resolve shared issues through a regular AWPR liaison group[6] (PM13).

Financial management and local governance

Income from planning fees (£1.43M) in the financial year 2013-14 was £50K more than last year and this increased fee income has been reinvested in the additional staffing in planning service (see above) to cater for workload stemming from Aberdeen's still relatively buoyant development industry.

As part of the Smarter Working initiative that is being rolled out Council wide, all development management case officers now have laptops and smart phones, enabling them to work from home or from any workstation in Marischal College. The use of Microsoft Lync has been rolled out in parallel to facilitate rapid communication and track location of staff, as well as enabling document sharing and video communication/conferencing.

Both planning managers have regular monthly meetings with the service accountant to ensure that budgets are on track and fee income is monitored and spend targeted and tailored accordingly.

Culture of continuous improvement

At corporate level the way that the Council operates is now based on "Shaping Aberdeen"[1] that includes five key objectives identified in the Strategic Infrastructure Plan and three key improvement drivers (customer experience, staff experience and the use of resources). The objectives and drivers have been used as the basis for service planning and improvements, including informing the new service structure, plans on a page and key priorities for Team Plans.

A newly created Support Manger is about to take up post in the Service and is expected to play an important role in terms of supporting change and continuous improvement and embedding culture change.

Further tailor made training in planning decision making, local review body procedures and the new pre-application forum procedures has been offered to all Councillors and delivered to all those who were able to attend - both in large groups and on a one-to-one basis – constituting the majority of all elected members. In the coming year the intention is to inaugurate a joint training/workshop session involving both Community Councils and Elected Members to promote dialogue as well as learning.

Officers across the planning service provide a series of in-house CPD talks and discussion groups throughout the year on topics relevant to Aberdeen. As examples:

• a focussed workshop, led by the MDC Team, was held with the whole Development Management Team to explore the way in which the services can ensure design quality and reflect on Aberdeen's recent "Plook on an Plinth" Award[2]

• The Environmental Policy Team held a workshop with the DM team on using Green Space Network Tool in the planning application assessment process. This was part of the package of work for the SAQP shortlisted Sustainable Urban Fringes Project.

The Service has continued its active participation in the SOLACE Benchmarking Groups for both Development Management and Development Planning, as well as the relevant HOPS parent and sub-committees - with representatives attending all meetings. One example of an improvement that has been made as a result is the formulation and adoption of Validation Guidance and a Validation Checklist in line with HOPS draft guidance (see earlier) (PM13).

A comprehensive review of the administrative and ICT provision for the entire Planning and Sustainable Development Service is well underway with an emphasis, in the first phase, on the ICT system and administrative structure for application support (Planning and Building Standards applications)[3,4]. A new application and integrated document management system is to be tendered for and implemented this coming year and the Application Support Team will subsequently be restructured under a newly appointed Support Manager who takes up post in July (PM3 and PM11).

As an initial step in the restructure the phased incorporation of the validation function into the Application Support Team has started and will continue over the next few months: giving a single point of responsibility for validation for all applications and helping to eliminate delays due to hand offs and ensure consistency of application and interpretation of validation criteria. Validation checklists based on the HOPS Development Management Sub Group draft document have been produced to facilitate this process and will be promoted on the website and via a workshop with the Agents' Focus Group.

An action in this year's Development Management Team Plan is to develop "Added value" indicators to assess the development on the ground by the development management process.

In the coming year the Environmental Policy Team will develop and deliver a series of Environmental Policy talks / seminars to Development Management to disseminate information and build understanding of effective Policy to implementation.

An internal consultations protocol is being developed within the Environmental Policy Team. This aims to ensure more streamlined consultation within the team and with other teams, especially the Development Management Team, for input into masterplans and applications, speeding up the time of responses, as well as offering skills development / sharing across team members to ensure business continuity.

Aberdeen beach and City lights

3   Suporting Evidence

Part 1:National Headline Indicators

1 Application Support Team
Leavers = 6 permanent + 4 temps = 10
New starts = 9 permanent + 4 temps = 13
Hours spent on recruitment process (including temps) 227 hrs = 6.1 weeks
Hours spent on training = 1165.5 hours= 31.5 weeks
7 permanent staff still having on-going training.

2 See attached electronic document "Applications with legal agreement (timescales)"

Part 2 Defining and measuring a high-quality planning service

- **Open for Business**

1 Aberdeen Local Development Plan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/local_development_plan/pla_local_development_plan.asp

2 Action Programme

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/local_development_plan/pla_aldp_action_programme.asp

3 Supplementary Guidance

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/local_development_plan/pla_aldp_supplementary_guides.asp

4 Strategic Infrastructure Plan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?lID=54562&sID=17090

5 City Region Deal

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?lID=63430&sID=26262

6 See attached electronic document "Consultation with Asset Management"

7 See electronic attachment "Countesswells PLACE action note 1"

8 See electronic attachment "Countesswells PLACE action note 2"

9 See attached electronic documents "Large Developments case officers and contacts"

10   See attached electronic documents "Trinity Group Meeting – 3 November 2014"

11   See attached electronic documents "SUDS Workshop" 16 January 2015

- **High Quality Development on the Ground**

1 Persley Den, Woodside Masterplan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?lID=56138&sID=2991

2 Countesswells Development Framework and Phase 1 Masterplan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?lID=59292&sID=14394

3 Newhills Development Framework

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?lID=60798&sID=14394

4   Aberdeen Masterplanning Process

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/planning_sustainable_development/pla_masterplan_process.asp

5   Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/council_government/shaping_aberdeen/City_Centre_Masterplan.asp

6   Nigg Development Framework and Masterplan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=64864&sID=2991

7   Draft Rowett North Masterplan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=64936&sID=2991

8   Draft AECC Site, Bridge of Don

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=64900&sID=2991

9   Cornhill Hospital planning application

http://planning.aberdeencity.gov.uk/PlanningDetail.asp?ref=120241#

10   MDC Protocol - see attached electronic document

11   Local Design Review Panel

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/planning_sustainable_development/pla_design_review_panel.asp

12   Aberdeen Local Development Plan: Proposed Plan 2016

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/local_development_plan/pla_2016_proposed_plan.asp

13   Draft Old Aberdeen Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=61708&sID=2991

14   Cove Bay Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/conservation/pla_conservation_area_08.asp

15   Pitfodels Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/conservation/pla_conservation_area_10.asp

16   Aberdeen City Heritage Trust Business Plan

http://www.aberdeenheritage.org.uk/uploads/downloads/acht_business_plan_201215.pdf

17   Aberdeen City Heritage Trust Annual Report

http://www.aberdeenheritage.org.uk/uploads/downloads/acht_annual_report_201314.pdf

• Certainty

1   Aberdeen Local Development Plan: Proposed Plan 2016

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/planning_environment/planning/local_development_plan/pla_2016_proposed_plan.asp

2   Processing Agreements Guidance

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=53630&sID=15040

3   See attached electronic documents "Aligned Consents (SG Project)"

- **Communications, engagement and customer service**

   1 See attached electronic document "CSE Customer consultation strategy and action plan"

   2 See attached electronic document "Customer Contact Protocol"

   3 See attached electronic document "Smarter Working Guidance"

   4 Facebook

   https://www.facebook.com/pages/Aberdeen-Local-Development-Plan/121238731367123; Twitter: @AberdeenLDP

   5 See electronic document "Colour advertisement in Press and Journal Friday 17th April 2015"

   6 See electronic document "Key Agency Workshops"

   7 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2014

   http://scotgovplanningarchitecture.com/2014/08/08/engaging-young-people/

- **Efficient and Effective Decision Making**

   1 Pre-application Forum Guidance and minutes

   http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/documents/g3554/Public%20reports%20pack%20 06th-Nov-2014%2014.00%20Pre-Application%20Forum.pdf?T=10

   2 See electronic document "Stop the Clock Guidance"

   3 Organisational Structure

   http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=65420&sID=2050

   4 See electronic attachment "Staff Town Hall Meeting – 11 November 2014"

   5 See electronic attachment "DM Team Plan"

   6 See electronic attachment "AWPR Liaison Action List"

- **Culture of Continuous Improvement**

   1 Shaping Aberdeen

   http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/council_government/shaping_aberdeen/ shapingaberdeen_home.asp

   2 See attached electronic documents "Design Workshop"

   3 See attached electronic document "ICT and Admin Review Project Bulletin"

   4 See attached electronic document Admin and ICT review – project governance document"

4 Service Improvements 2015-16

In the coming year the Service will make the following improvements:-
(Lead Team in brackets where applicable)

Open for Business

- Reconfigure the DM Team to facilitate the processing of major applications, including consideration of a Major Projects Team (DM)

High Quality Development on the Ground

- Actively input and participate in wider Council projects, such as the Strategic Infrastructure Plan, City Centre Masterplan and City Region Deal to support the delivery of the Development Plan

- Complete the Nigg Development Framework and Harbour Masterplan as outlined in National Planning Framework 3 (MDC)

- Develop detailed phased masterplans to support adopted development frameworks as arising, including specifically Craibstone, Rowett South, Rowett North, Bridge of Don (former AECC site) and Grandhome (part of the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative programme) (MDC)

- Develop a Streetscape Manual for Aberdeen to provide clear guidance and certainty in the delivery of masterplans and support the Scottish Government's Aligned Consents Project (MDC)

- Develop and deliver a programme of 6 conservation and urban design CPD events (MDC)

- Carry out a full review of the Local Design Review Panel to ensure relevance and improve efficiency, impact and outcomes (MDC)

- Develop and publish an Historic Environment Strategy for Aberdeen (MDC)

- Develop and publish Conservation Area Guidance for residents (MDC)

Certainty

- Implement a robust Consultation Protocol between Development Management and Environmental Policy (EP/DM)

- Progress alignment of Planning and Roads Construction Consent Processes (DM)

- Introduce procedure for reconsideration of legal agreements within 6 months of "resolving to grant" (DM)

Communications, Engagement and Customer Service

- Maintain Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the Development Management Team and achieve and implement accreditation for Local Development Plan and Environmental Policy Teams

- Make innovative improvements to how the Service monitors the ALDP and make this information available to the public, by producing a comprehensive and easy-to-use bulletin about new developments being approved and built in the city (LDP)

- Review and amend processing agreement guidelines and template and actively promote to applicants and agents (DM)

Culture of Continuous Improvement

- Continue to encourage and enable staff training in more detailed knowledge of specific topic areas, planning-related competencies and transferable skills

- Support staff towards gaining Chartered Membership of the RTPI, and support secondments to other teams to gain a broader experience

- Reconfigure and redesign the planning pages of the website, including a pre-application enquiry facility

- Bring tree protection orders up to date and implement high hedges legislation (EP)

- Review the Open Space Audit to ensure it is current, relevant and appropriate to underpin a review of the City's Open Space Strategy in 2016/17 (EP)

- Review the Core Paths Plan to ensure it is current, relevant and appropriate (EP)

- Implement a new application and electronic document management system and reconfigure administrative support to facilitate and enable electronic workflow (DM)

Delivery of service improvements actions in 2014-15

Committed improvements and actions	Complete?
Local Development Plan Team • **Committed Improvements and Actions** Monitor the infrastructure constraints to the delivery of development through the LDP Action Programme and, where appropriate, instigate Action Programme Delivery Days with developers and relevant key agencies to overcome barriers. • **Action Taken** Two Delivery Day workshops held with key agencies which have included developers, representatives from across the Planning Service, other Council Services and relevant Key Agencies. • **Evidence** See 'Open for Business' section of PPF report.	Yes
Environmental Policy Team • **Committed Improvements and Actions** Ensure that computerised application system can accommodate environmental consultations. • **Action Taken** Members of the Environmental Policy Team have been enabled to provide responses to planning consultations via this method. Need to roll this out for entire Team. • **Evidence** Draft consultation protocol.	Ongoing
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Ensure that tree protection measures arising from planning conditions are more effective by specifying more rigorous protection in the conditions and by monitoring that the measures are in place before development commences. • **Action Taken** More rigorous conditions are now specified. Ongoing monitoring of tree work by arboricultural planner.	Ongoing

Development Management (Applications) Team • **Committed Improvements and Actions** Carry out a comprehensive project managed review of resourcing, procedures and information systems in relation to the application administration and consider and implement any recommendations of the review. • **Action Taken** Project manager appointed and review carried out overseen by a project board. Approval given and funding made available to purchase a new integrated casework and electronic document management system. Mini completion to progress over next two months. • **Evidence** See Culture of Continuous Improvement Section.	Ongoing
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Consider reconfiguring team structure/ new ways of working in accordance with new structure of P&SD and to address current staff resource, including recruitment of new staff and introduction of Major Projects team. • **Action Taken** City Development Services Manager post in new structure to be re-advertised. New Support Manger appointed but yet to take up post. Review on hold until both managers are in post. • **Evidence** To be provided on completion in next year's PPF.	Ongoing
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Introduce a Pre-application Forum for Councillors to discuss major development proposals at the pre-application stage in line with Scottish Government guidance. • **Action Taken** Forum established and procedures put in place. Operating effectively. • **Evidence** See Efficient and Effective Decision Making Section above.	Completed

• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Continue the programme of continuous improvement of the information systems with the aim of improving efficiency, effectiveness and customer service focussing on: (i) web site improvements implemented through an inter–service focus group and assisted by a newly recruited web developer to enable amongst other things real time tracking of application progress and a map based application search and planning alerts facility (ii) recording of pre-application enquiries/discussions (iii) electronic workflow and mail monitoring (iv) fully implement electronic payment (phone payment by credit/debit card) • **Action Taken** (i) Web developer recruited and a programme of improvements underway (ii) Pre-application enquiry web form being trialled (iii) New casework and electronic document management system about to be tendered for (iv) Electronic payment system in latter stages of development • **Evidence** See Communications, Engagement and Customer Service Section above.	Ongoing
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Implement a programme of measures to address application determination speed including (i) an update and streamlining of the Processing Agreement template and guidance (ii) a procedure for reconsideration of applications with legal agreements within 6 months of "willingness to approve" • **Action Taken** Outstanding actions - priority actions in Team Plan for first few months of 2015-16	Ongoing
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Continue to work together with the Community Council Forum to finalise a Processing Agreement and planning training. • **Action Taken** Liaison meetings have continued and a Processing Agreement has been agreed. • **Evidence** See Communications, Engagement and Customer Service section above.	Complete

Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team	

• **Committed Improvements and Actions**
Develop a City Centre Masterplan and Delivery Programme including:
 	
  -   Co-ordinating procurement of multi-disciplinary team
 	
  -   Working with key partners and external agencies
 	
  -   Ensuring effective public engagement and ownership of the masterplan
 	
• **Action Taken**
Multi-disciplinary consultancy team led by BDP appointed May 2014. Final Draft Masterplan and Delivery Programme to be reported to Council in June 2015 for approval.
 	
• **Evidence**
Series of public engagement workshops, exhibitions and consultations taken place in September and November 2014, March 2015, City Centre Working Group established with key partners from Scottish Enterprise, Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce, Robert Gordon University, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen City and Shire Economic Futures, Visit Aberdeen and Aberdeen City Council. See High Quality Development on the Ground Section above.
	Complete

• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Co-ordinate the preparation of detailed phased masterplans supporting development frameworks for Countesswells, Newhills and Grandhome. • **Action Taken** Phase 1 Masterplan for Countesswells approved with development framework; Craibstone and Rowett South Masterplans presented as draft masterplans June 2015 to support respective applications for Planning Permission in Principle to deliver Newhills Development Framework; detailed roads and design workshops in preparation for Grandhome Phase 1 Masterplan undertaken. • **Evidence** See High Quality Development on the Ground Section above ref Countesswells and Newhills.	Ongoing
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Develop a masterplan for a new harbour at Nigg Bay with Aberdeen Harbour Board. • **Action Taken** Work in partnership with Aberdeen Harbour and Scottish Enterprise Grampian to prepare a draft development framework. Consultants team appointed, extensive stakeholder engagement undertaken. • **Evidence** Draft Development Framework (target committee August 2015)	Ongoing

• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Introduce a design surgery to support development management application assessment. • **Action Taken** Trial undertaken in Spring 2015 with a view to rolling out permanently. • **Evidence** MDC protocol established and included in DM portal.	Complete
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Review the Design Review Panel remit, membership and operations. • **Action Taken** Internal review underway with a detailed panel member review due to take place in summer 2015. Updates including refresh of process and panel membership to be complete by September 2015. • **Evidence** Evidence in next year's PPF.	Ongoing
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Develop detailed design policy to support the ALDP. • **Action Taken** Team workshops to test, update existing and develop new design and conservation policies. • **Evidence** Proposed ALDP published February 2015, consultation completed June 2015.	Ongoing
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Complete appraisals for 4 conservation areas - Old Aberdeen, Pitfodels, Cove and Footdee • **Action Taken** Draft Old Aberdeen CA Appraisal complete, including extensive liaison with Heritage Society and Community Council. Draft Footdee CA Appraisal due to be reported by October 2015 (consultation due August 2015), Pitfodels and Cove CAs complete. • **Evidence** See High Quality Development on the Ground Section Old Aberdeen, Cove Bay, Pitfodels	Ongoing
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Continue IHBC accreditation training. 3 candidates programmed for application submission 2015, 4 for 2016. • **Action Taken** Tailored training plans for each of the 7 candidates, mentored by senior conservation officer. Liaison and support from IHBC as pioneering pilot scheme. • **Evidence** Individual professional development training plans. See High Quality Development on the Ground Section.	Ongoing

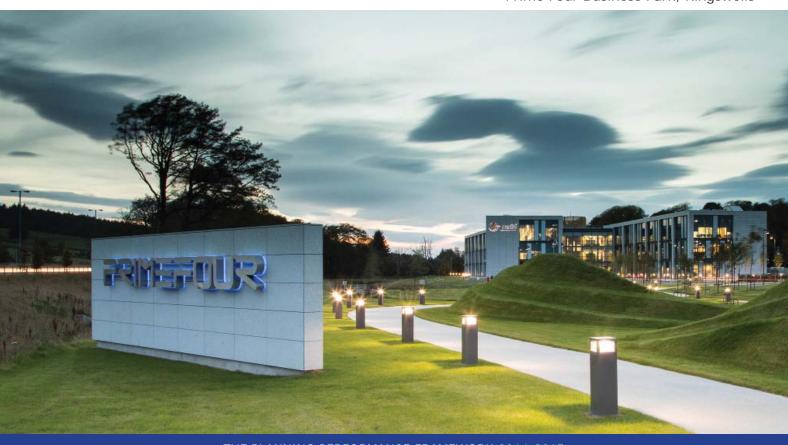|	
• **Committed Improvements and Actions** Continue to support the Aberdeen City Heritage Trust. • **Action Taken** Funding secured from Historic Scotland to 2018. ACHT Business Plan approved, Project Officer part of MDC team and co-located in Marischal College. • **Evidence** See High Quality Development on the Ground Section ACHT Business Plan: ACHT Annual Report.	Ongoing

Prime Four Business Park, Kingswells

5 Official Statistics

A: Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Category	Total number of decisions 2014-2015	Average timescale (weeks)	
		2014-2015	2013-2014
Major Developments	**17**	**47.6**	88.6
Local developments (non-householder)	494	16.6	15.9
• Local: less than 2 months	177 (35.8%)	6.9	6.6
• Local: more than 2 months	317 (64.2%)	22.0	22.6
Householder developments	**676**	12.8	10.0
• Local: less than 2 months	248 (36.7%)	7.2	7.4
• Local: more than 2 months	428 (63.3%)	16.0	13.9
Housing developments			
Major	**2**	70.1	110
Local housing developments	**86**	22.2	-
• Local: less than 2 months	16 (18.6%)	7.1	8.5
• Local: more than 2 months	70 (81.4%)	25.7	35.5
Business and industry			
Major	**4**	62.1	38
Local business and industry	**68**	15.5	16
• Local: less than 2 months	18 (26.5%)	7.1	7.6
• Local: more than 2 months	50 (73.5%)	18.6	24.2
EIA developments	0	0	12.3
Other consents*	270	17.1	17.3
Planning/legal agreements**	14	45.8	82.3
• Major: average time	3	63.4	-
• Local: average time	11	41.0	-
Local reviews	25	5.8	5

Notes :

* Consents and certificates: Listed buildings and Conservation area consents, Control of Advertisement consents, Hazardous Substances consents, Established Use Certificates, certificates of lawfulness of existing use or development, notification on overhead electricity lines, notifications and directions under GPDO Parts 6 & 7 relating to agricultural and forestry development and applications for prior approval by Coal Authority or licensed operator under classes 60 & 62 of the GPDO.

** Legal obligations associated with a planning permission; concluded under section 75 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 or section 69 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

B: Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

| Type | Total number of decisions | Original decision upheld | | | |
| | | 2014-2015 | | 2013-2014 | |
		Number	%	Number	%
Local reviews	25	18	72%	3	42.8%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	10	4	40%	5	55.5%

C: Enforcement activity

	2014-2015	2013-2014
Cases taken up	175	198
Breaches identified	216	160
Cases resolved	121	121
Notices served***	7	11
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

*** Enforcement notices; breach of condition notices; planning contravention notices; stop notices; temporary stop notices; fixed penalty notices, and Section 33 notices.

Townhouses, Stoneywood

D: Context

The focus of effort in the last year has been to prioritise improvements to the speed and efficiency of dealing with major development applications in response to average determination times that were below the Scottish average in 2013-14 and the consequent identification of this as "red" category in the Scottish Government's Annual Planning Performance Report. Determination times have improved from 88.6 weeks in 2013-14 to 47.6 weeks in 2014-15 – a figure that, whilst still very much a focus for further attention, is better than the Scottish average for the 2013-14. It is considered that the recruitment of additional senior level staff (including two experienced Senior Planners) and more of a focus on project management by case officers, systematically monitored by Team Leaders, has had a significant bearing on this improvement which is expected to continue as recently recruited staff gain workload and experience.

Conversely there has been a small increase in the average determination time for local and householder development applications. Factors that contributed to this decline in performance include:-

- clearing of legacy cases – 48 in the year

- a period of unprecedented turnover of staff in the Application Support Team which has significantly slowed down the validation process (see ref for evidence)

- a very significant increase in the number of Local Review Body cases (from 7 to 25) combined with the introduction of pre-application forum meetings (27 pre-application proposals considered in the year) in line with a Scottish Government requirement/ best practice:- both of which have demanded considerable staff resource

- planning officer level vacancies in the applications team which have only recently been filled (including maternity leave

- In common with previous years the time taken to determine the legal agreements had a significant impact on the figures and is a factor over which the planning service has limited control.

In the coming year it is expected that several factors will result in improved performance and a reduction in average determination times as detailed in the body of this report including:-

- introduction of Stop the Clock Procedure for the first time - as of April 2015

- implementation of new processes and restructuring of administration team including the appointment of a Business Support Manager

- fully staffed Applications Team – as of May 2015

- recruitment of additional staff into the Applications Support Team

- contracting out of the majority of legal agreements

Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is expected that the projected implementation of a new computerised applications system, which will ultimately provide an improved and more efficient application management, is likely to have an unavoidable short-term negative impact on processing times for a period of 2 or 3 months. Measures will be put in place to mitigate this impact as far as possible and the impact will be compensated for by long term permanent improvements in the speed of decision making in forthcoming years.

6 Workforce and Financial Information

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Head of Planning and Sustainable Development			1	

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

		DM	DP	Enforcement	Other
Manager	No. Posts	3	1.86	-	2.5
	Vacant	-	0.14	-	-
Main grade posts	No. Posts	15.5	9	2.5	9.5
	Vacant	-	-	-	-
Technician	No. Posts	4	-	-	2
	Vacant	-	-	-	-
Office Support/Clerical	No. Posts	7.5	-	-	-
	Vacant	0.5	-	-	-
Total		31	11	2.5	14

Note : Staff in the Masterplanning,Design and Conservation Team which is part of the larger DM team but who do not handle applications and staff in Environmental strategy with more than 50 percent planning related workload are now both recorded as Other. The Application Support team is split 50/50 in terms of work between Development Management and Building Standards so the total number of posts has been halved to indicate the resource exclusive to the planning function.

Staffing Age Profile	Number (approx.)
Under 30	18
30-39	22
40-49	10
50 and Over	8

Committees and site visits*	No. per year
Full Council committees	9
Planning Committees	13
Area Committees (where relevant)	N/A
Committee site visits	4
LRB**	27
LRB site visits	2

Notes :

*   *References to committees also include National Park Authority Boards. Number of site visits is those cases where visits were carried out by committees/boards.*

** *this relates to the number of meetings of the LRB. The number of applications going to LRB are reported elsewhere.*

	Total Budget	Costs		Income***
		Direct*	Indirect**	
Development management	500,735	1,523,137	131,166	1,438,669
Development planning	586,651	322,983	99,876	0
Enforcement	Subsumed in DM and DP Budgets			
Other				
Total	1,087,386	1,846,121	231,043	1,438,669

Notes:

*   *Direct staff costs covers gross par (including overtime, national insurance and superannuation contribution). The appropriate proportion of the direct cost of any staff member within the planning authority spending 30% of more of their time on planning should be included in costs, irrespective of what department they are allocated to (for example, legal advice, administration, typing). Exclude staff spending less that 30% of their time on planning.*

**   *Indirect costs include all other costs attributable to the planning service. Examples (not exhaustive) include accommodation, IT, stationery, office equipment, telephone charges, printing, advertising, travel & subsistence, apportionment of support service costs.*

*** *Include fees from planning applications and deemed applications, and recharges for advertising costs etc. Exclude income from property and planning searches.*

Justice Mill Lane

Appendix 1   Performance Markers

The performance markers are set out below. Progress and performance in terms of these markers is evidenced at the relevant in the body of the PPF report (eg. PM1).

Driving Improved Performance

	Performance Marker	Measure	Source/ Evidence	Policy Support	PPF
PM1	Decision making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types	Evidence of continuous improvement	Statistics and National Headline Indicators	Official Statistics and PPF reports	NHIs
PM2	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	YES/NO	PA to provide	Modernising the Planning System (Audit Scotland); SG website/ template	NHIs; Certainty
PM3	Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: - availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications - clear and proportionate requests for supporting information	YES/NO Examples	PA to provide	White Paper, Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps	NHIs; Open for Business; Certainty
PM4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant'* * *this will require production of supporting guidance, following wider stakeholder input*	Reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from same time last year)	PA to provide	Official statistics; PPF reports; evidence of delays to major developments	Certainty; Efficient and Effective Decision- Making
PM5	Enforcement charter updated/re-published	Within 2 years	PPF Report	Planning Act (s158A)	NHIs
PM6	Continuous improvement: - show progress/ improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators - progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report	Progress on all commitments	PPF Report	Delivering Planning Reform; PPF Report	Culture of Continuous Improvement; Service Improvement

Promoting the Plan-led System

	Performance Marker	Measure	Source/ Evidence	Policy Support	PPF
PM7	LDP (or LP) less than 5 years since adoption	YES/NO	PPF report	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy	NHIs; Certainty; High Quality Development on the Ground
PM8	Development plan scheme demonstrates next LDP: - on course for adoption within 5-year cycle - project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale	YES/NO YES/NO	PPF report	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy	NHIs; Certainty; High Quality Development on the Ground
PM9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Evidence of activity	PA to provide		Certainty; Efficient and Effective Decision-Making
PM10	Cross-sector stakeholders, including industry, agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Evidence of activity	PA to provide		Certainty; Efficient and Effective Decision-Making
PM11	Production of regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through supplementary guidance, on (i) information required to support applications and (ii) expected developer contributions	Evidence of activity	PA to provide		Open for Business; Certainty

Simplifying and Streamlining

	Performance Marker	Measure	Source/ Evidence	Policy Support	PPF
PM12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice)	Examples from the year	PA to provide		
PM13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Evidence of activity to pass on and adopt good practice	PPF report	Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps	

Delivering Development

	Performance Marker	Measure	Source/ Evidence	Policy Support	PPF
PM14	Stalled sites/legacy cases: conclusion/withdrawal of planning applications more than one year old	Reducing number of applications more than 1 year old (from same time last year)	Statistics from SG Analytical Services		
PM15	Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations - set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and - in pre-application discussions	Y/N Examples	LDP PA to provice		

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