

PLANNING PERFORMANCE UPDATE

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on planning performance matters (Development Management and Planning Policy) and also draw attention to recent feedback received from the Scottish Government in relation to performance.
- 1.2 Two notable annual reports were published by the Government in September / October 2015, the Planning Performance Framework Feedback, and the Annual Key Performance Indicators. Both of these clearly acknowledge and demonstrate that Argyll and Bute is a high performing Planning Authority in terms of its statistical returns, and also that it delivers good quality outcomes by being 'open for business', proportionate, and providing certainty to investors and community alike. The independent assessments of performance has highlighted that the planning service continues to improve year on year, deliver better than average results and is now a leading rural authority in planning terms.
- 1.3 Achieving positive planning performance and outputs is essential to the Council delivering the Single Outcome Agreement – particularly in relation to Outcomes No 1 & 2, namely that *the economy is diverse and thriving* and *we have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth*. Certain aspects of the service like the Core Path Plan Team and Planning Policy Team also directly shape Outcome 5, *People live active, healthier and independent lives*, through delivery of recreational and green networks.
- 1.4 Planning is often the first point of contact with the private sector, community and other key stakeholders so ensuring standards remain high is an important part of customer experience and expectation. Performance next year (2015/16) shall be scrutinised even further as the Government has introduced a 'penalty clause' whereby poorly performing Council's shall face financial penalties – potentially up to £250,000 for an Authority like Argyll and Bute.
- 1.5 The recent statistics and positive feedback from the Government on quality aspects is warmly welcomed.
- 1.6 It is recommended that Members:-
 - Note the content of the report and positive feedback received from Scottish Government.

PLANNING PERFORMANCE UPDATE

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on planning performance matters (Development Management and Planning Policy) and also draw attention to recent feedback received from the Scottish Government in relation to performance.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members:-

- Note the content of the report and positive feedback received from Scottish Government;

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Good planning creates opportunities for people to contribute to a growing, adaptable and productive economy. By allocating sites, embracing collaborative development management and creating great places Planning Services plays a pivotal role in underpinning the economic success of Argyll and Bute.
- 4.2 Planning is also instrumental in supporting our Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) particularly Objectives 1 and 2 which are to create an 'economy is diverse and thriving' and that 'we have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth'. Certain aspects of the service like the Core Path Plan Team and Planning Policy Team also directly shape Outcome 5, *People live active, healthier and independent lives*, through delivery of recreational and green networks.
- 4.3 The 'performance' of the planning service is measured by the Scottish Government in 2 main ways:-
1. Through quarterly statistical returns on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are submitted to the Scottish Government for collation / benchmarking; and

2. The production of a Planning Performance Framework (PPF) – which showcases statistics and cases studies that are reflective of the work undertaken by the Council. The Government then reviews and scores all Council's PPFs against a list of common criteria.
- 4.4 It is worth noting that performance is also measured and managed internally using pyramid, Microsoft Project and Civica internally.
- 4.5 The annual feedback from the Scottish Government on the PPF and annual KPIs has recently been published (September 2015) with Argyll and Bute performing well, demonstrating continuous improvement and being ahead of the Scottish Average and one of the top rural authorities (our COSLA Benchmarking cohort).

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

- 4.6 The Planning Performance Framework (PPF) is the principal yardstick of planning performance for the Council. It is produced annually and is an opportunity to showcase statistical returns as well as projects, development on the ground, working structures, testimonials, economic support and processes (**See Appendix 1**). It is a holistic snapshot of performance for the financial year and follows a structure that is set by the Scottish Government. Every Planning Authority in Scotland produces a PPF annually and the Government reviews and scores each one using a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) system.
- 4.7 Argyll and Bute submitted our PPF in June 2015 and feedback has been received on the 5th October from Alex Neil MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners Rights (**Appendix 2**).
- 4.8 The feedback has been very positive and the best year on record. There is clear evidence of continuous improvement and our 'open for business' ethos is reflected in reduced decision making timescales and higher approval rates. Some of the projects and achievements which were showcased this year to highlight that Planning was positively contributing to economic delivery included:-
- Adoption of new Local Development Plan;
 - Adoption of Historic Environment Strategy;
 - The Island Bakery, Lephain, Isle of Mull;
 - Oban Airport Expansion
 - Biodiversity and Non-Native Species Check List
 - Bowmore, Dalmally & Inveraray Masterplans
 - High quality of development on the ground in Helensburgh CHORD / Clyde Street Offices
- 4.9 The feedback from the PPF, is hugely important and in future years may also be a determining factor in assessing whether the Government shall enact a 'penalty clause' for poor performance. Details and implementation of the clause are still to be finalised but Authorities who cannot demonstrate year on year decision

making timescale improvements and are below national average could have 25% of fee income removed. This could be in the region of £250,000 for Argyll and Bute. Planning Services are keen to maintain and improve upon this year's success.

- 4.10 The full feedback from the PPF is contained within **Appendix 2** with a synopsis demonstrating year on year improvement re-produced below.

ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL Performance against Key Markers				
Marker		2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
1	Decision making timescales	G	G	G
2	Processing agreements	A	A	G
3	Early collaboration	A	A	G
4	Legal agreements	G	A	G
5	Enforcement charter	G	G	G
6	Continuous improvement	G	G	G
7	Local development plan	G	G	G
8	Development plan scheme	G	G	G
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	A	A	A
12	Corporate working across services	G	G	G
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge	G	G	G
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases	G	G	G
15	Developer contributions	A	A	A

Overall Markings (total numbers for red, amber and green)			
	R	A	G
2012-13	0	4	9
2013-14	0	5	8
2014-15	0	2	11

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)				
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2014-15 Scottish Average
Major Development	88.2	A 59.1	G 14.1	46.4
Local (Non-Householder) Development	14.0	G 13.1	G 10.8	12.9
Householder Development	8.9	G 7.2	G 6.9	7.5

ANNUAL STATISTICS

- 4.11 In addition to the PPF, the Scottish Government also released the Annual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Planning (FY 2014/15) in September. These statistics are collated and published quarterly and then annually by the Government and allow comparison and trends to be identified across all the Planning Authorities.

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Planning/Publications/planapps2015annual>

- 4.12 Similar to the PPF, the KPI publication also provides a positive snapshot of performance for 2014/15. Some of the keynote achievements are listed below.

Headlines from the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- The Total Number of planning applications submitted and dealt with has increased for the 3rd year in a row. ABC determined 1,097 'Local Applications'¹ last year and are the 9th busiest local authority in Scotland (out of 34) ahead of Dundee City, North Lanarkshire, Scottish Borders, Angus, Moray, East Dunbarton, West Lothian.
 - ABC determine applications quicker than the national average and other rural authorities. On average ABC determine 'Local Applications' in 9.5 weeks. This has improved from 11.6 weeks in 2012 and is 0.6 weeks better than the National Average. This is the headline indicator and the one which the 'Penalty Clause' is based upon. (Highland = 10.7, Scots Borders = 14.9, Aberdeenshire = 11.9)
 - ABC determine Major Applications much quicker than the National Average at 14.1 weeks compared to 36.6 weeks
 - ABC has a culture of 'added value' and approve 96.7% of applications in context of National Average 93.9%
 - ABC has a robust Planning Policy Framework and Governance / Decision Making arrangements that 92% of original decisions were upheld at Review compared to 64% of national average. A similar trend is noted at appeal where 64% of original decisions are upheld compared to 54% national average.
 - ABC determined 366 Housing applications in an average of 12.1 weeks – over 2 weeks quicker than national average
- 4.13 Maintaining and improving current levels of performance (Scottish Government requires year on year improvement to avoid Penalty Clause) may be challenging given current achievements and pending resource pressure. There are a number of opportunities for process review & sustainability of performance which are currently being pursued.

Quarterly Activity Update (FQ2 2015/16)

- 4.14 Some developments Officers are currently assisting to deliver on the ground include:
- Discharge of conditions, monitoring & working positively with developers
 - New Co-OP at Inveraray,
 - Kilmory Industrial Estate,
 - Glenshelloch,
 - Clyde Street Helensburgh Offices,
 - Delivery of CHORD & TIF.
 - Technically complex applications approved at Oban High School & Gallanach, Coll which required significant DM input.
 - Machrihanish Airbase,

¹ 'Local Applications' is the recognised description of the main staple of Planning Applications and includes Householder development (porches, conservatories, new housing (up to 50 units), minerals, Business & Industry, Waste Management, Electricity Generation and aquaculture.

- Maritime Change,
 - CHORD, CARS + THI still ongoing
 - Setting up LDP KE Sites Action Programme
 - Initiating Task Forces to Deliver Above (Dunbeg etc engaging with Architecture Design Scotland)
 - Creating Online Guides to newly adopted Core Path Plan
 - Running a Bi-Annual Design Competition
 - Launching LDP Community Planning in partnership with communities and gaining Scottish Government charrette funding for Tiree and Crinnan/Ardrishaig.
 - Published and distributed adopted LDP.
- 4.15 Completed Internal Audit on Retrospective Applications and Enforcement. 'Substantial Assurance' was achieved with 3 Recommendations to be implemented.
- 4.16 Wind Energy sector continues to be buoyant. Significant Public Local Inquiry (PLI) coming up tail end of year Creggans & Blary Hill. Scottish Government Reporter upheld refusal at Ardchnonnell.
- 4.17 Walking tour with Members of PPSL took place in Campbeltown. The tour's focus was to reflect upon planning policy and planning decisions; and how those decisions have made a positive contribution to place-making and regeneration on the ground.
- 4.18 To ensure continued improvements in delivery of development on the ground, the Development Policy team; working with Economic Development, are developing a combined Key Sites Action Programme and Strategic Infrastructure Plan. Collectively these will identify in detail the most important development opportunities and infrastructure requirements within Argyll and Bute. The intention of producing the document is to include these in a brief and be a highly polished document, mirrored with an online presence. Collectively these will effectively showcase the key opportunities and put a spotlight on the main infrastructure requirements. At the same time the team is preparing to introduce a more detailed and systematic appraisal of all housing development sites on an annual basis in order to flag up any risks that sites will not deliver within a five year period. This will help us to identify if and when we might need to identify more land, and to engage with developers to facilitate site solutions. Currently housing completions are continuing to improve slowly, with 138 to date this year, representing a 13.5% increase on last year at this stage.
- 4.19 Following adoption and publication of the Local Development Plan, officers have been working to produce Supplementary Guidance to add further supporting detail. One such element of guidance is TRAN 4 covering New and Existing Public Roads and Private Access Regimes. This is a significant introduction of a more proportionate approach, providing developers with potential flexibility in delivering road layouts and designs which are appropriate to the scale and setting of their development.

- 4.20 Continuing to develop more Supplementary Guidance the Policy Team are currently working on a refreshed approach to Renewables. This will reflect the most current national policy guidelines, give up to date guidance on emerging technologies, and provide appropriate detailed guidance to an important and active sector of the economy whilst balancing the need to protect the environment and landscapes of the Area. At PSSL on 16th January, Members will be presented with a draft policy prior to consulting with the public.
- 4.21 Planning for the future, Officers are already making preparations for the replacement Local Development Plan 2 which will be due to be adopted in March 2020. This may seem a long way away, but it is essential to properly program manage a complex and lengthy process to ensure we meet this important target. To this end a draft Development Plan scheme has been prepared which sets out a timetable of the whole process. This includes a publicity and consultation strategy and sets out clearly when and how Members will be engaged in the process, and essentially maps out a 4 year work program for the Development Policy team. The intention is to present a detailed worked up Development Plan scheme to Members at the Full Council on 21st January.
- 4.22 The Marine and Coastal Development Unit continue to provide input to and report back on the proposed development and management of Marine Protected Areas and Special Areas of Conservation, and have reported to this Committee separately. At the same time they continue to engage with and influence the development of the Marine Planning Partnership for the Clyde Marine Spatial Plan, provide specialist advice on up to 20 aquaculture and coastal development planning applications per annum and engage in other coastal related matters such as the potential devolution of the Crown Estate.

Twitter

- 4.23 Planning Services now has an established Twitter account and over 130 followers including local businesses, communities, members of the public and trade organisations. The news feed is 'Great Places@ABC_Planning' and we encourage all Councillors and staff to follow our tweets. We currently aim to tweet daily and post photos and news including site visits, outcomes of Planning Committee, new consultations, design awards, re-tweet interesting planning related material and generate interest in the built environment.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Planning Service has achieved positive outcomes and feedback in 2014/15 and has confirmed its position as a leading rural authority. It is also encouraging to note that the total number of planning application has continuing to increase and performance has improved. This continues to translate into a modestly improving housing completions rate which is 13.5% above last year to date. The continued attainment of good performance levels and sustainable resourcing of the Planning Service continues to make an essential contribution to delivering upon the Council's Single Outcome Agreement and avoiding the Governments Penalty clause.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – N/A

6.2 Financial – N/A at this stage. Continued high levels of performance required to maintain planning fee income (avoid the penalty clause). Sustainable resourcing of Planning Service.

6.3 Legal – N/A

6.4 HR – N/A

6.5 Equalities – N/A

6.6 Risk - N/A at this stage. Continued high levels of performance required to maintain planning fee income (avoid the penalty clause). Sustainable resourcing of Planning Service.

6.7 Customer Service – Planning Performance Framework showcase included Customer Service Elements.

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20th October 2015

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Planning Performance Framework Report

Appendix 2 - Planning Performance Framework Feedback