

Planning Performance Framework 2017/18

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report contains recent feedback from the Scottish Government in relation to our Planning Performance Framework (PPF). **Appendix A.**
- 1.2 Our PPF is the principal performance measure for Planning Services (*Development Management and Development Policy – within Planning and Regulatory Services*) and is submitted to the Scottish Government annually for scrutiny and scoring. The Council's 2017/18 PPF was submitted in July 2018 and was independently reviewed by a Scottish Government appointed consultant. A copy of the submitted document was submitted to the PPSL for noting at their meeting of 22nd August 2018.
- 1.3 Overall the feedback report is considered to be a positive response registering eleven 'green', three 'amber' and only one 'red' outcome across the fifteen performance indicators assessed.
- 1.4 The positive feedback response supports our 'open for business' ethos and is warmly welcomed in the current economic climate. Whilst the Scottish Government have not identified any improvement actions for ABC this year, the service must not be complacent with the focus being year on year continuous improvement. The PPF for 2018/19 is due to be submitted in July 2019.
- 1.5 It is recommended that the Committee:-
- (a) Note and publicise (*press, Twitter, Facebook and website release*) the positive feedback from the independent review.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 This report contains recent feedback from the Scottish Government in relation to our Planning Performance Framework (PPF). **Appendix A.** The Executive Summary (above) provides further background information.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (a) Note and publicise (*press, Twitter, Facebook and website release*) the positive feedback from the independent review.

4.0 DETAIL

What is the Planning Performance Framework?

4.1 This was Planning Services 7th Annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF) and is our 'balance scorecard' of performance which all Local Authorities must submit to the Scottish Government for review and scrutiny.

4.2 The PPF aims to be a holistic and easy read document that encapsulates statistical performance indicators as well as more qualitative information and case studies of good practice for the previous financial year. The basic structure of the document is stipulated by the Scottish Government but the character, tone, style and content is all shaped by the individual Authority. The Scottish Government has suggested that Authorities use the PPF as more than a means of simply reporting performance but utilise the document as an opportunity to promote their service and local area, to incorporate customer feedback and to provide updated narrative on case study items from previous years. The PPF seeks to focus on the Council being 'open for business' and the positive economic contribution that Planning Services have made within Argyll and Bute. The PPF presents case studies and examples of good practice which demonstrates the ability of the Service to facilitate the delivery of high quality development on the ground, to provide certainty to developers and investors, to consult and engage with customers effectively and to ensure that appropriate management and service delivery structures are in place to work efficiently.

Review and Feedback

- 4.3 The review of the PPF was carried out by an independent consultant on behalf of the Scottish Government and was then considered by the Minister for Local Government and Housing – Kevin Stewart MSP.
- 4.4 Within our PPF We managed to showcase a variety of good quality projects and initiatives that demonstrate our 'open for business' and improvement ethos.
- 4.5 The covering letter and feedback from Kevin Stewart MSP is contained in full at **Appendix A**, however some pertinent points are highlighted below:-

- **PM 1 Decision Making (Amber):** Performance in the determination of planning applications slipped from the previous reporting period with all three performance markers being slower than the National average. Part 5 of the PPF submission explains that Development Management Service operated under significant financial pressures during the reporting period as a result of a downturn in the volume of high fee value major and locally significant applications – part of the Service's strategy to reduce the financial risk to the Council during this period was to leave vacant post unfilled. Consequently the service operated with a 20% reduction in RTP1 qualified staff for part of the year with consequent impact upon overall performance.

It is noted that during 2018/19 planning fee income has returned to expected levels, all vacant posts have now been filled however Members will be aware that the overall number of professional posts has been reduced 2fte through DM Service Redesign in order to deliver £110k savings required for 2019/20.

It is further noted that performance on Major applications is measured against a small dataset of only 5 applications and as such is very easily skewed. Performance on Local (non-Householder) applications represents the majority of case work and it is noted that despite the significant resource issues average time periods for determination only increased by 0.2 days. Average time periods for determination of Householder applications similarly increased by 0.4days but were marked Green in the RAG assessment as this still falls within the 8 week statutory time period for determining applications.

- **PM 3 Early Collaboration (Green):** The feedback commentary recognises the important role of the Council's non-statutory pre-application advice service in promoting early engagement in the planning process. In particular it is noted that introduction of the chargeable pre-application service and clarification of the Council's policy on requests for further information in the planning process have been integral to the upgraded rating of this performance marker from its previous Amber rating in 2016/17.
- **PM 4 Legal Agreements (Amber):** The feedback commentary indicates that the Amber rating in the RAG assessment as the time period for determining applications with S75 agreements were slower than the previous reporting period. It is however noted that the Amber rating appears harsh given that the this average time period for handling these applications was in fact faster than the National average.
- **PM 5 Enforcement Charter (Red):** The feedback commentary has rated this performance marker as Red because the Enforcement Charter was older than the target of 2 years old at the end of the reporting period. It is noted that this matter has subsequently been addressed through adoption of an updated Charter by PPSL in June 2018.

- **PM 6 Continuous Improvement (Amber):** The Planning Service received positive feedback for the wide range of service improvements delivered during 2017/18, these are detailed in Part 3 of the PPF and include delivery of updated guidance on replacement windows and signage, delivery of the chargeable pre-application service, and completion of conservation area appraisals. It was also noted that the preparation of LDP2 progressed to plan during the reporting period. The performance marker was however graded as an 'Amber' on the basis that decision making (as detailed in PM 1 above) was slower than the previous year and that the enforcement charter (as detailed in PM 5 above) was out of date.
- **PM 14 Stalled Sites / Legacy Cases (Green):** The feedback commentary identifies that the Development Management Service have made a significant commitment to reducing legacy cases during the reporting period and have accordingly upgraded the rating on this marker from its previous Amber rating in 2016/17.

Focus on Performance

- 4.6 The cover letter from the Minister for Local Government and Housing, Kevin Stewart MSP, identifies that the Planning Bill has recently passed through the second stage of parliamentary consideration during which a number of new provision relating to performance were removed along with the existing penalty clause provisions.
- 4.7 The Minister however goes on to highlight the link between performance and resourcing and intimates that additional income from future increases in planning fees would be expected to be invested in the planning service to deliver improvements in performance:

“Whatever the outcome of the Planning Bill, I believe now is the time to look again at how we measure performance of the planning system. The High Level Group on Planning Performance met recently to discuss performance measurement and other improvements. I very much hope that we can continue to support ongoing improvements in our planning service and further demonstrate the value which the planning system can add to people’s lives. Ministers see an important connection between performance and fees and I am aware that proposals to increase fees will raise applicants’ expectations of an efficient and effective service.”

“We need to be able to measure performance to provide that crucial evidence to support any increase in fees, to help ensure that authorities are appropriately resourced to deliver on our ambitions. With this in mind we continue to liaise with COSLA, SOLACE, and Heads of Planning Scotland on matters of the Bill’s implementation and planning performance measures going forward”.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The 2017/18 PPF demonstrates strong performance against National statistics and agreed PPF Performance Markers and showcases a number of our high quality projects and outcomes.

5.2 Feedback from the Scottish Government has been positive and has confirmed that the Service has an 'open for business' approach to sustainable economic growth.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 **Policy:** None

6.2 **Financial:** None

6.3 **Legal:** None

6.4 **HR :** None

6.5 **Equalities:** None

6.6 **Risk:** Reputational & financial risk by being branded a poor performing authority if next years PPF is substandard.

6.7 **Customer Service:** None

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Planning Performance Framework 2017/18 Feedback