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Pippa Milne  
Argyll & Bute Council

29 November 2021

Dear Pippa Milne

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's tenth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, for the period April 2020 to March 2021.

This is the first time I have written to you individually in my capacity as Planning Minister since my appointment earlier this year. I am very grateful for the support and welcome I have received and look forward to working with you.

This year has continued to present challenges for people working within planning, in the development sector and across Scotland's communities. We know people are doing the best they can to engage and operate, sometimes in ways and circumstances that may not be ideal, and with many still predominantly working from home. I appreciate that many of you will have had to make difficult choices in what work is prioritised, in much the same way the Government and Planning and Architecture Division has had to. However, we should all be very proud of how planning has responded to the coronavirus pandemic, adjusting as necessary to keep going and supporting recovery. I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for all the work that has been done during the pandemic and to support our ongoing recovery.

When my predecessor wrote to you last year he indicated that the pandemic had required a rethink about the timing and prioritisation of our planning work programme. A number of our workstreams were paused or delayed as a result, including the review of the planning performance and fee regimes, which had been the subject of a detailed consultation that concluded in early 2020. However, in October 2021 we published a revised planning implementation programme (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/transforming-planning-practice-updated-planning->

[reform-implementation-programme/](#)). You will note that we have now recommenced our planning performance and fees review, which reflects the importance Scottish Government attaches to this work. We are currently finalising proposals and intend to lay regulations before the end of the year to introduce increased fees, providing a boost to planning authorities' resources. We also intend to commence the recruitment of the National Planning Improvement Coordinator early in 2022.

Turning to the 2020-21 PPF reporting year, although, as expected, there have been some small changes overall in the markings awarded, the figures indicate that performance has remained relatively stable. This is a testament to the hard work and flexibility of authorities during these very difficult times and I believe that overall good progress continues to be made by Scotland's planning authorities.

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

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Arthur', written in a cursive style.

**Tom Arthur**

Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth

**CC: Peter Bain  
Fergus Murray**

## PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2020-21

Name of planning authority: **Argyll & Bute Council**

The High Level Group on Performance agreed a set of performance markers. We have assessed your report against those markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action. The high level group will monitor and evaluate how the key markers have been reported and the value which they have added.

The Red, Amber, Green ratings are based on the evidence provided within the PPF reports. Where no information or insufficient evidence has been provided, a 'red' marking has been allocated.

No.	Performance Marker	RAG rating	Comments
1	<b>Decision-making:</b> continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Red	<p><b>Major Applications</b> Your timescales of 40.4 weeks are slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 41.3 weeks. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p> <p><b>Local (Non-Householder) Applications</b> Your timescales of 12.5 weeks are slower than the previous year, the statutory timescale and the Scottish average of 12.4 weeks. <b>RAG = Red</b></p> <p><b>Householder Applications</b> Your timescales of 9.1 weeks are slower than the previous year, the Scottish average of 8.1 weeks and the statutory timescale. <b>RAG = Red</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Red</b></p>
2	<p><b>Processing agreements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and</li> <li>availability publicised on website</li> </ul>	Green	<p>You encourage processing agreements to applicants for all major and locally significant developments through pre-application discussions, user forums and online. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>Processing agreement information is available through your website. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
3	<p><b>Early collaboration</b> with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and</li> <li>clear and proportionate requests for supporting information</li> </ul>	Green	<p>You provide a pre-application advice service which is promoted through the website, user forums and by staff engaging with prospective applicants. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>You have a proportionate and clear process for requesting supporting information including engaging with consultees and other council services to identify issues/constraints prior to the application being submitted. Evidenced through a number of case studies. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>

4	<b>Legal agreements:</b> conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Green	Applications subject to a legal agreement were determined slower than last year but faster than the Scottish average. You state that applications which are subject to a legal agreement are regularly reviewed to ensure progress and completion within 6 months.
5	<b>Enforcement charter</b> updated / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was reviewed within the last two years, and has been updated with an addendum in light of the relaxed approach being taken in response to pandemic.
6	<b>Continuous improvement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and</li> <li>• progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report</li> </ul>	Amber	Your LDP more than five years old; while clear timescales exist for adopting the next LDP this will not be within the required 5 year timescale. Your decision making timescales for local and householder applications are slower than the Scottish average and the previous year. Your enforcement charter is up-to-date. The number of legacy cases has increased. <b>RAG = Red</b>  Despite the impact of the pandemic, progress has been made against a number of last years' service improvement commitments. You have identified a good range of further commitments for the coming year. <b>RAG = Amber</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Amber</b>
7	<b>Local development plan</b> less than 5 years since adoption	Red	Your development plan was more than 5 years old at the time of reporting.
8	<b>Development plan scheme</b> – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and</li> <li>• project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale</li> </ul>	Amber	Your LDP will not be replaced within the 5 year cycle, however, you still consider that it is fit for purpose and will be so until it is replaced with LDP2. <b>RAG = Amber</b>  LDP2 is project planned with management and reporting processes in place to ensure adoption in 2022. <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Amber</b>
9	<b>Elected members engaged early</b> (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>	N/A	
10	<b>Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early</b> (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year *including industry, agencies and Scottish Government</i>	N/A	
11	<b>Regular and proportionate policy advice</b> produced on information required to support applications.	Green	Your website which contains information for applicants to consider before making an application. Relevant supplementary guidance is reviewed and updated regularly. Use is made of the National Validation Standard published by HoPS, which council officers informed.
12	<b>Corporate working across services</b> to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up	Green	A number of your case studies demonstrate your approach to corporate working such as the Shopfront Improvement Scheme, Dunbeg Masterplan and Covid-19 response work.

	services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)		
13	<b>Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge</b> between authorities	Green	Your PPF report, including the case studies, set out a number of examples of benchmarking and knowledge sharing. Planning officers attend a number of forums, such as HopS, the LA Aquaculture Forum, and Clyde Marine Planning Partnership. Officers have engaged with other rural authorities to review and update procedures for handling prior notification/approval submissions.
14	<b>Stalled sites / legacy cases:</b> conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Red	You have cleared 17 cases during the reporting year, with 57 cases still awaiting conclusion. This is an increase on the number which remained at the end of last year.
15	<b>Developer contributions:</b> clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and</li> <li>• in pre-application discussions</li> </ul>	Green	Your LDP, supported by supplementary guidance, sets out expectations for developer contributions and sets out how contributions are proportionate to the scale, nature and impact of the proposed development. <b>RAG = Green</b>  Expectations for developer contributions are established in pre-application discussions. <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Green</b>

**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL**  
**Performance against Key Markers**

Marker		13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
1	Decision making timescales								
2	Processing agreements								
3	Early collaboration								
4	Legal agreements								
5	Enforcement charter								
6	Continuous improvement								
7	Local development plan								
8	Development plan scheme								
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR)	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A
10	Stakeholders engaged early (pre-MIR)	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A	N/A
11	Regular and proportionate advice to support applications								
12	Corporate working across services								
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge								
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases								
15	Developer contributions								

**Overall Markings (total numbers for red, amber and green)**

	Red	Amber	Green
<b>2013-14</b>	0	5	8
<b>2014-15</b>	0	2	11
<b>2015-16</b>	0	3	10
<b>2016-17</b>	1	3	11
<b>2017-18</b>	1	3	11
<b>2018-19</b>	0	3	10
<b>2019-20</b>	0	3	10
<b>2020-21</b>	3	2	8

**Decision Making Timescales (weeks)**

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	2020-21 Scottish Average
Major Development	59.1	14.1	23.3	22.1	37.9	28.3	33.9	40.4	41.3
Local (Non-Householder) Development	13.1	10.8	10.3	12.4	12.6	10.8	10.2	12.5	12.4
Householder Development	7.2	6.9	7.0	7.5	7.9	7.1	7.2	9.1	8.1