

North Lanarkshire Council Report

Planning Committee

approval noting

Ref LB

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Planning Performance Framework 2019-20

From Head of Planning & Regeneration

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Executive Summary

This report seeks to inform the Committee of the Scottish Government's feedback on the performance of the Planning and Place Service for the period April 2019 to March 2020 based on the Planning Performance Framework (PPF) submitted in July 2020. The Planning Performance Framework is prepared annually and it details the performance of the service against the Key Performance Indicators, agreed with the Scottish Government, it highlights examples of good practice by using case studies and details the on-going work by the service to deliver continuous improvement. The report also sets out the improvements that the service intends to focus on in the following year.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of this report.

The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority Improve economic opportunities and outcomes

Ambition statement (24) Review and design services around people, communities, and shared resources

1. Background

- 1.1 Since 2012 each of the planning authorities across Scotland voluntarily prepares an annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF) which sets out how their service is performing. The PPF was developed by the Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) and the Scottish Government to provide a document with a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators to document planning activities which assists in the drive towards consistently high-quality planning services across the country.

2. Report

- 2.1 The Planning Performance Framework is not a policy document. It provides planning authorities an opportunity to demonstrate continuous improvement, changes implemented, achievements and lessons learnt over the year.
- 2.2 The PPF 2019/20, our ninth, was submitted to the Scottish Government in July 2020. The report sets out the achievements of the Council under four headings:
- Quality of Outcomes;
 - Quality of Service and Engagement;
 - Governance; and
 - Culture of Continuous Improvement
- 2.3 The framework was developed by the Heads of Planning Scotland to capture and highlight a balanced measurement of planning performance and to provide Ministers, Councils and the public with a better understanding of how a planning authority is performing and delivering high quality development on the ground.
- 2.4 The case studies covered in this year's report primarily focused on collaborative working and used examples related to: the pre-application discussions for the revised Ravenscraig Masterplan; the Coatbridge CARS Project as an example of partnership working and work that was carried out with Stepps and District Community Council to improve our systems for a more positive experience for the community when they engage with the Service. Other case studies focused on the development of our workforce and the role of Planning in developing and delivering the Plan for North Lanarkshire.

3. Feedback from Scottish Government

- 3.1 In 2019-20, for the 13 relevant performance markers, the Council received seven green markers, five amber and one red in the feedback from the Scottish Government, this is one red fewer than the previous year. The reasons for the red marker once again was that our Local Development Plan is more than five years old.
- 3.2 We received an amber marker for our timescales for decision making. Our timescales for determining Major Applications fell to an average of 20.7 weeks this is against a Scottish average of 33.5 weeks. Local, non-householder applications fell to 10.9 weeks which is the same as the Scottish Average and decisions on householder applications took 8.0 weeks against a Scottish average of 7.3 weeks. Whilst speed of determination has fallen on the previous year's performance, we remain one of the better performing authorities in Scotland.
- 3.3 This report reflects the fact that the planning service continues to go through a period of change. In 2018/19 there was a re-structuring of the service and the recruitment of new staff, the drop in performance over the 2019/20 period reflects the period of adjustment whilst these changes bedded in. There are also several changes, which continue to be on-going, to our systems and processes which are designed in the longer term to improve our performance. There remain several other changes that have been identified that should improve the performance of the service, and 11 out of our 17 identified improvement actions for 2019/20 are acknowledged by the Scottish Government to have been completed whilst the remainder have been continued into 2020/21.

- 3.4 There were also several positive comments in the feedback. It acknowledges our collaborative engagement with developers is leading to improved outcomes and consultees and the recognition of the positive contribution made by Planning in the Council's re-aligning of services to ensure that it has a key role to play in delivering the Vision for North Lanarkshire.
- 3.5 As part of the PPF process Councils are encouraged to benchmark their PPF against one of the other authorities in their Benchmarking Group. This year we were paired with Glasgow City Council. Representatives from each authority took part in two on-line meetings and this allowed the opportunity to exchange information and views on some aspects of each other's work and practices to permit learning from best practice. Amongst other things, Glasgow were interested in how we have undertaken a review of our standard conditions for planning permissions and we have shared these with them and we have undertaken to share our review of our protocol for dealing with Planning Appeals procedures with them when we have completed this project. In turn North Lanarkshire staff were keen to understand Glasgow's approach to their Local Review Body and how the Glasgow team approach application validation and Glasgow have undertaken to share further information on their process. These benchmarking discussions have proved to be very informative and useful for the development of networks for the exchange of information.

4. Planning Performance Framework: Service Improvement Actions.

- 4.1 We value feedback on our service and welcome the opportunity to use this insight to inform policy, strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity within the service.
- 4.2 Our Planning Performance Feedback improvement actions covering the 12 months from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 were highlighted in our ninth PPF report and will be reported on in our next PPF which will be submitted in July 2021, however, these have been subject to change. Our priorities during the year were realigned following the outbreak of Covid-19 which has hit the planning service along with most other Council functions. Much of the early part of the year was focused on ensuring that our staff were equipped to deliver a service and many of our work practices have had to be adapted to ensure that the service can continue. We are now looking at what changes we need to make to deliver our service as we move forward and are once again focusing on the improvement actions identified for 2020/21.
- 4.3 The following highlights some of key actions for service improvement that we are concentrating on in the 12 months from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021:
- We are trialling a new validation process and realigning tasks to increase consistency and reduce delays for householder applications.
 - We have increased resources directed at reducing our physical records and keeping more records in electronic format with a view to increasing accessibility and a reduction in storage costs.
 - We have commenced updating the information held on our website in line with the new North Lanarkshire Content and Style guide.

- We are reviewing our appeals handling processes to ensure a more consistent and efficient approach.
- We are developing a standardised approach to developer contributions and strengthening our policy guidance.
- We are developing a process for dealing with legacy cases.
- We are developing our development management workflow tool to assist the issue of planning permission following decision.

5. Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 Fairer Scotland Duty
There are no implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 Equality Impact Assessment
There are no equalities issues arising from this report.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Financial Implications
There are no Financial Impacts arising from this report.
- 6.2 HR, Policy and Legislative Impacts
It is not considered that the PPF will have an HR, Policy or Legislative Impact.
- 6.3 Environmental Impacts
There are no environmental impacts associated with the PPF.
- 6.4 Risk Implications
There are currently no risks to the Council associated with this report.

7. Measures of success

- 7.1 A Planning Service that delivers excellent places, performs well when benchmarked against other Scottish Local Authorities and has an embedded culture of continuous improvement.

8. Supporting documents

- 8.1 The Planning Performance Framework 2019/20 can be found here:
https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/CC_2020_00029%20Planning%20Performance%20Framework%202019%202020%20Accessible.pdf
- 8.2 The Scottish Government's feedback on the PPF 2019-20 is attached as Appendix 1.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Humphries'.

Pamela Humphries
Head of Planning and Regeneration

APPENDIX 1

PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2019-20

Name of planning authority: **North Lanarkshire Council**

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

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

No.	Performance Marker	RAG rating	Comments
1	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Amber	<p>Major Applications Your timescales of 20.7 weeks is slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 33.5 weeks. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your timescales of 10.9 weeks is slower than the previous year and is the same as the Scottish average. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Householder Applications Your timescale of 8.0 weeks is slower than the previous year and the Scottish average of 7.3 weeks however, it is within the statutory timescale. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
2	<p>Processing agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and availability publicised on website 	Green	<p>You continue to offer and encourage processing agreements for all major applications. RAG = Green</p> <p>Processing agreements are advertised on your website. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
3	<p>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information 	Green	<p>You provide a pre-application advice service for major applications which is promoted through online pro-forma and by staff engaging with prospective applicants. RAG = Green</p> <p>The online pro-forma helps ensure prospective applicants provide the necessary information in order for you to provide bespoke advice which includes a clear and proportionate request for supporting information. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>

4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Amber	Two applications with legal agreements were determined this reporting year in an average time of 35.6 weeks which is faster than last year but is slower than the national average.
5	Enforcement charter updated / republished within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was 1 month old at the end of the reporting period.
6	Continuous improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress/ improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	Amber	<p>Your decision-making timescales are all slower than last year. Your enforcement charter is up to date but your LDP is over 5 years old. Elsewhere, the number of legacy cases you have has increased. RAG = Red</p> <p>You have completed 11 out of 17 of your improvement commitments with the remaining to be continued over the next reporting year. You have identified a good range of improvement commitments for the coming year, informed by stakeholder feedback. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
7	Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption	Red	The LDP was 7 years and 6 months old at time of reporting.
8	Development plan scheme – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and • project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	Amber	<p>Your replacement LDP will not be adopted within 5 years of the previous LDP's adoption and your report indicates that timescales have changed again within the past year. However, it is noted that a decision was taken to modify the plan to ensure alignment with the SDP. RAG = Amber</p> <p>It is not clear from your report how you are project planning the replacement of your LDP to ensure there is minimal additional delay. However, it is noted that you have prepared a project plan for the review and replacement of your SPG. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>	N/A	
10	Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>	N/A	
11	Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on information required to support applications.	Green	Your report notes that a review of your SPG is underway and that you take a proactive approach to protecting and enhancing the built and natural environment through your design polices, LDP, Development Frameworks and engagement with developers and that your collaborative approach is leading to improved outcomes.

12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)	Green	You have outlined that Planning now sits within Enterprise and Communities which brings it into the same area as housing, enterprise, environmental assets and communities. Your case study demonstrates how you have contributed to the Economic Strategy by creating a long term vision and realigning infrastructure and resources to support that and that working with other services would be critical to delivering the vision.
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Green	You have provided a long list of the partnerships and peer review groups you participate in. You have provided a case study which shows how you are building a resilient workforce and service by creating opportunities for staff to develop their role and potential without needing to leave.
14	Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Amber	You have cleared 8 cases during the reporting year, with 49 cases still awaiting conclusion. We note that you intend to review your strategy in the year ahead with a view to significantly reducing this number.
15	Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions 	Green	<p>Guidance on developers' contributions is included in a supplementary guidance document. It is noted that an improvement action for the year ahead is to strengthen this policy. RAG = Green</p> <p>Your report notes that developer contributions are discussed at an early stage, and that requests are based on a number of outlined factors. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL
Performance against Key Markers

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

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

2012-13	6	4	3
2013-14	0	4	9
2014-15	0	4	11
2015-16	0	6	7
2016-17	1	4	8
2017-18	1	4	8
2018-19	2	4	7
2019-20	1	5	7

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)

	12-13	13-14	14-15	2015-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	2018-19 Scottish Average
Major Development	21.0	19.2	21.2	24.3	29	14.9	17	20.7	33.5
Local (Non-Householder) Development	15.3	9.7	11.3	11.7	10.5	7.8	9.3	10.9	10.9
Householder Development	9.1	7.3	7.5	8.1	7.2	6.3	7.1	8.0	7.3

