



NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Plan 2024

Stirling Council





A high performing planning authority needs to have the right number of people to do the work expected of it with the rights skills set. It also needs to have a strategy to ensure that it retains and recruits the right staff in the future. It supports staff to upskill and to be prepared for changes in policy, legislation, and new circumstances.

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
1. The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	2 – The service is currently maximising productively as best as possible within the current resources but requires further detailed workforce planning to ensure that the current service performance is maintained and enhanced due to the fragility of staffing levels.
2. The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce	2 – The service currently maximise training and learning opportunities and works with staff to ensure that they are supported within their current role and their development.

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).



Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
<p>Develop an ongoing Workforce Strategy and Training Plan, reviewed annual as the PGD cycle completed to support service and individual officer needs, both in terms of resources and skills. Action will include, but is not limited to:</p> <p>A review of application numbers and types to assess general trends and evidence base for staffing and skill levels require for service operation; A review of skill gaps (arising from PGD reviews) and opportunities suggested by officers; Using the evidence above to inform the training plan and how best the skill gaps can be filled, e.g. training or additional resource; A review of working arrangements in the service to ensure there is flexibility to meet demand across both DM and DP; and Consideration of a clear progression route from Graduate to Officer and support through the RTP1 APC process.</p>	Planning and Building Services Manager	High	Short (Preparation) and Medium (Delivery)	All planning staff and support staff (Gateway) and cross service support from Organisational Development (OD) and HR





A high performing planning authority has a positive culture through ensuring it has sound governance, effective leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement. The authority has an identified chief planner, who is supported by a strong leadership group to advise on decision-making, policy and operational management.

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
3. This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	1 – The Service currently maximises opportunities for continuous improvement and is embedded into everyday working.
4. This Planning Authority has sound governance	1 – The Service has sound governance with clear processes in place and commitment to regularly review the Scheme of Delegation to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose.
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	1 – The Service has effective leadership and shares good practice both internally and externally



Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
What action will you take? What will the outcome be?		High Medium Low	Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	
Complete review of Scheme of Delegation.	Planning and Building Standards Service Manager	High	Short	Service Manager, Planning Solicitor and Governance
Update service improvement plan with operational updates once NPIF process is complete to ensure that working practices are aligned with best practice and learning from other authorities. This could include further sessions with our Cohort partner and neighbouring authorities.	Planning and Building Standards Service Manager and Team Leaders	Medium	Short	Service Manager, Development Planning and Development Management Team Leaders





A high performing planning authority needs to have an effective local development plan and other strategies in place to provide a vision for the future of the area. It needs to be able to set and deliver on policy ambitions and priorities by clearly informing decision making and providing certainty and predictability for communities, developers and investment. The authority's development management systems need to be effective in making the right decisions about development and be as efficient as possible in doing this. The planning authority makes best use of digital technology and how it manages and uses data.

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
6. The planning authority has a robust policy and evidence base	2 – The Local Development Plan is on track for adoption within anticipated timescales, including the submission of the Evidence Report, however it is noted that the current Stirling Local Development Plan 2018 is 6 years old, predates NPF4 and will be 9 years old by LDP3 adoption
7. The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	2 – The Service utilises GIS and has end to end digital processes within Development Management, however does lack a “digital presence”
8. The planning authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes	2 – The Development Management Team has good performance currently but is



	sensitive to sudden increases in applications or unexpected drop in resources
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Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Complete digital end to end processing of LRB process.	Development Management Team Leader	High	Short	Team Leader in conjunction with support staff (Gateway) and Planning Solicitor
Develop an ongoing Workforce Strategy and Training Plan, reviewed annual as the PGD cycle completed to support service and individual officer needs, both in terms of resources and skills. Action will include, but is not limited to: A review of application numbers and types to assess general trends and evidence base for staffing and skill levels require for service operation; A review of skills gaps (arising from PGD reviews0 and opportunities suggested by officers; Using the evidence above to inform the training plan and how best the skill gaps can be filled, e.g. training or additional resource; A review of working	Planning and Building Standards Service Manager	High	Short (Preparation) and Medium (Delivery)	All planning staff and support staff (Gateway) and cross service support from Organisational Development and HR



arrangements in the service to ensure there is flexibility to meet demand across both DM and DP; and consideration of a clear progression route from Graduate to Officer and support through the RTPi APC process.				
Investigate opportunities to improve digital engagement on general planning issues to ensure that the service is utilising emerging digital technologies effectively to aid the decision making process.	Planning and Building Standards Service Manager	Medium	Medium	Planning Officers in conjunction with the corporate communications and web teams





A high performing planning authority should ensure a wide range of people are involved in shaping their future places. Engagement should be fair and inclusive, early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate and should include difficult to reach groups. The authority should engage with a wide range of partners at a national, regional and local level to ensure a joined-up approach and that links are made across policies and programmes. The planning authority should demonstrate good customer care, transparency and effective communication.

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
9. This planning authority has good customer care	2 – Anecdotally with the fall in formal complaints, and numbers upheld, combined with the sustained increase in planning performance, customer care is assumed to be acceptable, however the service lacks quantifiable data to confirm this.
10. The planning authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities.	2 – As well as the required planning consultation on planning applications the service engages extensively with local communities and stakeholders in Development Plan preparation.

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).



Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Consider the need for a customer service satisfaction survey alongside the proposed national customer and stakeholder survey to be undertaken by the NPI team.	Planning and Building Standards Service Manager and Development Management Team Leader, in conjunction with the NPI team	High	Short	Minimal, electronic survey with link inviting participation can be included in email signatures and decision letters
Organise an Agents and Architects Forum and seek feedback as to how best to engage with them going forward, and the frequency of such events and communication.	Planning and Building Standards Service Manager, Development Management Team Leader and Gateway Supervisor	High	Short (Before the end of 2024)	Staff time
In tandem with the above actions, develop a communications strategy for the service.	Planning and Building Standards Service Manager, Development Planning, Development Management Team Leader and Gateway Supervisor	High	Short	Staff time





A high performing planning authority should demonstrate place leadership by taking a collaborative place-based approach in line with the Place Principle. It should use the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes in decision-making processes, to achieve the three spatial principles outlined in NPF4: sustainable places, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; liveable places, where we can all live better, healthier lives; and productive places, where we have a greener, fairer, and more inclusive wellbeing economy. The planning authority should seek to ensure that there are no impediments to delivering agreed development.

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
11. The planning authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places	3 – Some progress has been made on this indicator and we do seek quality placemaking but we lack the data to evidence the outcomes and how these are embedded in the decision making process.
12. This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	2 – The service has a proportionate approach to Section 75 Legal Agreements and imposition of conditions and a clear project management approach. We also have a dedicated resource within the Development Management Team



	for the delivery of our key strategic sites but the service is sensitive to workload arising from these sites and ability for the wider team, service and council to support delivery.
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Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action <small>What action will you take? What will the outcome be?</small>	Owner	Importance <small>High Medium Low</small>	Timescale <small>Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years</small>	Resources
Implement recording of added value on applications to reach, or exceed, policy and guidance requirements to create an evidence base to assess performance against place and wellbeing outcomes. This evidence base will then inform a monitoring and evaluation process to ensure these are being effectively embedded into decision making and review processes.	Development Management and Development Planning Team Leaders	Medium	Short	All Development Management Staff but in conjunction with Development Planning Team
Develop an ongoing Workforce Strategy and Training Plan, reviewed annual as the PGD cycle completed to support service and individual officer needs, both in terms of resources and skills. Action will include, but is not limited to: A review of application numbers and types to assess the general trends and evidence base for staffing and skill levels require for service operation; A review of	Planning and Building Standards Service Manager	High	Short (Preparation) and Medium (Delivery)	All planning staff and support staff (Gateway) and cross service support from Organisational Development (OD) and HR



<p>skill gaps (arising from PGD reviews) and opportunities suggested by officers; Using the evidence above to inform the training plan and how best the skill gaps can be filled, e.g. training or additional resource; A review of working arrangements in the service to ensure there is flexibility to meet demand across both DM and DP; and consideration of a clear progression route from Graduate to Officer and support through the RTPi APC process.</p>				
<p>Complete the review of the standard conditions to ensure that conditions are legally adequate and that all conditions are proportionate and risk based.</p>	<p>Development Management Team Leader and Planning Solicitor</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>All Development Management and Development Planning Staff, Planning Solicitor and with support from other services, such as Environmental Health and Roads</p>

