



Falkirk Council



NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Plan 2024

Falkirk 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	3
2. The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce	3

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
Prepare a Workforce Planning Strategy including consideration of future service delivery needs, available and potential resources including increased fee income, team resilience, technical support functions, staff progression and recruitment, and succession planning.	Senior Planning Manager & Team Co-ordinators	High	Short Term	All Planning Staff Human Resources Organisational Development



Appropriately staffed and structured teams capable of delivering a quality planning service.				
Undertake a Training Needs Analysis and develop a Service Training Plan, including consideration of emerging types of development, new policy agendas, and the potential of digital technologies. Staff are equipped to deal with changing professional demands and are able to make full and effective use of technology and digital tools.	Senior Planning Manager & Team Co-ordinators	Medium	Short Term	All Planning Staff Human Resources Organisational Development
Review specialist support needs both internally and externally across a range of relevant topics and with particular reference to the challenges of industrial decarbonisation in Grangemouth. Staff have timeous access to appropriate specialist advice needed to support quality decision making.	Senior Planning Manager & Team Co-ordinators	Medium	Short Term	All Planning Staff Improvement Service Heads of Planning Scotland
Review Health & Safety risk assessments for all staff ensuring that risks associated with new ways of working are properly accounted for. All risks are identified, understood, and appropriately mitigated.	Senior Planning Manager & Team Co-ordinators	Low	Long Term	Team Co-ordinators Health & Safety
Hold meetings/workshops with internal and external consultees to agree protocols around when consultations are issued. Consultation is proportionate and delays associated with consultation are minimised.	Senior Planning Manager & Team Co-ordinators	Medium	Medium Term	Team Co-ordinators Internal Consultees External Consultees



Progress fuller implementation of the Uniform system with particular reference to the 'Consultee Access' functionality.

Greater efficiency in the management of planning application consultations.

Development
Management Co-
ordinators

Medium

Medium Term

Systems
Development Officer

Development
Management Staff





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	2
4. This Planning Authority has sound governance	2
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	2

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
Establish a Planning Improvement Monitoring Group to oversee implementation of the NPIF Improvement Actions. NPIF actions are effectively progressed and monitored by an appropriate team.	Senior Planning Manager	High	Short Term	Senior Planning Manager Team Co-ordinators Planning Delegates Planning and Performance Colleagues



Undertake a review of the Scheme of Delegation including consultation with Elected Members/legal officers and secure Council approval for any recommended changes. Delegation arrangements for different applications and consents are appropriate and proportionate, leading to more efficient processing and improved performance.	Development Management Co-ordinators	High	Short Term	Senior Planning Manager Team Co-ordinators Planning Delegates Governance Colleagues Legal Colleagues Elected Members
Deliver a programme of non-mandatory training for all Elected Members on specific planning topics. Members are better equipped to make informed decisions related to planning.	Lead Planning Officers	Medium	Short Term	Senior Planning Manager Team Co-ordinators Planning Delegates Governance Colleagues Legal Colleagues Elected Members
Review Planning Committee report format, design, layout and content. Reports convey information in a format that is more accessible for Elected Members and the public.	Senior Planning Manager	Medium	Medium Term	Senior Planning Manager Team Co-ordinators Planning Delegates Governance Colleagues Legal Colleagues Elected Members





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
7. The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	2
8. The planning authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes	2

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
Procure new corporate GIS system with new system/data administration procedures and staff training. Staff have wider access to a more cost-efficient GIS service.	Senior Planning Manager	High	Short Term	Senior Planning Manager Business Management Co-ordinator



				Planning Technicians
Integrate GIS planning datasets fully with Uniform. Staff have access to reliable spatial constraint mapping through the Uniform system.	Business Management Co-ordinator	Medium	Short Term	Systems Development Officer Planning Technicians
Undertake a review of the Scheme of Delegation including consultation with Elected Members/legal officers and secure Council approval for any recommended changes. Delegation arrangements for different applications and consents are appropriate and proportionate leading to more efficient processing and improved performance.	Development Management Co-ordinators	High	Short Term	Senior Planning Manager Team Co-ordinators Planning Delegates Governance Colleagues Legal Colleagues Elected Members
Increase enforcement capacity by recruiting full-time enforcement officer. Better resourcing of the enforcement function.	Development Management Co-ordinators	High	Short Term	Senior Planning Manager Development Management Co-ordinators
Deliver a programme of non-mandatory training for all Elected Members on specific planning topics. Members are better equipped to make informed decisions related to planning.	Lead Planning Officers	Medium	Short Term	Senior Planning Manager Team Co-ordinators Planning Delegates Governance Colleagues



				Elected Members
Review systems for registration, validation, and allocation of applications. Quicker and more efficient processing of planning applications.	Development Management Co- ordinators	Medium	Medium Term	Development Management Co- ordinators Graduate Planners





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	3
10. The planning authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities.	2

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
Review pre-application enquiry arrangements including charging, handling, and response timescales. An improved and more transparent service offered to applicants.	Development Management Co-ordinators	Medium	Medium Term	Senior Planning Manager Development Management Co-ordinators



Restart an annual or biannual Developers forum. Improved communication between the planning service and its customers.	Senior Planning Manager	Medium	Medium Term	Senior Planning Manager Team Co-ordinators
Review customer satisfaction/feedback survey and processes. Improved communication between the planning service and its customers.	Development Management Co-ordinators	Medium	Short Term	Development Management Co-ordinators
Produce project plan for LDP3 Proposed Plan Strategy and Site Choices consultation. Consultation at this stage of plan preparation is effective.	Development Planning Co-ordinator	High	Short Term	Development Planning Co-ordinators
Update and expand LPP support resources. Improved LLP guidance and resources available to community bodies.	Development Planning Co-ordinators	High	Short Term	Planning Officer
Develop a package of planning and regulatory information to assist potential business start-ups in Falkirk Town Centre. Better quality development in the Town Centre and minimising delays to investors.	Economic Development Manager	Medium	Medium Term	Economic Development and Business Gateway Staff Falkirk Delivers (BID) Planning Officer





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	2
12. This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	2

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
Consult and finalise process mapping of the stages and tasks involved with planning obligations and identify areas for further improvement. A clearer understanding of the planning obligations process and journey as a basis for improvements.	Planning Obligations Monitoring Group	High	Short Term	Input required from relevant POMG officers.



Prepare a risk register to identify significant risks from planning obligations monitoring facing the Council and control measures to address these. Risks associated with the planning obligations process will be appropriately mitigated.	Planning Obligations Monitoring Group	High	Short Term	Input required from relevant POMG officers.
Identify cost benefit for software automation to support and improve planning obligations enforcement, monitoring, and reporting. A clear business case for investment in new systems to manage the process.	Planning Obligations Monitoring Group	Medium	Short Term	Engage with potential software providers, and early adopters of software (Aberdeenshire and West Lothian Councils) Build a business case to secure budget for software license.
Record information on planning obligations as required by Section 36(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1997 as amended and develop a template for reporting this information in advance of the commencement of the Section 36(5) duty. Legislative requirements are met and public transparency on developer contributions is improved.	Planning Obligations Monitoring Group	High	Short Term	Engage with Heads of Planning Scotland and Scottish Government, both of which may be looking to develop a national template. Input required from Legal Services.
Create a dedicated Council webpage for planning obligations which includes information on developer contributions secured, spent and unspent.	Planning Obligations Monitoring Group	Medium	Medium Term	Review good practice from other Councils.



Public transparency on developer contributions is improved.				
Pilot the use of an interactive map and dashboard to report and improve internal and external communication around spending of contributions. Information on developer obligations is more accessible.	Planning Obligations Monitoring Group	Low	Medium Term	Engage with GIS Technicians and review emerging good practice from other Councils.
Review the process and format of the Housing Land Audit (HLA) in the light of the revised Scottish Government HLA Guidance. Compliance of the HLA with the Scottish Government's Guidance.	Planning Obligations Monitoring Group	Medium	Short Term	Planning Officer.

