

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Plan 2024

Midlothian 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 <small>(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)</small>
1. The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	4
2. The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce	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	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
<small>What action will you take? What will the outcome be?</small>		<small>High Medium Low</small>	<small>Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years</small>	
Review staffing structure to ensure there is sufficient staff required to carry out all tasks	Planning Manager	High	Short/ Medium	
Look into the possibility of seeking outside help to support in the production of MLDP2	Policy Team	High	Short	
Assess the impact of discretionary charging (pre-application submission rates, workloads, timescales)	Planning Service	Medium	Short	Statistics from E-Planning Officer
Introduce a staff survey to identify what is working well and internal improvements	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Survey (online) – Digital Team



Look into increasing the number of planning staff trained in complaint handling	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Liaise with the Continuous Improvement Team
Investigate ways to make the current consultation process more effective	Planning Applications Team	High	Medium	Liaising with the relevant departments within the council





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 <small>(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)</small>
3. This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	3
4. This Planning Authority has sound governance	3
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	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	
Work collaboratively with bordering Local Authorities to carry out work required for MLDP2	Policy Team	Medium	Short	Liaise with other local authorities in Edinburgh/ Lothians
Review validation rates from current reporting year and take necessary steps to increase figure (if required)	Planning Applications Team	Medium	Short	Statistics from E-Planning Officer



Review of current elected member training	Planning Service	Medium	Medium	Refer to online regulations
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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 <small>(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)</small>
6. The planning authority has a robust policy and evidence base	3
7. The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	2
8. The planning authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes	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 <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
Internal staff training days to develop skills (including GIS skills)	Planning Service	Medium	Short/ Medium	
Update of Enforcement Charter to meet regulations	Planning Applications Team (Enforcement)	High	Short	Refer to online regulations





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 <small>(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)</small>
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 <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
We will continue to review the feedback forms received from customers dealing with the Planning Service in addition to the Stakeholder Survey to	Planning Service	Medium	Ongoing	



identify areas of improvement from a customer perspective				
Liaise with Key Groups in the next stages of MLDP2 policy preparation	Policy Team	High	Short/ Medium	Communication with Key Agencies





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
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 <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
Explore the possibility of including the Place and Well-being outcomes in the assessment of planning applications	Planning Applications Team	Medium	Medium/ Long	

