

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Progress Update 2025

Dundee City Council



Dundee City NPIF Annual Report (Year Two - 2025)

Foreword

This foreword presents Dundee City Council Planning Service's Year 2 update on the Improvement Action Plan. It summarises progress across the five key themes of the Improvement Framework: People, Culture, Tools, Engage, and Place and reflects the ongoing commitment to service improvement.

People

The Planning Service continues to prioritise team development and cross-departmental collaboration. A strong culture of teamwork has been fostered, with improved engagement between Planning and Environment colleagues

A member of the team has taken on the Planning Training Coordinator role alongside their existing duties, and this has been well received. Early work is underway to identify training needs across the team. Additionally, a successful student placement programme, developed in partnership with the University of Dundee, has strengthened links with the University and supported future planners.

Culture

Annual Quality Conversations across the Planning Service have improved staff engagement, helping to identify training gaps and support broader experience across planning functions.

Councillor briefings have been delivered to aid in the consideration and determination of planning applications presented to committee.

Initial work is underway with Planning Aid Scotland and the Communities Team to develop training on planning matters for representatives from Community Councils and Neighbourhood Representative Structures.

Tools

An Open Space Audit has been completed in collaboration with consultants, forming the basis for the forthcoming Open Space Strategy. Environment colleagues will be developing the strategy with support from the Planning Service.

GIS tools such as Survey123 have been effectively used to support Local Development Plan (LDP) consultation processes. These tools have enhanced public engagement and made complex spatial data more accessible.

The Planning Service has made efforts to reduce the average determination time for householder applications, and this has been supported by internal improvement meetings and a renewed focus on timely decision-making.



Engage

Work has begun to improve the customer feedback process, with a broader review of customer service planned for 2026. Enhancements to the Planning webpages have already been implemented, providing clearer guidance on pre-application advice and improving transparency.

The Planning Service is also exploring ways to publish public representations online.

Engagement with community groups is being strengthened through the Development Plan Scheme 2025, which outlines a commitment to inclusive and meaningful consultation throughout the LDP process.

Place

Dundee City Council is continuing to work with stakeholders to ensure that the ambitions of the City Centre Strategic Investment Plan are achieved. The Eastern Quarter has been identified as a priority area, with a masterplan in development to guide future investment.

The Delivery Programme 2025 outlines key projects and partnerships that support the city's growth. Progress has been made on several national developments, and the programme will be regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with wider Council objectives.

Conclusion

The actions identified through self-assessment and peer review are realistic, targeted and aligned with the Improvement Framework. While some actions have been quick wins, others are more complex and require sustained effort over the longer term. The majority of actions are progressing well and are contributing to a more effective Planning Service.

Introduction

The National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) was piloted incrementally in three separate cohorts throughout the 2024/25 financial year. This was to test a new approach to measuring the performance of planning authorities. The pilot aimed to test the new framework, to explore what works and what doesn't. This resulted in each planning authority producing an improvement action plan and performance assessment.

Each improvement action plan sets out:

- What the planning authority has agreed as its priority activities
- Whether these have short-, medium- or long-term timescales
- The owner of the actions
- The resources needed

[Link to action plan for 2023/24.](#)

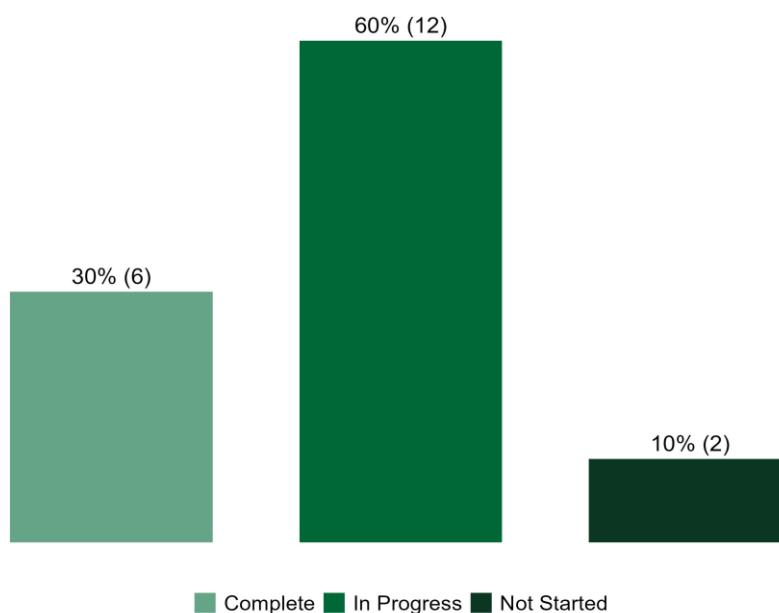


In year two of the NPIF the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress Dundee City has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.

Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

This section details each of the improvement actions and the progress the planning authority has made.

Dundee City has 20 improvement actions. The status of the actions is shown below:



Action 1: Implement monthly meetings with Environmental Health regarding key planning applications to streamline application process

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

This has enabled improved communication and collaboration between Planning and Environmental Health. The meetings have proven to be a beneficial forum with dedicated time to discuss planning applications where there are significant environmental health considerations. These sessions have enabled improved collaboration between the teams whereby concerns and possible solutions can be identified. In addition, the early indications



are that there has been an improved response time in formal written consultation, and this has streamlined the application process.

Action 2: Undertake a review of the discretionary charging framework to enable service investment and support cost recovery. This will be monitored to ensure that the level of discretionary charging is regularly reviewed to ensure an effective service for customer

In Progress

Progress against this action: Following the publication of the revised fee regulations a review of the discretionary charging was undertaken and implemented.

The following next steps are proposed: The discretionary charging will continue to be monitored and reviewed by the service and further alterations will be made as necessary in future years.

Action 3: The creation of a Planning Training coordinator role, enabling upskilling of members of the team

In Progress

Progress against this action: A member of the Planning Service has taken on the Planning Training Coordinator role and early work on the identification of training needs across the Team has commenced.

The following next steps are proposed: Throughout the next year training sessions that meet the requirements of the training needs of the Team will be identified and promoted. Opportunities to organise internal training sessions for the specific requirements across the Team will also be progressed.

Action 4: Develop a student work experience and internship placement with the University of Dundee to promote a career in planning and develop planning skills

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

A student work experience and internship placement programme with the University of Dundee was developed collaboratively. The programme consisted of a 6-week placement in which a planning student attended the council offices for one day a week work experience. The student gained Development Management experience and was provided with the opportunity to assess a planning application and gain real world experience of working within a planning department. The student successfully completed the placement, and this



programme supported their university course. It has been agreed to form an ongoing programme between the Council and University.

Action 5: Introduction of the annual Quality Conversations process

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The Quality Conversation process has enabled managers and team members to discuss their progress and identify training gaps. This has further enabled staff members to move around the team and gain experience in other aspects of planning or be involved in more complex or varied applications. The process is now fully embedded within the team and although this is a council wide initiative it has been well received by colleagues. These annual reviews will continue and will be followed up with a 6 monthly check in.

Action 6: Training to community groups on planning matters

In Progress

Progress against this action: Early work has commenced with the Planning Service and Communities Team working with Planning Aid Scotland to develop training on planning matters for representatives from Community Councils and Neighbourhood Representative Structures.

The following next steps are proposed: The training will be delivered by Planning Aid Scotland, and this will be arranged by the Council's Communities Team. The Council will liaise with the community groups to determine the level interest in particular areas of training. These training areas will be further developed and delivered as required and the Planning Service will be available to provide any necessary input as required.

Action 7: Review Scheme of Delegation, where it relates to planning, and suggest changes as required

In Progress

Progress against this action: The review of the scheme of delegation has been undertaken by Council Officers and will be considered by Committee in due course.

The following next steps are proposed: It is intended that the reviewed scheme of delegation will be considered by Committee and published by the end of the 2025.



Action 8: Provide Councillor briefings and training on specific topic matters e.g. affordable housing, short term lets

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Detailed training has been provided to elected members in respect of planning legislation and guidance. Councillor briefings have also been undertaken on specific topic matters including affordable housing and short term lets. These briefings provided an opportunity to discuss the relevant policy and guidance with committee members so that they could take this into account when considering planning applications. This will be an ongoing process, and further briefings will be held as necessary.

Action 9: Joint working to produce an Open Space Strategy to support the progression of the review of the LDP

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Council worked with consultancy Ironside Farrar to undertake an Open Space Audit to inform an update to the Council's Open Space Strategy. The audit assessed and mapped the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing open space provision in the city, using Green Flag assessment criteria and Ordnance Survey data.

The following next steps are proposed: The Planning Team will be assisting Environment colleagues to prepare the draft Open Space Strategy. The Open Space Audit will inform the Open Space Strategy which will set out a strategic framework of the Council's policies and proposals as to the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure in the city. This is an ongoing project which will support the review of the Local Development Plan and work on this will continue following the submission of the Evidence Report to Gate Check stage. It is anticipated this will be available for public consultation in 2026.

Action 10: Utilise key GIS tools such as Survey123, StoryMaps, and Dashboards in Local Development Plan (LDP) consultation processes, especially the Place Standard Tool and Play Sufficiency Survey

In Progress

Progress against this action: The use of GIS tools during evidence gathering stage of the preparation of the LDP has enabled the production of graphical information that is easy to access and understand. GIS Survey123 was used as part of the consultation during the evidence gathering process and provided a map-based consultation process to engage with members of the public and assisted the process in gathering data for the place standard survey and play sufficiency survey.



The following next steps are proposed: The Place Reports are in the process of being prepared using GIS StoryMaps and Dashboards to provide mapping and key information on a Ward level basis across the city. It is anticipated that as the LDP progresses to the next stages there will be further use of GIS tools for presenting information visually as well as to assist with consultation processes.

Action 11: Improvement Meeting reducing average timescales for determination of householder applications

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Meetings were held with the Development Management side of the team to discuss the improvement action to reduce the average time to determine householder planning applications. These meetings enabled Council Officers to suggest ideas as to how the overall determination time for applications could be reduced. A suggestion that has been implemented was the timeous determination of minor applications to include householder applications. The early indications are that the determination of these applications in a timely manner is showing an improvement. The Team will continue to focus on this area of improvement over a longer period in order to further reduce the determination timescales for these applications.

Action 12: Address resource issues on Enforcement

In Progress

Progress against this action: Justification for resourcing the Enforcement function within the Planning Team has been agreed with the Council's Corporate Recruitment Team.

The following next steps are proposed: The vacant Enforcement post will be advertised, and a successful candidate will be appointed subject to the recruitment process in autumn 2025.

Action 13: Review the customer feedback procedure

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed: We have not had the time given other priorities.

The following next steps are proposed: This action forms part of a range of customer service improvements in respect of service delivery and is intended to be implemented in 2026. This work is intended to improve the interaction between the Planning Service and its customers.



Action 14: Develop a process to allow objections/representations to planning applications to be visible on the planning portal

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Planning Service are currently exploring methods to ensure that sensitive information regarding representees are not identified as a result of publishing representations online. There is a need for the service to further explore the use of redaction tools to ensure personal information is not shared online. There are further resource issues in respect of checking the redaction to ensure accuracy. It is intended that this will be implemented in 2026.

The following next steps are proposed: This action forms part of a range of customer service improvements in respect of service delivery and is intended to be implemented in 2026. This work is intended to improve the interaction between the Planning Service and its customers.

Action 15: Enhance Planning webpages to improve customer pre-application advice and provide improved response timescales

Complete

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The Planning website have been updated and includes a robust explanation about the Pre-application service customers can expect when submitting an enquiry. The website clearly sets out upfront information that an applicant would be expected to submit as part of an enquiry along with the required fees and details of what is and what is not included in any response. In addition, links are provided to supporting policy and guidance documents that an applicant may wish to consult and consider prior to submission of a formal pre-application request.

Action 16: Improve and encourage active participation in the customer satisfaction surveys

Not Started

Reason(s) action has not been progressed: We have not had the time given other priorities.

The following next steps are proposed: This action forms part of a range of customer service improvements in respect of service delivery and is intended to be implemented in 2026. This work is intended to improve the interaction between the Planning Service and its customers.



Action 17: Review and enhance an approach to collaborative engagement with Community Groups

In Progress

Progress against this action: A high-level summary of engagement methods to be implemented as part of the review of the LDP have been set out in Participation Statement within the Development Plan Scheme 2025. As part of the Participation Statement, the Council sets out that efforts will be made to seek to involve a wide range of parties including established Community Groups

The following next steps are proposed: This will continue to be a priority for the Council moving forward in the review of the Local Development Plan. The expectation will be that during key consultation periods the Planning Team will have targeted consultation with Community Groups and will encourage participation and input. As the Local Development Plan progresses the Council will work with the Council's Communities Team in further developing meaningful engagement with Community Groups. This will involve reviewing engagement methods with the appropriate groups so that they are fit for purpose.

Action 18: Implement the actions of the City Centre Strategic Investment Plan

In Progress

Progress against this action: The City Centre Strategic Investment Plan (CCSIP) has been published and is a material planning consideration. Various city centre areas with their own unique characteristics were identified through the CCSIP process, with the Eastern Quarter emerging as a priority area due to its significant challenges and opportunities.

The following next steps are proposed: The Council is working with consultants to progress the Eastern Quarter Masterplan. The specific proposals within that masterplan will be progressed as a priority. The Council will continue working with developers and partners to secure and implement the actions of the CCSIP. The CCSIP and progress on actions are subject to regular monitoring and reporting to ensure the ongoing success.

Action 19: Implementation and monitoring of Local Development Plan Action Programme

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Council published the Delivery Programme in February 2025, and it highlights a range of key partners who are to be involved in the various proposals and projects. The Council is proactively working in partnership with other organisations in seeking to attract and facilitate appropriate development for the benefit of the city. Significant progress towards the actions within the Delivery Programme have been made on key national developments such as at the Eden Project, Waterfront office development and Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc



The following next steps are proposed: The Delivery Programme is a working document in conjunction with the delivery of wider Council objectives. Partner contributions are likely to be varied across national and strategic developments and will include a range of services including funding, project management, design or other professional services. The Delivery Programme will be kept under review and updated at least every two years or sooner should Scottish Ministers direct the authority to update it.

Action 20: Undertake an audit of the Section 75 process

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Planning Service identified the current Section 75 process as an area of potential improvement. This has led to discussion and reviewing the existing process and undertaking an audit of this process.

The following next steps are proposed: The existing Section 75 process has been audited by external consultants appointed by Dundee City Council. Once the final report is provided then the Planning Service will consider the recommendations made in respect of applications going forward.

Peer Collaborative Review Follow Up

As part of the pilot, each planning authority held a peer collaborative review workshop. This brought together key stakeholders and customers to discuss and provide constructive feedback on the improvement action plan.

Status of the peer review follow-up meeting: We are planning to send an email to update on progress.

Additional information: It is intended that the progress update will be submitted following the year 2 meeting with the Improvement Service taking place on 25 September 2025

