



NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Plan 2024

Aberdeenshire 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	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
Attribute 1: Examine opportunities for a more progressive discretionary charging framework to enable service investment, cost recovery and provision.	Development Management	Medium	Medium – 3 years	Service Managers Team Managers Staff Discretionary Charging Improvement Working Group
Attribute 1: Further work to improve consultee liaison to streamline processes & protocols – to enable improved consultation timelines.	Development Management	High	Short – 1 year	Service Managers Team Managers



				Staff Consultee Improvement Working Group Consultees
Attribute 1: Examine ways to improve collaborative working and develop timelines for provisions of key pieces of work between services i.e. open space strategy and local housing strategy.	Policy	Medium	Medium – 3 year	Service Managers Team Managers Staff collaborative working development
Attribute 2: Review and update the Career Development Scheme to ensure staff development, retention and succession planning.	Planning authority	High	Short – 1 year	Service Managers Team Managers Human Resources Staff Development
Attribute 2: Develop the work experience partnership with Universities and the Education service, promoting a career in planning as well as an understanding of the planning system.	Planning authority	Medium	Medium – 3 year	Service Managers Team Managers Staff Development University partnerships Education Partnerships





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	4
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	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
Attribute 4: Consider further review with Elected Members of Part 2C (Planning Delegations) to streamline to find ways of improvement in planning application determination timescales.	Development Management /Legal	Medium	Medium – 3 years	Service Managers Team Managers
Attribute 4: Reviewing further legislation Part 2A – ensure that approval of the Proposed Delivery Programme is sought from Full Council.	Planning Information & Delivery/Legal	Medium	Medium – 3 years	Service Managers Team Managers





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	3
7. The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	4
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
Attribute 7: Examine opportunities for increased use of digital platforms and technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute towards corporate review of GIS systems and storage procedures to ensure systems meet the needs of the planning system and supports digital modernisation 	Planning Authority and IT	High	Short - 1 year	Service Managers Team Managers Business Support Team IT Service Finance/Budgets



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pursuing and finalising roll out of site visit technology – use of tablets & associated site visit application for officer use on site • Implement the conditions module within Uniform Key Plan Database Development • Power BI - to provide real time monitoring for planning performance and income 				Corporate GIS working group Uniform working group Planning Staff
Attribute 7: Development of Enforcement digital systems to meet Audit outcomes re customer services.	Enforcement	High	Short - 1 year	Service Managers Team Managers Enforcement Staff Business Support Team
Attribute 8: Develop a more detailed process for monitoring appeal decisions across the service resulting in overturned decisions by reviewing decision reports.	Planning Authority (Both Policy and Development Management and Local Review Body officer input)	High	Medium - 3 years	Service Managers Team Managers Legal Planning Staff
Attribute 8: Member Training on reasonable and robust decision making. Understanding of the Local Development Plan, NPF4, Policies and interpretation, material planning considerations.	Planning Authority (Both Policy, Development Management and Local Review Body)	High	Short - 1 year	Service Managers Team Managers Planning Staff Committee Services Councillors
Attribute 8: Review the requirements for developer obligations within settlement statements working collaboratively with agencies about the infrastructure required.	Planning Authority (Both Policy, Development Management, Developer Obligations, Planning	High	Short - 1 year	Service Managers Team Managers Developer Obligations Planning Staff Transport Strategy Area Managers



	Information & Delivery), Education services, external agencies such as NHS Grampian, Transport Scotland			
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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
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
Attribute 9: Consider tools to improve performance in the pre-application service set against targets and encourage through website information more standing advice and self-help information for customers.	Development Management – Pre Application Working Group	High	Short – 1 year	Service Managers Team Managers Business Support Team Consultees Website working group



				Web Team
Attribute 10: Community Engagement Toolkit – physical equipment and resources which can be made available to communities to enable them to undertake engagement activities.	Planning Information & Delivery	High	Short – 1 year	Team Managers Planning Staff Area Managers / Teams
Attribute 10: Community Guide to Planning – Brief written guide aimed at individuals and communities to help in understand the planning system.	Planning Information & Delivery (in collaboration with other parts of the Planning Authority and Area Teams)	Medium	Short - 1-2 years	Team Managers Planning Staff Area Managers / Teams





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	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
Attribute 12: Create an Aberdeenshire Employment Site Prospectus.	Planning Information & Delivery	Medium	Short – 1 year	Service Managers Team Managers Planning Staff
Attribute 12: Review monitoring of Planning Process Agreements and extension of time recording and processes	Development Management	High	Short – 1 year	Service Managers Team Managers Planning Staff



				Business Support Team
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