

National Planning Improvement Framework

Performance
Assessment
Template

2024



Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



From mountain to sea

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1.0 CONTEXT



1.1 Planning Authority Details

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The matrix below has been used to determine the self-assessment score for each attribute. If an attribute has been scored at a level of 1 or 2 then a good practice example, has been included in the appendix and referenced within the text.

Score	Attribute	Good Practice Example
<input type="checkbox"/> 1	Making excellent progress	Consolidate Share learning with others
<input type="checkbox"/> 2	Making good progress	Build upon Increase ambition in targets Share learning with others
<input type="checkbox"/> 3	Making fair progress	Develop Increase ambition in targets Review and improve implementation
<input type="checkbox"/> 4	Making limited progress	Review Review ambition Review approach taken Inform NPI Learn from others
<input type="checkbox"/> 5	No progress	Prioritise Prioritise fundamental review and revisit approach taken. Engage with NPI Learn from others

Table 1 - Self-assessment score matrix



1.2 Forward

Aberdeenshire Council Planning Authority has been delighted to take part in the first cohort of 10 Planning Authorities to pilot the new continuous performance reporting framework developed by the National Planning Improvement Service. Based on a self-assessment approach, involving staff, stakeholder peer review and a collaborate deep dive with our partner Local Authority, Scottish Borders Council.

The self-assessment framework consists of 5 themes, developed by stakeholders from a range of perspectives and interests in planning. The themes have been identified as key to achieving a high performing Planning Authority. Within each of the five themes there are 12 attributes as follows:

- 1. Theme: People**
 - Has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity.
 - Has a valued and supported workforce
- 2. Theme: Culture**
 - Has embedded continuous improvement
 - Has sound governance
 - Has effective leadership
- 3. Theme: Tools**
 - Has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity.
 - Has a valued and supported workforce
- 4. Theme: Engage**
 - Has good customer care
 - Has effective engagement & collaboration with stakeholders and communities
- 5. Theme: Place**
 - Supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
 - Supports the delivery of consented development

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a new statutory reporting requirement for Planning Authorities resulting in the development of the National Planning Improvement Framework, creating an annual reporting mechanism to assess performance and identify actions for improvement. Importantly, areas of good practice are also identified and compiled nationally to encourage shared learning across Local Authorities.

Recognising areas of good practice and evaluating where further developments can be made will ensure that Aberdeenshire Council has the right framework in place to become a high-performing Planning Authority.

Customer feedback, through the establishment of a peer review format, has been central to evaluating the framework and action plan. Providing valuable insight and challenging us to improve on communication and consistency as well as ensuring a responsive and timely service, focusing on creating sustainable, liveable and productive places.

I would like to thank our facilitator, partner Local Authority and those who participated in our peer review workshop to evaluate our proposed improvement actions, their input has helped refine our actions and influenced our priorities. Thanks also to the Planning team, who co-ordinated this new self-assessment process.

This framework and associated improvement action plan will be published and submitted to Ministers for approval.

I look forward to developing this self-assessment process further and sharing updates on our agreed action plan.

Paul Macari
Head of Service
Planning and Economy



1.3 Introduction



Diagram 1 - Planning and Economy Portfolio within the Environment and Infrastructure Services Directorate

Aberdeenshire Council's Planning Authority sits within the Environment and Infrastructure Services (E&IS) Directorate which covers a range of inter-related functions delivered within the context of wider social, economic and environmental objectives with a focus on facilitating place. The functions that form part of Environment and Infrastructure Services are outlined in Diagram 1.

The Planning and Economy Service vision is:

'to create safe, connected, sustainable, inclusive, and economically prosperous places that reflect the needs of our communities and safeguard our unique natural and historic environments'.

The Planning and Economy Service provides strategic and regulatory direction to the Council, communities, industry, and partner organisations with regard to public health, investment, growth and development within Aberdeenshire and comprises of the following services (set out in Diagram 2).

Planning and Economy portfolio which is aligned to the Council Plan 2024-29



Diagram 2 - Planning and Economy Portfolio services



1.3 Introduction

To deliver the Planning and Economy vision and the Council Plan priorities (sustainable economy, connected communities and living well locally) the Planning Authority key activities for 2024-25 are as follows: .

- **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2029 - approval of Development Plan Scheme 2025, preparation of the Evidence Report, and submission to the DPEA.**
- **Initiation of the "Call for Ideas" stage of Local Development Plan-making process.**
- **Assessment and Determination of Planning Applications.**
- **Appropriate action to prevent/resolve unauthorised development.**
- **Delivery of Historic Environment Strategy supporting the drive to net zero, and ensuring the economic, social and wellbeing benefits of the historic environment are realised.**
- **Strategic Development - Renewable Energy Developments supporting drive to net zero and economic growth.**
- **Facilitate development delivery associated with the Aberdeenshire LDP 2023.**
- **Supporting communities with Local Place Plans.**
- **Continued delivery of the Planning Information and Delivery Team (PIDT) Strategy with full review in 2025.**
- **Collect, collate, analyse, and disseminate place-based data and information to inform plans, policies, and decision-making across the Service.**



Image 1 - Faithlie Centre - Fraserburgh



1.4 Peer Review Meeting

Aberdeenshire Council Planning Authority scheduled a collaborative peer review meeting on 21st August 2024 in the Council's Viewmount Office in Stonehaven, facilitated by Scottish Futures Trust. The meeting was held with a hybrid option to allow participants to join remotely. The purpose of the peer review workshop was to give stakeholders the opportunity to review Aberdeenshire Council's National Planning Improvement Action Plan and provide feedback to help shape the finalised plan.

Fourteen stakeholders attended the collaborative session which included, 2 members of staff from our partner authority, Scottish Borders Council, 2 members of staff from the National Planning Improvement Framework and 10 statutory consultees and users of the planning system i.e. community and industry representatives. List of attendees as follows:

- Scottish Borders Council – peer review Local Authority Partner
- National Planning Improvement Service
- Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SSEN)
- NESTRANS - Regional Transport Partnership for Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.
- Councillor Representative - Chair of Infrastructure Services Committee
- Area Manager, Aberdeenshire Council
- Head of Planning & Economy, Aberdeenshire Council
- Scottish Water
- Roads Manager, Aberdeenshire Council
- Community Council Representative
- Local Architect
- Local Developer
- Representation from Homes for Scotland

The session was externally facilitated by a representative from Scottish Futures Trust, who helped lead the group through the improvement attributes and actions as well as ensuring a productive collaborate discussion. Also in attendance were 7 members of Aberdeenshire Council Planning Authority who were there to assist with discussions and answer any specific questions. The National Improvement Champion and National Improvement Officer were also in attendance and a copy of the agenda is available [online](#).

The peer review session reviewed the Improvement Action Plan, debated the self-assessment scoring for each attribute as well as the associated actions. The facilitator was guided by the attendees in terms of order of priority of themes, attributes and actions and associated discussion time. The key focus was centred around what would make a real difference and if you could change one thing what would it be as well as what would success look like.

Key themes discussed were as follows:

- Communication.
- Consistency of advice and acknowledged the complexities of delivering a service across a large geographical area .
- Understanding the planning system and the application process to help community representatives to be better informed and provide them with the knowledge to share information within their local areas.
- Clarity and timescales based on real time information – would like to be able to easily understand where an application is within the application process, especially for community representatives.
- Importance of digital technology and investing for the future.
- Share expertise nationally, especially for specific types of applications.

The group agreed the Improvement Action Plan and whilst the scoring for attributes 4, 6 and 11 were debated it was concluded to leave as is and work towards improvements for the 2024-25 reporting cycle:

- Attribute 4 remained with a score of 4 after it was debated to potentially increase this to a score of 3. It was agreed that further work that will commence during the 2024-25 reporting cycle to review the Scheme of Governance will help to streamline the process and deliver increased consistency / certainty and improved timescales.
- Attribute 6 remained with a score of 3 after it was debated to potentially increase this to a score of 2. It was acknowledged that there are still gaps in the required data and guidance which has caused delays in the Local Development Plan process. Work is continuing to gather the required data to allow analysis and interpretation to inform policy.
- Attribute 11 remained with a score of 3 after it was debated to potentially increase this to a score of 2. It was debated within the review group that the Planning Authority does support the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places but that Local Place Plans are just at the early stages of being developed and the success of these can't be measured until the next reporting cycle.



1.4 Peer Review Meeting

Minor amendments were agreed to timescales for delivery as well as identifying additional elements to be added to improvement actions to be considered for example:

- **Community guide to planning** – timescale to develop was agreed to be shortened.
- **Pre application charging** – discussed the benefits of no fee for householder applications.
- **Consistency of approach for validation of large-scale energy projects** – this has already been addressed through staff training.

The facilitated discussion was deemed to be valuable for stakeholders and the Planning Authority. The following feedback was received:

- The workshop was well run and inclusive. It gave encouragement to all to put forward their views.
- Thank you for giving Scottish Water the opportunity to contribute in Aberdeenshire's NPIF session.
- A really good opportunity and open forum to collaborate and share experiences, both from those working with and within the Local Authority on how we can improve the service.

The feedback/suggestions made by the peer review group have been incorporated into the final report, reflecting the outcome of the collaborate discussions received from the stakeholders.



Image 2 - Aden County Park



Image 3 - Macduff Harbour



2.0 PEOPLE

“

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.

”

2.1 Attribute 1

This Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity

- » Does the Planning Authority have the sufficient level of staff to carry out all activities within the required timeframes?
- » Does the Planning Authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current budget?
- » Does the Planning Authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current income?
- » Does the Planning Authority received responses from consultees within the prescribed timescale when assessing planning applications?
- » Does the Planning Authority have the ability to access the appropriate advice, expertise, evidence and data it requires?

2.1.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 3 - Making Fair Progress. Whilst there has been progress in many of the following areas, the dynamic environment of budgeting, finance, the constant changes to digitalisation and the continued scrutiny of performance, the Planning Authority will continue to work within the parameters of continuous improvement delivering a customer focussed quality service.

2.1.2 Budget - Staff

The Planning Authority has 113 full and part time staff forming a multi disciplined team which is considered to provide sufficient staffing levels to deliver the required services. However, staff numbers have reduced significantly over the years in all parts of the Planning Authority. The associated reduction in budgets must align with available staffing hours. In real terms, staffing levels and capacity combined with the adaption/realignment of work priorities and practices ensures delivery of statutory duties and beyond in all parts of the service. It is a continuing balance between available budget and staffing resources combined with streamlining processes.

The Planning Authority works throughout Aberdeenshire within 6 administrative areas which vary greatly in population density, connectivity and socio-economic issues.



Plan 1 - Map of Aberdeenshire including 6 administrative areas and the location of Aberdeen City



2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.3 Workforce Information

The Head of Service for Planning and Economy which incorporates the chief planner role is supported by two Service Managers who oversee a total staffing complement of 113 staff which equates to 88 full time and 25 part time staff.

Planning Authority	Staff total (excluding vacancies)	Full time	Part time	Vacancies
Chief Planner	1	1		
Development Management	46	38	8	2
SDDT (Energy)	6	4	2	
Enforcement	7	4	3	
Continuous Improvement	1	1		
LRB	1	1		
Policy	8	7	1	
PIDT	9	7	2	
HET	9	7	2	
Planning Admin & ePlanning	25	18	7	3
Total	113	88	25	5

Table 2a - Current staffing within Planning and Economy Portfolio

Planning Authority	Tier 1 Chief Executive	Tier 2 Director	Tier 3 Head of Service	Tier 4 Manager
Relating to the Planning and Environment Service which sits within the Infrastructure Services Directorate	1	1	1	9 (Planning Managers / Team Managers and Team Leaders)
Total	113	88	25	5

Table 2b - Hierarchy of leadership roles



Staff Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	11
30-39	30
40-49	29
50 and over	43

Table 2c - Staff age profile

Chartered Staff – Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) & Other Institutes	Headcount
Head of Service (Chief Planner)	1
Development Management	29
Development Planning	8
Licentiate/Associate	6
Other	3 x Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IBHC) 2 x Chartered Institute for Archaeologist (MCIfA)

Table 2d - Chartered staff

2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.4 Planning Authority Structure

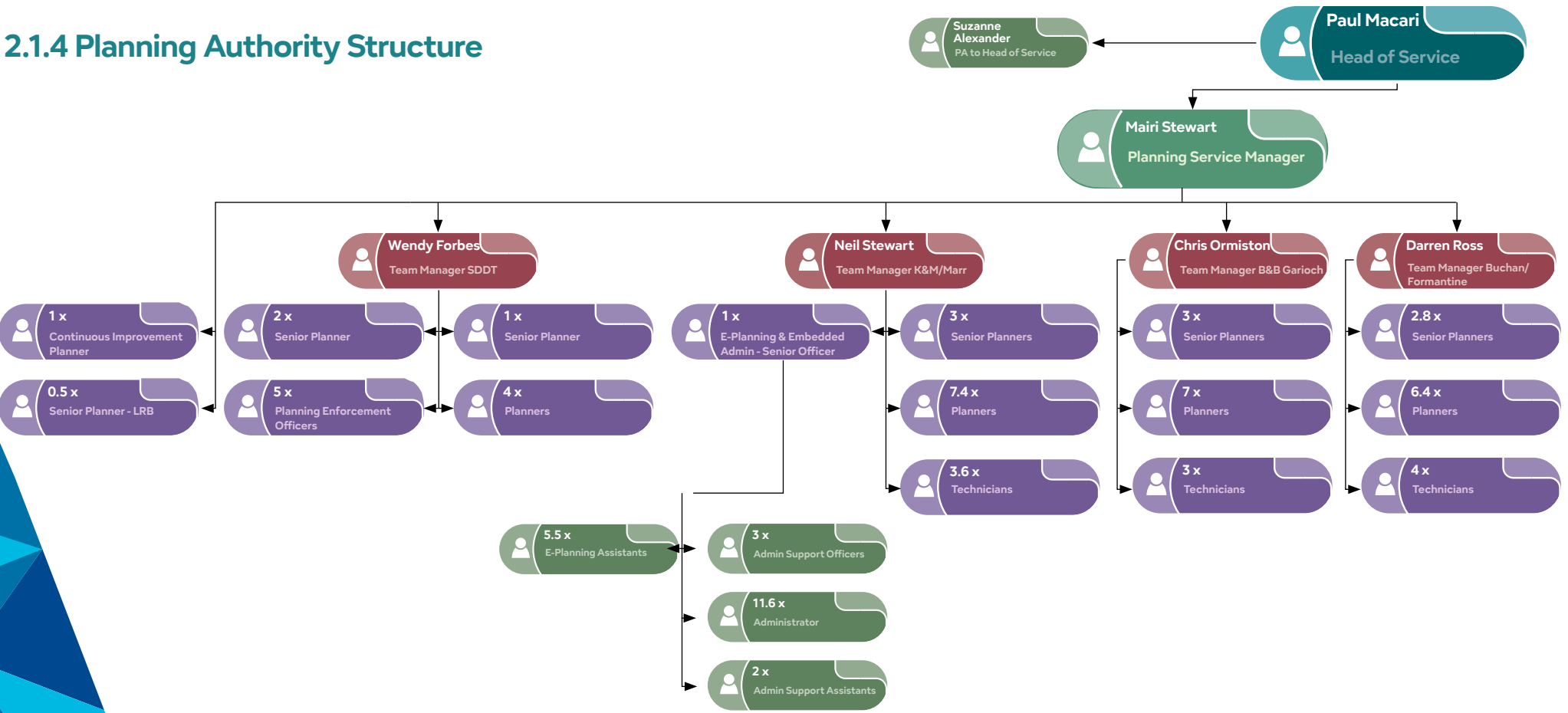


Diagram 3a - Planning Authority (Planning & Economy (Statutory Planning Arm))

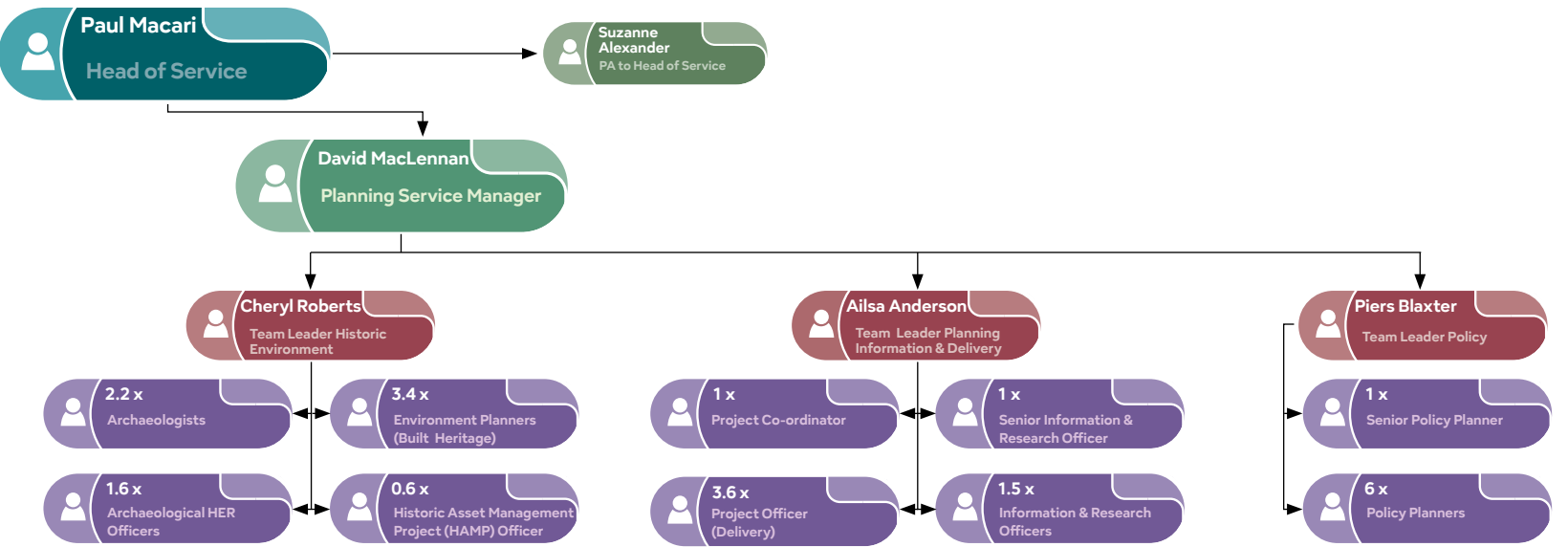


Diagram 3b - Planning Authority (Planning & Economy (Strategic Planning Arm))

2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.5 Planning Authority Team Remits

Policy

- Placemaking
- Local Development Planning
- Supplementary Guidance
- Strategic Environmental Assessment
- Open Space and Play Sufficiency

Planning Information & Delivery

- Delivery Programme
- Housing and Employment Land Audits
- Area Profiles
- Housing & Employment Site Prospectus
- Masterplan Consent Areas
- Local Place Plans
- Town Centre Health Checks
- Facilities Monitor

Development Management

- Pre-App Enquiries & General Planning Enquiries
- Planning – frontline planning admin, e-planning and customer support Customer Service
- Permitted Development Enquiries
- Validate/Register Applications
- E planning
- Household/Local Planning Applications
- Major applications & Masterplans
- Advert Applications
- Listed Building Applications
- Conservation Area Consent Applications
- Prior Notification/Prior approvals
- Hazardous Substances Consents
- Energy applications
- Minerals applications
- Notice of Initiation of Development
- Notice of Completion of Development
- Condition Monitoring & compliance
- Planning Enforcement
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening/Scoping
- Other Certificates
- Appeals/Local Review Body
- Licensing consultations
- Property Enquiries
- Property History Searches
- Protocols/Service Level Agreements
- Performance Reporting
- Complaint management
- Freedom of Information Requests/Environmental Information Request
- Local Review Body

Historic Environment Team

- Listed Buildings
- Conservation areas
- Inventory of Historic Battlegrounds
- Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes
- Historic Environment Register
- Aberdeenshire Design Awards
- Historic Asset Management Project
- Doors Open Day
- Heritage Led Regeneration
- Archaeology
- Urban Design

Development Management (Strategic Development & Delivery)

- Pre-Application Advice
- Energy applications
- Major Energy Applications
- Major/Strategic Applications
- EIA Screening/Scoping
- Section 36 & 37 consultations



2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.6 Policy and Planning Information & Delivery

The [Local Development Plan](#) (LDP) is a statutory document which alongside [National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4) forms the Development Plan for the area. The LDP guides decisions on future development proposals and addresses the needs and opportunities of the area. Topics that LDP cover include housing, employment, retail and open space as well as identifying where development should take place and areas where development should be restricted. The purpose of planning is to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest. The [Delivery Programme](#) is a biannual document which aids in the delivery of allocations in the LDP and identifies a programme for delivery of sites and necessary infrastructure to support and sustain development.

The **Planning Policy team** works to ensure that the LDP is place-based, relevant, accessible and useful to people with an interest in their place. Plans are developed in collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders and based on robust evidence so that they are deliverable.

By planning for the future and working with our communities the team works to ensure that our places provide opportunities for new housing and economic development in places that people want to live, work and play in. As well as safeguarding the buildings, spaces and environments that are important to communities.

In conjunction with the Policy Team, the **Planning Information and Delivery Team (PIDT)** purpose is to ensure that our plans are deliverable and based on reliable evidence. As part of the Delivery Programme and [Audit processes](#) the team work with stakeholders

including Council services, national bodies and the development industry to identify the who, what and when it comes to the delivery of allocated sites within the statutory Development Plan.

The Team also provide a key role of working with our communities in relation to supporting and guiding the development of [Local Place Plans](#) (LPPs), particularly in smaller communities, and in the annual publication of [Town Centre Health Checks](#) which review and assess the vibrancy of town centres and identify gaps in provision or improvement projects for the community to improve the place they live.

The Team have also recently produced the '[Facilities Monitor](#)', an online and interactive resource that displays the availability and spread of services/facilities within Aberdeenshire settlements from shops to defibrillators. This will be an invaluable resource as we progress with the place-based approach in Aberdeenshire.

The 2 teams work together to support our economy with the LDP supporting decisions to invest in a place, identifying priorities and by ensuring strong links with the Delivery Programme provides confidence to industry that there are sufficient opportunities to invest in Aberdeenshire by maintaining a clear focus on delivery of outcomes considered throughout each part of the plan's preparation and implementation.

2.1.7 Historic Environment Team

The **Historic Environment Team** leads on the management, enhancement and promotion of the Historic Environment by:

- Managing: Supporting sustainable development and ensuring the pivotal role of the historic environment on the journey to net zero is realised alongside the adaption of the historic environment to address the challenges of climate change.
- Enhancing: Ensuring we enhance our understanding of the historic environment so the benefits of that understanding can be realised by the community and wider society. Enhancing the historic assets and infrastructure in our control in a way that is a benchmark to others and realises the place making qualities these assets can provide to a community and their wellbeing.
- Promoting: Promote the historic environment through outreach and engagement to ensure the wellbeing, lifelong learning, and skills development that the historic environment offers are realised, and its contribution to tourism maximised.



2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.7 Development Management & Enforcement

Development Management and Enforcement implements the legislative requirement that planning decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The purpose of planning is to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest.

The delivery of development in line with the Development Plan includes the National Planning Framework 4, which supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places. Through built in opportunities to engage in and have a say on new development, communities can influence and shape the future development of their areas.

The delivery of development in forming productive places, aids delivery of the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and community wealth building. Through collaborative work with other services to enable sustainable places aligns with the pillar of Connected Communities. To encourage and support healthy and active lives, facilitate the delivery of affordable housing, encourage engagement in the decision-making process and assess development based on the policies on local living and rural development.

The **Development Management and Enforcement** teams already operate on a place-based basis, with area focused teams. Through the Government's planning transformation, the current Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 (and subsequent amendments and revisions) promotes a more expansive and strategic role for Planning within Councils, with enhanced input to

strategic decision making through aligning other services and strategies to create a delivery focused policy framework. The Act gives Planning an enabling role to take planning and placemaking matters into account when making strategic decisions about investment and service delivery. The delivery of development is guided by the Development Plan and implemented by the Development Management function to ultimately ensure we are creating great places for all. Focus is on creating sustainable places and transforming outcomes for communities through enhanced engagement and involvement in the planning system.

Development Management

The main function of **Development Management** is processing a variation of planning application types (circa 2000+ per year), providing advice at masterplan and pre application stage and engaging widely with a range of stakeholders, public and Councillors. As part of the overall process, Development Management influences the location and quality of development to comply with the Council's objectives, policies, plans and strategies. It also acts as an enabler of the development process to safeguard the quality of the environment and mediating between conflicting land uses or development proposals. An income of £2,452,528 was generated in 2023-2024 through both nationally set and discretionary fees. Performance up until 2024 has been measured and monitored nationally by the annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF), now replaced by the inaugural National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF). The service is regularly within the top national performance quartile for decision making. A continuous improvement framework is in place

and the service is accredited as part of the nationally recognised Customer Service Excellence standard.

Enforcement

The Council's **Planning Enforcement Team** investigate breaches of planning control. These include:

- Work being carried out without planning permission or listed building consent
- An unauthorised change of use of land or building
- Not following conditions imposed by a planning permission
- Not following plans approved by a planning permission
- Unauthorised advertisements.

The primary aim of **planning enforcement** is to protect the environment and the quality of life in the public interest. The need for effective planning enforcement, both underpins the Council vision to be the best area, by protecting the area's special environment and sustaining the quality of life for all and is necessary to ensure that the Development Plan policies are upheld. The integrity of the planning process depends on the Council's readiness to take enforcement action when it is required to do so. Local Authorities have the primary responsibility for taking whatever enforcement action is necessary within their area and the Council will always exercise its planning enforcement powers rigorously where appropriate.

2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.8 Place Agenda - Policy, Planning Information Delivery & Historic Environment

Planning should provide a vision and support development that is designed to a high-quality, which demonstrates the six qualities of successful place – distinctive; safe and pleasant; welcoming; adaptable; resource efficient; and easy to move around and beyond.

LDPs should tell a clear and compelling story about the future of places and are based on 'The Place Principle' promoting a joined-up and collaborative approach to decisions about a place's assets and services. Planning has a leadership role to play in putting this approach into practice, working with others across the public, private, third and community sectors, planning ensures that development meets our community's needs.

LDPs should implement national planning policies by setting out a spatial strategy that shows what they mean for change and development in a particular place. Having this clear focus on place will support public engagement with planning. People are more likely to take an interest in planning as we articulate how it is clearly relevant to the places they live, work and spend their time.

Outside planning itself the teams work to support other services and provide reliable and meaningful data to support the delivery of other Council strategies and work plans which are appropriate to place. This includes the auditing of open space, development of [Town and Area Profiles](#), Place Plans for Academy Towns and Housing Strategies to ensure that our places are meeting identified needs within the community

In addition to this the teams undertake a breadth of other work including supporting [Local Place Plans](#) (LPPs) by providing guidance and resources to support particularly smaller communities articulate their views on the future development of their place and needs of the area. LPPs will be taken into account when formulating the LDP and by Development Management when considering planning applications in the LPP area.

[Town Centre Health Checks](#) (TCHCs) are also undertaken in collaboration with community and business groups to identify the vibrancy and vitality of town centres and identify opportunities and areas for improvement.

Finally building on the area's local heritage and historic assets, teams work with communities, businesses and national bodies to deliver heritage led regeneration projects that can be transformative in terms of improvements to our places-physically, economically and socially with recent successful projects completed including the F2021 project and the Banff Vinery, projects which received awards and recognition for the positive impact they had on these places and communities.

2.1.9 Place Agenda - Development Management & Enforcement

By its very nature the delivery and regulation of development through the development management and enforcement functions is based on a place-based approach as the decision-making process enables and facilitates the ethos of place and place making.

The Place policy supports delivery of the Six Qualities of Successful Places set out in National Planning Framework 4. All planning applications are assessed on the policy framework of NPF4 and all decisions are based on the acceptability of the relevant policies to ensure development on the ground integrates the six qualities.

The process of decision making, relies on consultation and collaboration with other Council services and stakeholders, which will seek the best outcomes according to the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes, already embedded in NPF4.

The planning decision making process relies on Development Management inputting to and implementing the policies of the Development Plan. This integrated approach is integral to the joint leadership role Planning as a service has in delivering the six qualities of successful place and making the right decisions to meet the needs of the communities of Aberdeenshire.

Whereas the Development Plan provides the policy tools to support and deliver successful places through the place principle and Development Management assess development and support and deliver successful places, equally important is ensuring the communities can be confident that their places and quality of life will be enforced and thus protected through compliance with the planning process.



2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.10 Engagement

It is important that we engage with all those who may have an interest in their area, community and place. Each year as part of our [Development Plan Scheme](#) we include a Participation Statement setting out how this will be achieved. In this way we hope to Inform and Involve people in the way in which we engage with them in the plan-making processes.

We aim to be open and honest in relation to engagement provide clear opportunities to be involved and the voices of people heard. This includes the Local Development Plan, supporting Local Place Plans, Town Centre Health Checks and utilising community heritage and assets to deliver heritage led regeneration projects which build on the community's sense of pride and place.

In all our engagement we will adopt the advice provided in the Scottish Government's "Effective Community Engagement in Local Development Planning Guidance" and the National Standards for Community Engagement.

The National Standards for Community Engagement are good-practice principles designed to improve and guide the process of community engagement to build and sustain relationships between public services and community groups – helping them both to understand and act on the needs or issues that communities experience.

2.1.11 Climate Change

A principle focus of NPF4 and future plans and policies will be on Sustainable Places, with specific reference to tackling the climate and nature crises.

Our Policy Principles will be to encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis. LDPs must address the global climate emergency and nature crisis by ensuring the spatial strategy will reduce emissions and adapt to current and future risks of climate change by promoting nature recovery and restoration in the area. In particular consideration should be given to:

- Just Transition
- Conserving and recycling assets
- Local living
- Compact urban growth
- Rebalanced development
- Rural revitalisation
- Emissions from development are minimised
- Our places are more resilient to climate change impacts.
- Improving biodiversity
- Promoting nature recovery and, nature restoration
- Soils
- Forestry, woodland and trees
- Green belts
- Coastal development
- Energy
- Design, quality and place
- Blue and green infrastructure
- Flood risk and water management

LDPs will identify and protect locally, regionally, nationally and internationally important natural assets, on land and along coasts. Spatial strategies should also better connect nature rich areas by establishing and growing nature networks to help protect and restore the biodiversity, ecosystems and natural processes in their area.

The importance of the Planning Authority to climate change and delivery of sustainable places can be summarised within NPF4 which states:

Planning is a powerful tool for delivering change on the ground in a way which brings together competing interests so that decisions reflect the long-term public interest.

2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.12 Resources

Within Development Management in 2023-24 serious staff shortages necessitated adaption of service delivery and customer engagement. A workforce framework was created to allow vacancies to be filled through a more agile recruitment process, broadening the criteria with a focus on transferrable skills and options for a career change. Encouraging a border background into the Planning Profession has resulted in the development of an inhouse training and mentoring programme with the goal of developing our own staff. A revised career progression scheme is being developed to allow staff to progress based on a checklist of knowledge and experience which is discussed and reviewed at one to ones. The challenges of recruitment and retention has been highlighted in the recent Scottish Government Consultation on Resourcing which focuses on the national shortage of qualified planners, due to the reduction in Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) accredited University courses in Scotland and overall lack of funding related to the planning process.

In Policy and Planning Information and Delivery Team (PIDT) additional staffing resources have been utilised to meet challenges of new tasks following the adoption of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). This has resulted in an additional member of staff working within the Policy Team and the utilisation of students/seasonal staff to undertake a range of fieldwork and desk-based research to support work streams such as the Open Space Audit and Town Centre Health Checks. Officers have also been acting as dedicated support/facilitators for communities in relation to the creation of Local Place Plans (LPPs) which have significantly increased workloads across the teams. Significant challenges

to budgets and lack of additional resources to meet these challenges lead to uncertainty as to whether this additional resourcing will be made permanent to allow the teams to continue to fulfil statutory and non-statutory workloads.

The Historic Environment Team is also responsible for the councils Historic Asset Management Project (HAMP). Budget challenges have meant that the specific project officer post for the management of this project is no longer available. This presents opportunities for upskilling and development of planning staff to take on more project orientated work, but additional support will be necessary as the skills and knowledge develops across the team. This comes at a time when capital budgets and external funding opportunities are being reduced coupled with increasing competition for available grants which will impact upon the likelihood of the future delivery of large-scale heritage led regeneration schemes such as the award winning F2021 scheme in Fraserburgh.



Image 4 - Old Ballater School Redevelopment



2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.13 Budget - Income

Whilst there are service wide cost recovery models for income generating activities for the entire Planning and Economy Service, opportunities for cost recovery through planning fee income remains a challenge. At present, 40% of the operating costs of the Service come from income generation/cost recovery and this has equated to a balanced budget being returned. With the recent and ongoing legislative changes and new duties such as digital coupled with a challenging financial environment for Local Authorities it is recognised that work needs to continue to maximise fee income and generate new strands of income. Options for fee setting and income has recently been set out in the Scottish Government Resourcing consultation. Elements of continuous improvement activity to streamline processes to improve and make service delivery more cost effective have been rolled out in some areas, some more advanced than others.

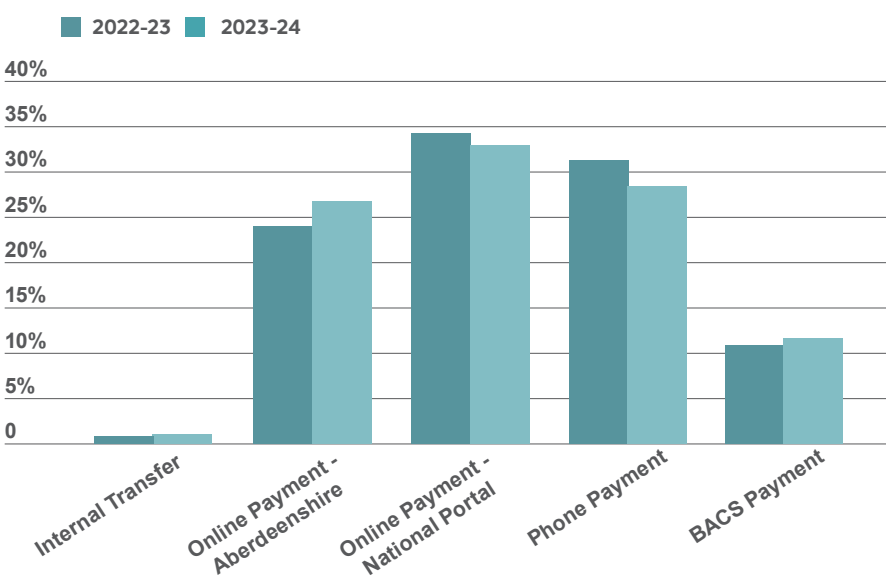
Within Development Management the first element of discretionary charging has been rolled out. This is solely focused on the Energy Transmission falling under Regulations 4 and 6 for large scale energy, transmission and infrastructure development only. Phases 2 and 3 of charging will follow in 2024/2025 with a further roll-out of discretionary charges, waived/reduced fees, and surcharges for other development types.

Collaborative work with the Finance Service is ongoing and the Planning Authority Managers work closely with their Finance partners to ensure close monitoring of each respective service budget. The total income for planning applications and discretionary charging for 2023-24 is £2,452,528.

	2022-23		2023-24	
	No. Apps	Fee Received	No. Apps	Fee Received
Planning Application Fees	2082	£2,387,916	1900	£2,336,928
Discretionary Fees*	0	0	20	£115,600
TOTAL	2082	£2,387,916	1920	£2,452,528

*Implemented October 2023

Table 3a - Planning Application & Discretionary Fees Income



Graph 1 & Table 3b - Payment Methods - Planning Application Fees

	2022-23	2023-24
Internal Transfer	0.4%	0.7%
Online Payment - Aberdeenshire	24.0%	26.2%
Online Payment - National Portal	34.3%	33.7%
Phone Payment	30.9%	28.5%
BACS Payment	10.4%	10.8%

2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.14 Performance

Statutory performance indicators submitted quarterly to the Government are considered to be satisfactory. Improvements have been visible following a successful recruitment and training programme. There are however still elements of performance where there are discrepancies e.g. major application performance and further work is required to address these.

2.1.15 Consultees

Aligned with performance, the input/output and timescales associated with consultee responses continue to be monitored and collaborative work forms part of the Development Management Continuous Improvement Framework. Progress is being made, albeit at different levels. For example, in 2022-23 Environmental Health responded with an average timescale of 19 days due to recruitment challenges and this has reduced to an average of 15 days in 2023-24.

Within the reporting year performance has varied per consultee with the average response time (in days) outlined in Table 3.

Consultee	Issued	Replied within time	% within time	Average response time (days)
Roads Development	1372	1072	78%	9
Environmental Health	797	403	51%	15
Flooding and Coastal Protection	406	251	62%	12
Developer Obligations	566	468	83%	9
Natural Environment	846	755	89%	7
Historic Environment (Built Heritage)	758	702	93%	9

Table 4 - Average response times per consultee

Noting that the timescales for a consultee to respond is 14 days and 28 days for an Environmental Impact Assessment or Major application.

In some instances, resourcing and staff shortages have impacted and continue to impact on consultation response times. Refer to the [consultation response time comparison with the previous year](#) for further information.

The service works with the internal consultees and has carried out a review and refresh of the planning/consultee liaison groups which includes an update on protocols. Currently the liaison groups are:

- Planning/Roads Development
- Planning Environmental Health
- Planning/Governance/Developer Obligations
- Planning/Property

Amongst various topics and issues to be addressed and resolved, joint working to streamline and improve the consultation process continues. A recent example has involved Development Management shadowing the Flood Team to map out their internal consultee customer journey which allowed Planners to gain insight and understanding on how to improve consultee access. This has resulted in a more efficient process through updating the consultee protocol and allowing view only access to the Planning Document Management System to allow immediate access to consultee information such as letter of representation to enable timely responses.

The environment and historic environment protocol is also being reviewed and updated.



2.1 Attribute 1

2.1.16 Access to Advice, Expertise, Evidence and Data

The Service has staff within the Planning Information and Delivery Team who have experience in statistics and research techniques, spatial analysis, data and information management. Improving the mapping system to Arc Geographical Information Systems is being investigated corporately and progress is being made to start to utilise Power BI to help and inform decision making.

The Scottish Government's decision to close the Digital Planning Programme in its current form alongside the Council's own challenges regarding digital investment has created a range of challenges for the Planning Authority. The use of digital technology remains a dynamic necessity in the majority of work of the Planning Authority, covering all aspects of service delivery. Whilst it is considered that the Council and the Service are within the upper quartile of digital advancement within the current network of Local Authorities, the dynamic global environment of digital change and the dual challenges of resourcing and digital support creates their own issues.

The deletion of existing digital platforms and reduction in the robustness of existing databases due to a cessation of support from IT to maintain existing platforms due to budget cuts has led to uncertainty in how officers will be supported to utilise digital technology going forward. A reduction in IT expertise available to assist on which software products to utilise also impacts upon the availability/tendering for external software/hardware as Services need to investigate, purchase and maintain new software packages which requires increasingly specialist knowledge of these systems.

New databases are required to be built to support the Delivery Programme, housing and employment land audits and demonstrate a deliverable housing land pipeline. To support the Policy Team in their LDP preparation, Objective Key Plan software is being investigated as well as the Uniform Site visit module and technology and benchmarking is being undertaken to ensure that the Historic Environment Team are able to continue to fulfil the terms of service level agreements with other local authorities to maintain and update the Historic Environment Record database which similarly requires updating/upgrading.

The provision of a corporate data hub work is an ongoing project for Aberdeenshire Council to consolidate data utilised by different services in a central hub. This will include a full audit of data sources in the Council which will be used in the development and implementation of the Councils Place Strategy and policy.

Refer to Appendix 1 for a good practice example on attribute 2: Recruitment and retention - doing things differently



Image 5 - Glenmuick Church - Ballater



2.2 Attribute 2

This Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce

- » Does the Planning Authority have a workforce planning strategy in place?
- » Does the Planning Authority have the ability to support staff development and upskilling and send staff on relevant courses?
- » Does the Planning Authority have a deliverable commitment to support staff health and wellbeing?

2.2.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 2 - Making Good Progress.

In response to the challenge of recruiting and retaining staff, the service has had to re-focus and adapt to different methods of recruitment to attract and then retain staff.

2.2.2 Workforce Planning

Aberdeenshire Council has a workforce planning strategy in place which sets out the vision for the future, enabling the development of current and future workforce with the right skills, at the right time and in the right place. Specific actions for Planning concentrate on following areas:

- Increasing Training Opportunities
- Succession Planning
- Up Skilling
- Individual Action Plans – Personal Performance Plans (PPPs)
- Secondment opportunities
- Recruitment

In 2023/24, the Planning Authority faced an unprecedented number of planner vacancies, especially in Development Management, partly due to a national shortage of qualified planners and the closure of planning schools. This led to a new recruitment approach, supported by staff, resulting in successful hires and revisions to the career development program. While progress has been good, maintaining a

strong focus within the workforce framework is essential.

Recruitment challenges include:

- National shortage of qualified planners (MRTPI)
- Narrow focus on required skills
- Reduction in accredited Planning Schools
- Competition from higher paying local authorities and private businesses
- Recruitment drive from energy/renewable companies and consultants
- The location, geography and perceived 'remoteness' of Aberdeenshire as a place to live and work.

To help overcome the recruitment challenges the following actions have been implemented as part of the workforce framework:

- 4 x Summer 2023 student placements (Survey Assistants) were employed in the Policy and PID Teams, providing paid work experience. Tasks included fieldwork and desk-based research on topics like open space and town centres. One student was later hired full-time as a Planner. Due to the success, the program will expand to five placements in Summer 2024.
- The Admin Team recruited a modern apprentice, and the staff member recently won an ACE award from the staff internal awards recognition scheme.
- Student placements have also been undertaken within Historic Environment Team. This involved supporting students with their dissertations in partnership with

other bodies such as Zero Waste Scotland on the reuse of materials in conjunction with a review of the future of the Council's material store and a review of Conservation Areas across Aberdeenshire.

- Developing a partnership with Aberdeen University careers service through work experience placements and helping to provide opportunities to students who have chosen to study at their local University and move to seek local employment.
- Workstyle – adopting a hybrid working has helped retain staff and provided opportunities to recruit differently.
- Collaboration with local universities and schools to encourage day placements, summer work, work placement programmes and awareness of planning as a career through engagement and career fairs.
- Utilise and recognise transferable skills outwith traditional planning degrees as part of the recruitment and retention programme.
- The Aberdeenshire Design Awards include a student category, offering a £300 prize for the winner and £100 for runners-up. Partnering with Robert Gordon University's Scott Sutherland School of Architecture, the award encourages future architects to adopt innovative and sustainable design principles. Each year, a theme aligns with student projects; in 2023, it was "Strategies for Sustainable Living," focusing on sustainable living, post-pandemic wellbeing, and the regeneration of urban and rural areas through adaptive reuse of buildings.



2.2 Attribute 2

2.2.3 Training and Development

Staff have access to a training database which highlights opportunities for staff training and development. Specific budgets are identified for staff training and development on both universal training opportunities and specific actions/identified in individuals’ Personal Performance Plan (PPPs).

Examples of training and in-house staff development include ongoing and recent graduates from day release planning courses at the University of Dundee for Planning qualifications which have been funded by the Planning Authority. Lunch Time Learning providing opportunities for informal Continuing Professional Development. Shadowing, gaining committee experience. Training through induction process. With cognisance to budget restraints, any staff attending external training events are required to present/ share their learning experiences with colleagues. In some instances, more focused training covering more technical or specific areas of expertise, a ‘train the trainer’ ethos will apply.

Staff are encouraged to work towards gaining RTPI accreditation or any relevant equivalent qualification/ chartership. Experienced staff volunteer as mentors to support staff to submit the required information to the RTPI. The relationship with the RTPI is strong and is reflected in Aberdeenshire Planning Officers winning and being commended in the RTPI Awards ‘young planner of the year’ award in 2024 and 2019. The Service also support and fund Graduate Apprentice places at Robert Gordon University.

For more experienced members of staff looking to progress into senior or management roles the Council funds several places each term on the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) course run by North East Collage. This is an accredited course primarily undertaken as home study with support from college staff and helps develop the skills/knowledge of those looking to progress within the Council and this opportunity continues to be popular.

2.2.4 Health and Wellbeing

The wellbeing of staff is very important, and the Council offers a range of programmes as part of its wellbeing commitment to support staff. This includes:

- 87% wellbeing tool
- Counselling service
- Employee assistance programme
- Stress and mental health
- Mental health first aider programme

These programmes are facilitated by a dedicated team and wellbeing of staff and teams is a regular item for all one to ones and team meetings.

Refer to Appendix 2 for a good practice example on attribute 2: Work experience and apprenticeship scheme

2.3 Improvement Action Plan (People Theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5=No progress)
1. The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	Ranking of 3 - Making Fair Progress
2. The Planning Authority has a value and supported workforce	Ranking of 2 – Making Good Progress

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified according to their level of importance (High/Medium/Low) and by when (Short/ Medium/Long term).

Improvement Action <i>What action will you take? What will the outcome be?</i>	Owner	Importance <i>High Medium Low</i>	Timescale <i>Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years</i>	Resources
Attribute 1: Examine opportunities for a more progressive discretionary charging framework to enable service investment, cost recovery and provision	Development Management	Medium	3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 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	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 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	3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 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	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 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	3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Service Managers● Team Managers● Staff Development● University partnerships● Education Partnerships





3.0 CULTURE

“

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.

”

3.1 Attribute 3

- » Has the Planning Authority undertaken an annual assessment of its performance and acted upon areas previously identified as in need of improvement?
- » Has the Planning Authority achieved recognition at relevant awards or through performance accreditation frameworks?
- » Has the Planning Authority engaged in peer review, good practice exchange or improvement activities?
- » Has the Planning Authority addressed any complaints upheld by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and have evidence of this and that it has learned from valid cases?

3.1.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 2 – Making Good Progress.

Building on the corporate implementation of the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) Self Evaluation, the Planning and Economy Business Improvement Plan and the continuous improvement management system: Customer Service Excellence (CSE), the ranking for this attribute is 2 – making good progress.

3.1.2 Culture of Continuous Improvement

Development Management has been operating within the CSE improvement framework since 2019. A government backed standard, developed for public sector organisations, it assesses an organisation against 57 components with a particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism, staff attitudes and customer insight. In order to achieve the standard Development Management has to provide evidence against the criteria during an independent audit assessment on an annual basis. During the audit the assessor not only considers the evidence provided, but also speaks to staff in different roles and levels, as well as a range of key customers and stakeholders.

The CSE Standard is not only an independent validation of achievement, but also crucially a skills development tool and driver for continuous improvement and culture change – ensuring that the customer and staff are always at the heart of the decision-making process as part of

Planning Authority change and improvements. The audit report and feedback help to form the basis of continuous improvements set for the service each year.

CSE reaccreditation was achieved during a 2-day external audit in February 2024. Refer to the [award certificate](#) and the [compliance plus certificate](#) which highlights that 4 were gained at the February Audit for the following:

- 1.3.5 - We have made positive changes to services as a result of analysing customer experience, including improved customer journeys.
- 2.2.1 - We can demonstrate our commitment to developing and delivering customer focused services through our recruitment, training and development policies for staff.
- 4.2.3 - We can demonstrate that we benchmark our performance against that of similar or complementary organisations and have used that information to improve our service.

- 4.3.4 - We learn from any mistakes we make by identifying patterns in formal and informal complaints and comments from customers and use this information to improve services and publicise action taken.

Embedding CSE as a continuous improvement tool has resulted in identifying the needs and preferences of customers as well as demographics and groupings. Feedback is then targeted through questionnaires, focus groups and forums such as the Agent and Developer Forum. The sharing of best practice and collaboration is organised through various internal and external working groups which the Planning Authority have an active role such as chair of RTPI Scottish Young Planner network and Convenor of Grampian RTPI Chapter as well as Heads of Planning Working Groups.



3.1 Attribute 3

3.1.3 Awards

The Vinery, Banff - Conservation and Building Adaptation: distinction and category winner of the Ian Shepherd award and RTPI finalist.

The judges praised the restoration and modernisation of the once redundant building, noting it is now an asset to the centre of Banff. They acknowledged the challenges in restoring and repurposing such buildings, making the work here particularly commendable.

The [Vinery](#) is category B listed and all that remains of the extensive series of buildings and gardens forming part of the Duff House estate, however it had been underused since the 1980s, with years of neglect and deterioration. The building has now been repurposed into a community facility after is sympathetic repair through the use of traditional materials and techniques. Energy usage has been considered in the design, with the new timber frame of the Vinery being locally crafted.

The building’s restoration is a success, evidenced by its active use by the local community and its removal from the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland. The judges believe awarding the Ian Shepherd Award to the Vinery will positively influence the reuse of traditional buildings in Aberdeenshire.



3.1.4 Improvement Activities

As part of audit and performance management, the service reviews its business plan and team improvement plans annually. Actions are based on customer feedback, staff suggestions, complaints, and appeals. Recent improvement projects include:

Planning/Heritage led regeneration: The built heritage team, through the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), formed a group with members from IHBC, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council, National Trust for Scotland, and Birse Community Trust to host the annual IHBC conference in Aberdeen. The conference, themed ‘Heritage on the Edge,’ focused on sharing good practices and innovations for developing projects in remote UK areas and taking lessons from further afield. Since this group was developed, they have stayed in contact and delivered two CPD events, one at the Advocates Library, Aberdeen a chance for heritage specialists, architects, and planning professionals to get together with representation from ASA, RTPI, IHBC, HES and those working in the commercial sector. They further organised a full day of study tours to conservation projects across Aberdeenshire. The group continue to stay in contact and work together on shared projects including a collaborative piece of work to understand the skills and materials gap for the construction sector across the Northeast of Scotland and working together on the issues and implementation of NPF4.

Public Benefit through Planning: Aberdeenshire Council Archaeologists have developed a new piece of planning guidance ‘Delivery of Public Benefit and Social Value for Archaeology in the Planning Process’ this

document set out to achieve better public engagement and benefit from archaeological works undertaken as part of the planning process, and to maximise the positive contribution development makes to local communities. It also provides clear and concise guidance for developers and their archaeological contractors on how to achieve the public benefit requirements as laid out within Policy 7 ‘Historic Assets and Places’ within National Planning Framework 4. Finally, it provides a standardised methodology and guidance for use across all local authorities in Scotland to ensure consistency for council staff, developers, contractors, and other relevant stakeholders. This was produced in collaboration with and endorsed by ALGAO and CIFA.

Improving Design outcomes: Aberdeen Society of Architects (ASA) and Aberdeenshire Architectural and Landscape Design Awards (AALDA) have collaborated on and supported each other’s award schemes to help promote good design across the region by sitting on each other’s judging panels, cross promotion of each other’s winning schemes and materials and developing contacts between planning and architecture

3.1 Attribute 3

3.1.5 Complaints and Learning from Feedback

Feedback is sought from customers via online questionnaires, focus groups, forums and the corporate ‘Have your Say’ compliments, comments and complaints feedback mechanism. Feedback is logged centrally and forms the basis of new service improvements. To ensure lessons are learned from appeals and formal complaints a centralised electronic SharePoint register for all staff to access has recently been set up to highlight the outcome of appeals and complaint responses received from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The register includes a summary of each case, the outcome, the lessons learned and any appropriate actions that have taken place or will take place.

Between April 2023-March 2024, through the Council’s ‘Have Your say’ system, the Planning Authority was asked to respond to 120 feedback requests (Service Requests/ Level 2/Complaints). Of these only 7 were taken forward by the customer to the SPSO. Of these 7, following initial investigation, 5 were not taken any further by the SPSO. The other 2 that were taken forward for formal investigation by the SPSO resulted in the complaint not being upheld. As such, in the reporting year there were no cases where the SPSO upheld a complaint.



Image 6 - Fraserburgh Regeneration Scheme



3.2 Attribute 4

This Planning Authority has sound governance

- » Does the Planning Authority have an effective scheme of delegation in place?
- » Have all councillors who exercise a planning function undergone statutory training and is there is evidence of ongoing training for members?
- » Have more than x % of officer recommendations have been overturned by councillors at committee or Local Review Body.

3.2.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 4 – Making limited progress.

3.2.2 Scheme of Governance

Overall, the Scheme of Governance for Aberdeenshire Council is both comprehensive and robust. The Scheme of Governance enables the Council to follow clear procedures, ensuring that all decisions are lawful, accessible and transparent. The Scheme of Governance was reviewed in 2023, and changes were made to the powers available to officers however, it is recognised that this could be streamlined and improved in terms of allowing further delegations to officers to make planning decisions. This would improve performance outcomes and speed of decision making. Benchmarking with other Local Authority schemes of governance has been consistently undertaken as part of evidence gathering during a period of review. It is recognised that there are many differences in how each Local Authority is governed, for many reasons and not one size can fit all in terms of planning delegations. Whilst Councillor input into the planning decision making process is obviously important, further work with Councillors will form a vital part of the focus to instigate any further changes to the Scheme of Governance for planning decision making. There is also work to do in clarifying and streamlining the Scheme of Governance attached to the Development Plan process.

The Scheme of Governance was reviewed in 2023 in consultation with Legal Services, staff and Councillors and is available to view on the Council’s website: [Planning](#)

[Delegations \(aberdeenshire.gov.uk\)](#). Part 2C (Planning Delegations) sets out how planning applications and other development management matters are dealt with by the Council. It lists all delegations relating to the determination of planning applications, including powers reserved to Committee and Full Council. The document sets out the provisions relating to processes for developments within the Cairngorms National Park. It also contains guidance on making representations; making a request to speak at Committee; appeals; the Local Member notification process; significant departures; substantial bodies of support; and pre-determination hearings.

Between April 2023 and March 2024, 92.7% of planning application decisions were made by officers using delegated powers, slightly down from 93.5% the previous year. This shows a consistent use of delegated powers for planning applications. In addition, the planning application approval rating remains high at 93.4% of all applications in 2023-24. In 2022-23, the approval rating was 93.9%.

A further review of Part 2C (Planning Delegations) is being considered with a view to exploring with Councillors the potential for further streamlining to aid the improvement of performance in planning application decision-making. Following a review of the scheme governance all non-Development Management matters (e.g. Policy/

Development Plan) are the provenance of the Full Council. The implications for service delivery from the current model is that it relies on the full council timetable. While it is not part of the Scheme of Governance, there is still an expectation and requirement on teams to engage with Area Committees in advance of any full council meeting to identify and discuss any area specific issues and to seek feedback in lieu of the full council meeting which should effectively function as an endorsement for this work. This reflects the area focus of Aberdeenshire Council which affords six area committees to input on matters in their own areas. Given the size and format of these meetings there is generally less opportunities for debate and consideration/ agreement beyond officer recommendations.

Future reviews of the Scheme of Governance will consider whether to devolve debate and scrutiny of these issues to area or policy committees. The benefit of this structure is that agreement by full council provides clear ownership of the Development Plan as a corporate document and staff are always looking for ways to resolve the issue of ensuring meaningful debate and scrutiny of policy by Councillors at local levels in advance of the Full Council meeting to ensure that all views are considered in advance of this meeting.



3.2 Attribute 4

3.2.3 Councillor Training

All Councillors receive training specific to their role, from the day that they were elected. A comprehensive induction programme is led by Legal Services, with collaboration and input from other services of the Council. The Planning Authority plays a significant role, as a large part of the Councillor’s remit is planning decision making, whether as part of the formal Committee process, or as part of the member notification process as set out in the current Scheme of Governance.

Training specific to planning continues throughout the year, whether training identified and requested by Councillors themselves, or arranged by the Planning Authority, whether to inform Councillors of new legislation, new processes, or refresher training on specific elements of the planning process that they require to keep updated upon.

The Council also have an internal training data base – ALDO (Aberdeenshire Learning and Development) – where the Councillors have their own training platform.

As part of the planning transformation and the 2019 Planning Act, planning and legal officers set up workshop sessions with Councillors to take them through the mandatory member training consultation (2023), seeking their views. All Councillors are fully aware of the importance of having up to date training on planning and their role in the decision-making process.

3.2.4 Recommendations overturned by Committee or at Local Review Body

Under Part 2C (Planning Delegations) of the Council’s Scheme of Governance, planning applications can be reported for consideration and determination to the six Area Committees covering the six Administrative Areas of Aberdeenshire, but also Infrastructure Services Committee and Full Council depending on Part 2C (Planning Delegations). From April 2023 to March 2024, 137 planning applications were reported and determined by Councillors at Committee. Of these, 21.9% of the officer recommendations were overturned.

In relation to overturns, 61.9% were approved against an officer recommendation for refusal and 4.2% were refused against an officer recommendation for approval. Between April 2022 and March 2023, 136 were reported and determined by Councillors at Committee. Of these 19.9% of the officer recommendations were overturned. In relation to overturns, 55.6% were approved against an officer recommendation for refusal and 2.2% were refused against an officer recommendation for approval.

These figures show a relative consistency of approach in decision-making at Committee with approximately only one fifth of all applications that are reported to Committee under the Scheme of Governance being overturned. While the percentage of approvals against a refusal recommendation is far greater than refusals against an approval recommendation, the overall picture is that in total in 2023-2024 - only 30 applications (26 approvals and 4 refusals) determined (Committee or by delegation) by the Planning Authority during this period were decisions against officer recommendation.

From April 2023-March 2024 there were 34 appeal decisions made by the Local Review Body (LRB). Of these 47.1% of the original officer decisions were overturned. This is compared to 29 LRB decisions from April 2022-March 2023 where 17.6% of the original officer decisions were overturned.

Initial observations on the upturn in LRB appeals being upheld, have not identified any significant, consistent or obvious reasons, or a clear pattern of decision-making relating to certain policies. There has been support given to some householder and small-scale changes of use to garden ground type proposals which may account for the upturn. For noting, there is an observation of more LRB appeal dismissals for houses in the countryside perhaps because of the added emphasis on sustainability and accessibility provided by NPF4.

2022-23

Recommendation	No. Committee	No. Overturned	% Overturned
Approve	91	2	2.2%*
Refuse	45	25	55.6%
Total	136	27	19.9%

*Both overturned cases went to appeal - 1 Approved / 1 Dismissed

Table 5a - Planning recommendations overturned at committee 22/23

2023-24

Recommendation	No. Committee	No. Overturned	% Overturned
Approve	95	4	4.2%*
Refuse	42	26	61.9%
Total	137	30	21.9%

*3 currently at appeal - 2 Pending / 1 Approved

Table 5b - Planning recommendations overturned at committee 23/24

3.3 Attribute 5

This Planning Authority has effective leadership

- » Does the Planning Authority have an identified Chief Planning Officer in place?
- » Does the Chief Planning Officer advise on corporate decision making and policy within the broader organisation?
- » Is the Planning Authority’s Chief Planning Officer a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute?
- » Does the Chief Planning Officer advise and support external bodies through engagement in organisations’ committees, advisory groups or working groups?
- » Does the Planning Authority have a strong leadership team that supports a culture of continuous improvement?

3.3.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 2 - Making Fair Progress.

Aberdeenshire Council has a Chief Planning Officer who is the Head of the Planning and Economy Service. This is a lead role in the corporate and strategic management of the Council and the Chief Planning Officer ensures the importance of the role that Planning plays in delivering on the Councils priorities of people, environment and the economy. Specific duties/responsibilities include:

- Working in partnership with the Director, other senior managers and Councillors to play a key role in the leadership, vision and strategic direction of the Council and the organisation.
- Work with the Director, other senior managers and Councillors to help define and develop corporate objectives, translating these into appropriate and effective action programmes.
- Representing the Council externally as a respected ambassador, promoting economic, environmental and social issues at all times.
- Participating in effective partnership working with local communities and with other public, private and voluntary sectors organisations in order to achieve the

Council’s objectives. Specifically in relation to external bodies the Chief Planning officer is also an active member of the following groups representing both Aberdeenshire Council and the Planning Authority:

- Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) Executive Board
- Regional Economic Partnership
- Opportunity North East: Food, Drink and Agriculture Board
- North East Adventure Tourism
- North East Scotland Investment Zone
- North East Scotland Regional Investment Partnership
- Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery Fund (LACER) Steering Group
- The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) – Head of Service for Planning and Economy is the Chief Officer
- Aberdeen City and SHIRE City Region Deal
- Regional Inward Investment Forum

Beyond the Chief Planner, officers within Aberdeenshire’s

Planning and Economy Service are actively involved in promoting planning and the environment and sharing best practice in a number of other bodies, these include:

- Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) – Convenor RTPI Grampian Chapter and Chair of the Scottish Young Planners Network, both sitting on the Scottish Executive Committee
- Members of Heads of Planning Scotland Development Management (HOPS DM) subcommittee/Policy Committee/Energy Group
- Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO)
- Scottish Historic Environment Forum
- North East Partnership Against Rural Crime
- North East Scotland Preservation Trust Board
- Conservation Officer Group Members
- North East Scotland Traditional Buildings Forum



3.3 Attribute 5

3.3.2 Culture of Continuous Improvement

Through effective leadership the cultural shift towards continuous improvement along with staff and customer engagement shaping, moulding and adapting service delivery and embedding Customer Service Excellence has ensured fair progress.

The Planning Authority is represented corporately within Aberdeenshire Council's extended management team and through various local and national working groups, strategically helping to shape sustainable communities and development.

Embedding a culture of continuous improvement is supported through effective leadership, encouraging staff and customer feedback as fundamental elements to developing the continuous improvement plan. Staff working groups lead on service improvement themes and projects including customer and staff insight and feedback. A collective project management tracker and service improvement log allow all staff to be kept informed of development and progress. This was reviewed in detail at the Customer Service Excellence recertification audit in February 2024. The number of compliance pluses increased from 3 to 4 due to customer journey analysis and developing customer focussed service improvements, learning from feedback and complaints and benchmarking with similar organisations. The number of partial compliances reduced from 4 to 3 with further work to include customer satisfaction targets, consistency and communication and developing Personal Performance Plans.

Refer to Appendix 3 for a good practice example on Attribute 5: Shaping improvements with our customers: Customer Service Excellence reaccreditation.



Image 7 - The Hill of Dunnideer

3.4 Improvement Action Plan (Culture Theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5=No progress)
3. The Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	Ranking of 2 – Making good progress
4. The Planning Authority has sound governance	Ranking of 4 – Making limited progress
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	Ranking of 3 - Making fair progress

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified according to their level of importance (High/Medium/Low) and by when (Short/Medium/Long term).

Improvement Action <i>What action will you take? What will the outcome be?</i>	Owner	Importance <i>High Medium Low</i>	Timescale <i>Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years</i>	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	3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Service ManagersTeam 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	3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Service ManagersTeam Managers





4.0 TOOLS

“

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 efficient as possible in doing this. The Planning Authority makes best use of digital technology and how it manages and uses data.

”

4.1 Attribute 6

This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base

- » Does the Planning Authority have an up to date Local Development Plan in place and/or is on track to adoption?
- » Does the Planning Authority have an up to date Regional Spatial Strategy in place/or on track to adoption?
- » Has the Planning Authority’s Local Development Plan Evidence Report been approved by the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals and/or on track for approval?
- » Have the application of the Local Development Plan’s policies been found to be deficient at appeal or judicial review?

4.1.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 3 - Making Fair Progress.

Aberdeenshire Council is currently amending its working practices to respond to changes imposed through new legislation. This is a learning process and progress on some matters has been hindered somewhat by a lack of secondary legislation coming forward, and awaiting further guidance from Scottish Government, e.g. guidance on preparation of Housing Land Audits. Notwithstanding this, progress is being made towards targets for production of a range of these statutory documents and we are learning lessons from this process to refine and develop our approach to ensure that all statutory obligations are met now and in the future.

4.1.2 Local Development Plan

The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan (LDP) 2023 was formally adopted relatively recently on 13 January 2023. Supplementary Guidance on developer obligations and affordable housing was subsequently adopted in December 2023. The LDP 2023 was written to accord with the National Planning Framework 3 and be consistent with the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan (SDP) 2020.

Legislation is changing as part of the planning reforms and the Scottish Government has enacted the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. As the LDP was adopted in 2023 it was prepared using the preceding legislation. Transitional arrangements have been announced by the Scottish Government to manage the changeover from current to new-style LDPs.

The next LDP will be prepared on a timetable that will see its adoption in or before 2029 and will be written to accord with National Planning Framework 4 which itself also now forms part of the statutory Development Plan.

4.1.3 Regional Spatial Strategy

As outlined above, the LDP 2023 was written to be consistent with the Aberdeen City and Shire SDP 2020. The SDP has since been replaced by NPF4 which now addresses strategic planning matters. NPF4 was prepared on the basis of an ‘indicative’ RSS for northeast Scotland, which was broadly based on the SDP 2020.

It is noted that Section 5 of the 2019 Act as related to the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) is yet to be fully brought into force and there is currently no guidance available. As such, there is currently no adopted RSS covering the Aberdeenshire area.

4.1 Attribute 6

4.1.4 Local Development Plan Evidence Report

Aberdeenshire Council’s LDP Evidence Report is still in production and good progress has been made with several key sections authored and publicly consulted upon, such as 30 topics which respond directly to their related NPF4 policies. The LDP Development Plan Scheme outlines our proposed itinerary for the publication of the Evidence Report, and it is anticipated that this will be presented for consideration at full Council early in 2025, with our subsequent submission to the Gate check thereafter.

Good communication has been ongoing between related Aberdeenshire Council Services and external agencies who are key stakeholders within their respective areas of the Evidence Report and the timescales for required forthcoming data releases have been agreed and reflected within the proposed itinerary set out in the Development Plan Scheme.

Ongoing discussions have also occurred between Aberdeenshire Council Planning Policy Team and the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA) to clarify and seek certainty on the new LDP plan making process, with specific minuted discussions having focussed on the remit and scope of the Evidence Report, and the intended engagement procedures envisaged by the DPEA. As part of this, some drafts of our Evidence Report Topic Papers have been shared with the DPEA for comments. These discussions have been positive, informative and have clarified matters of uncertainty, enabling suggestions from the DPEA to be considered into our work moving forward.

4.1.5 Application of Local Development Plans

There were no judicial review cases in April 2023-March 2024. There were 7 instances where the DPEA overturned the original decision from the period of April 2023-March 2024. Within these 7 instances, specific references to ALDP23 policies P1, P3, P4, E3, PR1, RD2, HE1, and HE2 were made within the reporters’ decisions. While the policies, P1 P3, P4, E3, PR1, HE1 and HE2 were overturned in these instances in a broad range of site-specific reasons and applications, Policy RD2 relates to developer obligations and was found in two instances to be deficient and overturned at appeal, finding that unlike the policy wording from preceding LDPs, the current policy context appears to have become considerably less specific about what might be required in the way of medical facilities and is no longer an assertion that such facilities are required in respect of development merely that they may be. Developer obligations supplementary guidance has since been adopted by Aberdeenshire Council after these appeals were overturned, and none have been lodged referring to this policy since that period. An improvement action identified going forward is to review the policy language regarding developer obligations in the forthcoming LDP and to signpost developers toward specific requirements for developer obligations within settlement statements working collaboratively with external agencies about the infrastructure required in order to comply with NPF4 Policy 18 and the five circular tests.

From April 2023-March 2024 there were 34 appeal decisions made by the Local Review Body. Of these 47.1% of the original officer decisions were overturned. This is compared to 29 LRB decisions from April 2022-March 2023 where 17.6% of the original officer decisions were overturned. The ALDP2023 policies referred to in the overturned decisions were P1, P2, P3, C2, C4, E2,

HE2, PR1, R1, R2, B3, and RD1, where R2: Development Proposals

Elsewhere in the Countryside was the most commonly overturned policy for consistent reasons. This often involved the LRB taking a more lenient interpretation of rural development policy or the view that on balance there were wider benefits which outweighed a subsequent departure from the policy. An improvement action identified going forward is to continue to monitor such incidences and prevalence going forward and reviewing LDP policy to comply with NPF4 policies 17 and 29.



4.2 Attribute 7

This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology

- » Has the Planning Authority encouraged and promoted planning applications to be submitted through the e-development portal?
- » Does the Planning Authority have a data governance strategy in place for the management of planning data?
- » Does the Planning Authority have the ability to use interactive web-mapping, GIS and spatial data?
- » Does the Planning Authority have the ability to use digital approaches to engagement, including website, social media and other platforms?

4.2.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 4 - Making Limited Progress.

The Planning Authority have been reliant on digital technology to provide the requisite services for a considerable period of time. As examples, the Development Management function has been paperless for over 11 years now and the public engagement for the current Local Development Plan was all done via digital means. The service has its own dedicated information (data) team which forms a central and vital part of service delivery. Where the relatively low ranking has materialised from is the current and future challenges the service is experiencing and pre-empting how digital technology can be maintained, how budgetary challenges and resources can ensure technology is kept up to date with the fast-evolving technical world whilst meeting the growing needs and expectations of the customer. Attribute 1 sets out the challenges from embedding changes and investment in new technologies that are continually required to increase efficiency in all aspects of planning delivery.

Attribute 1 sets out the range of data sources the Planning Authority uses across its delivery model and has largely identified that it does have the relevant data, and/or has access to data to carry out its functions. The challenges are likewise set out in Attribute 1 in terms of ensuring that the most up to date data is available, when necessary, examples include the Local Housing and Open space strategy which have impacted upon the timings

of the Council's Evidence Report. Within Development Management challenges to access real time information (performance and monitoring etc) in an accessible format remains a challenge.

Overall work continues to identify resources to ensure systems meet the needs of the planning system and supports digital modernisation. Assistance to achieve digital modernisation also sits at a national level for example, developing the portal to further digitise and streamline the application process. Better collaboration nationally with iDox to consider Local Authority best practice such as a detailed visual timeline for the planning application process. Creating a national interactive self-service customer journey tool to help applicants work out if and what type of planning permission would be required. Working collaboratively will help to modernise the digital capability within Planning and Local Authorities.

4.2.2 e-Planning

Between April 2023 – March 2024, 95% of all planning applications received were submitted through the e-development portal. This is the same percentage figure as 2022- 2023.

Website information and guidance promotes the use of the e-development portal and unless in exceptional circumstances, paper planning applications are not accepted: [Apply for planning permission - Aberdeenshire Council](#).

There is a dedicated e-Planning team which forms part of the Embedded Admin Team and is responsible for the electronic administration of all planning and building warrant documentation on Uniform and the Website.

4.2.3 Data Governance

The Business Systems Team manage the Uniform and Document Management System. Performance information is available to staff, published online, presented quarterly to Committee and the Scottish Government. Workload is managed via Uniform and PowerBI. The Planning Register provides public access to all planning applications and supporting documents and is managed in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

4.2 Attribute 7

4.2.4 Interactive Web Mapping, GIS and Spatial Data

The Planning Authority holds the majority of its data spatially and this is used to map planning constraints for applications. Cadcorp and ArcGIS software are the mapping tools used by the Planning Authority.

The Facilities Monitor has been broadened and re-launched using ArcGIS StoryMaps. The Facilities Monitor now covers 179 settlements and their facilities recorded and displayed in interactive, map-based reports. The data was gathered between July 2023 and September 2023. The facilities recorded include, but are not limited to, shops, post offices, banks, education facilities, public services, halls, churches and garages.

Other examples of spatial data:

- [Housing Land Audit](#)
- [Employment Land Audit](#)
- [Vacant and Derelict Land](#)

4.2.5 Digital Engagement

Planning web pages

- Information on all the services provided by Development Management, including how and when customers can contact us, the structure of the service along with guidance documents and application forms are available online.: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/planning-applications/>
- Website content includes a step by step guide on how to apply for planning permission
- 'Do I need planning permission?' web text has recently been updated with an easy to follow step by step process and online forms which are pdf at present are to be reviewed and moved to interactive online forms.

Agent Forum

The Agent Forum for 2023 was held virtually on 24 November jointly with Development Management and Building Standards at the continuing request of our customers. Feedback was sought at the last forum and Agents have also been asked in advance if they have any agenda items or questions. Participants from the agent forum received:

- An [email invite](#) which included asking for any agenda items and questions
- An email invite with the [agenda](#)
- [Follow up email](#) thanking them for attending and addressing questions raised by participants and a copy of the presentation and a meeting recording of the virtual agent forum
- [Q&A](#) from the Forum details questions & responses and was circulated in the post meeting email
- The forum is held annually and provides a platform to exchange information, update on legislation & service changes as well as gathering customer feedback.

Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire:

- The customer satisfaction questionnaire & analysis was completed in Oct 2023 - [Development Management Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire](#). The feedback has been analysed and collated into themes. Agreed improvements are noted in the DM customer satisfaction questionnaire action plan. Note that a customer satisfaction target of 90% has been set and this was achieved prior to the C19 pandemic however, in June 2021 the satisfaction rate has dropped to 77%, in 2022 the satisfaction rate was 76% and in 2023 the satisfaction rate was 64%. This is set in a backdrop of ongoing issues with the staffing and recruitment challenges during 2023.
- The satisfaction rate is published [online](#) and linked in our [customer charter](#). Feedback from the survey and subsequent actions are highlighted in the customer feedback section of the website within a section – [you said, we did](#).
- The questionnaire was circulated to 600 customers which resulted in 112 returns giving a response rate of 19%.

Have your say:

- [Have your say - Aberdeenshire Council](#) is the corporate compliments, comments and complaints feedback mechanism. The results are compiled corporately and reviewed by the management team. In order to improve the Complaints process – Planning have a member of staff who is the central contact to manage complaints.

Engage Aberdeenshire:

- The Policy Team have used online survey platforms on Engage Aberdeenshire [Local Development Plan 2027 | Engage Aberdeenshire](#) as part of routine engagement for various aspects of work related to the LDP. In the four-month period since 1 January 2024, over 1,500 visits to the LDP Engagement Aberdeenshire pages have been recorded with 520 contributions received.



4.3 Attribute 8

This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes

- » Does the Planning Authority planning have the ability to make decisions on planning applications within the required timeframes?
- » Are less than x% of planning decisions overturned at appeal or judicial review?
- » Does the Planning Authority have an up-to-date Enforcement Charter in place?
- » Does the Planning Authority have the ability to resolve enforcement cases?

4.3.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 3 - Making Fair Progress.

4.3.2 Decision Making Timescales

It is considered that the Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes. However, during the reporting year there were significant challenges around staff vacancies and resources in Development Management. Despite a downturn in the number of planning applications received, this did affect to a degree, at different times of the year and in various teams, the working capacity to operate in a consistent and effective way in Development Management processes particularly around the consideration and timing of decision making on planning applications and planning enquiries. It also affected the ability to maintain high communication and some customer care standards.

Notwithstanding this, when judged against overall performance levels relating to timescales in decision-making (average weeks), the figures show that an acceptable level was still achieved. Applications that were the subject of agreed Planning Processing Agreements (PPAs) or agreed Extension of Times, with applicants/ agents, are excluded. In the context of less application decisions over the categories of development, compared to the previous year, Major applications (25.4 weeks) were slower (4 weeks) as were Local Development

(Householder) applications (8.1 weeks) (0.3 weeks slower). Local Development (Non-householder) applications (12.4 weeks) though were quicker (2.5 weeks) as were All Local Development applications (10.4 weeks) (1.3 weeks quicker). Other Consent applications (8.7 weeks) were also quicker (0.3 weeks). if and what type of planning permission would be required. Working collaboratively will help to modernise the digital capability within Planning and Local Authorities.

It is unknown how this compares with National average weeks levels in 2023-24 but if compared to National levels from the previous year, we are quicker in all main categories. Major applications are quicker by 14.1 weeks; Local Development (Non-householder) applications are quicker by 2 weeks; and Local Development (Householder) applications are quicker by 0.8 weeks.

With staffing levels stabilising over the reporting year, and going into the 2024-25 year, there is sequential evidence of improvement in overall decision-making timescales, and it is an action to maintain and build on this by continued monitoring activity at all levels but also focussing on average weeks timescales and tools to project manage timelines on cases alongside our customers.

A Legacy Case Strategy remains in place with a similar number of such cases cleared in 2023-24 (65) compared to the previous year (66). However, some of the staffing capacity issues did affect the ability to focus on such cases and therefore the overall number of live cases did increase by 8 to 52. There is an action, now that there is potentially more capacity, to focus again on reducing the number of live legacy cases and monitoring, at least 2 months in advance, cases which will become legacy applications.

Scottish Government Official Statistics and Key Outcomes for Aberdeenshire Council can be found here.

- Planning Application Decision-making timescales [April 2023-March 2024](#)
- Key outcomes – Development Management [Key Outcomes April 2023-March 2024](#)



4.3 Attribute 8

4.3.3 Local Review and Appeals

In 2023-2024, the Planning Authority had 56 planning appeal decisions. Of these, 22 were appeals to the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals (DPEA), and 34 were appeals to the Local Review Body (LRB). Of the appeals that went to the DPEA, 3 (2 pending and 1 subsequently approved) were at appeal because an officer approval recommendation had been overturned by Councillors at a Committee. 31.8% of the DPEA appeals and 47.1% of the LRB appeals resulted in an overturned decision. Overall, therefore 7 DPEA and 16 LRB appeals resulted in overturned decisions. This represents 41% of all appeals having their original decisions overturned in 2023-2024.

There were no Judicial Review Cases in 2023-24.

Analysis of these overturned appeal decisions has not drawn any particular pattern over what is a fairly short period of time (1 year) but it is an action to continue to monitor all appeal decisions and where relevant incorporate any learning into training for Councillors and Staff where appropriate.

Scottish Government Official Statistics on decision making for appeals: [Decision-making LRBs and Appeals](#).



4.3.4 Enforcement Charter and statistics

In relation to Planning Enforcement, there is an up to date [customer charter](#) and [enforcement charter](#). The customer charter was reviewed and updated Feb 2024 and is reviewed annually. The Enforcement charter is reviewed every 2 years.

There is a dedicated Planning Enforcement Team which forms part of the Development Management Service. This provides combined experience and knowledge and uses Senior Planners to supervise. It allows consistent processes and procedures to be put in place as well as identifying improvement areas where necessary. The team uses digital technology for its functions and there is customer information on the Council [website](#). The team undertakes benchmarking and a collaborative approach internally and externally and has been the subject of a recent Internal Audit.

Refer to Appendix 4 for a good practice example on attribute 8: Planning Enforcement Audit. Scottish Government Official Statistics on Planning Enforcement: [Enforcement Statistics April 2023 - March 2024](#).



Image 8 - Victorian Turret - Banchory

4.4 Improvement Action Plan (Tools Theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5=No progress)
6. The Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base	Ranking of 3 - Making fair progress
7. The Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology	Ranking of 4 – Making limited progress
8. The Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes	Ranking of 3 - Making fair progress

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified according to their level of importance (High/ Medium/Low) and by when (Short/ Medium/Long term).

Improvement Action <i>What action will you take?</i> <i>What will the outcome be?</i>	Owner	Importance <i>High</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>Low</i>	Timescale <i>Short term – 1 year</i> <i>Medium term – 3 years</i> <i>Long term – 3+ years</i>	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● 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	Planning Authority and IT	High	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Service Managers● Team Managers● Business Support Team● IT Service● Finance/Budgets● 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	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Service Managers● Team Managers● Enforcement Staff● Business Support Team



4.4 Improvement Action Plan (Tools Theme)

Improvement Action <i>What action will you take?</i> <i>What will the outcome be?</i>	Owner	Importance <i>High</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>Low</i>	Timescale <i>Short term – 1 year</i> <i>Medium term – 3 years</i> <i>Long term – 3+ years</i>	Resources
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)	Medium	3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 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	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 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 Information & Delivery), Education services, external agencies such as NHS Grampian, Transport Scotland	High	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Service Managers● Team Managers● Developer Obligations● Planning Staff● Transport Strategy● Area Managers





5.0 ENGAGE

“

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.

”

5.1 Attribute 9

The Planning Authority has good customer care

- » Does the Planning Authority have the ability to offer pre-application advice where it is requested?
- » Has the Planning Authority held regular engagement events with developers and communities?
- » Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that customers are satisfied with the service offer by the Planning Authority?

5.1.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 2 - Making Good Progress.

5.1.2 Pre-application Service

The Planning Authority operates a full pre-application advice service for the submission and assessment of Householder, Local Development and Major Development proposals. All relevant information and guidance is presented on the Website [Planning pre-application advice - Aberdeenshire Council](#). All pre-application enquiries are directed to these formal pre-application process routes. Currently there is no fee charged for the pre-application process. This is under review during 2024-25. Peer review consultees welcomed that charging would be implemented in the future for pre applications and this would give assurance on performance and a detailed response. It was also suggested that consideration should be given to excluding householder pre applications from charges and this will be taken into account when charges are reviewed.

In 2023-24, 661 pre-application enquiries were validated. Some pre-application enquiries do not result in planning applications being submitted but in 2023-24, there were 208 valid planning applications that were the subject of pre-application advice which represents 11% of all planning applications validated within this period. In 2022-23, 213 pre-application enquiries were validated - 10% of all valid planning applications.

Performance monitoring on certain targets (validation timescale, case officer acknowledgement letter timescale; and final response timescale) is undertaken on a quarterly basis. In relation to this, 76% were validated within 3 working days; 55% had their case officer acknowledgement letter issued within 2 working days; and 57% had their final response issued within 25/30 working days.

	Year Total		
	No. Iss'd	Within Timescale	
Buchan	105	45	43%
Banff & Buchan	96	66	69%
Formantine	129	31	24%
Garioch	130	83	64%
Kincardine & Mearns	187	107	57%
Marr	238	184	77%
Total Received	885	516	58%

Table 6b - Pre Application Validation – for Local or Major Development Responses - issued within 25/30 working days (or agreed timescale) - target 100%

	Year Total		
	No. Ass'd	Issued within 2 W/days	
Buchan	108	58	54%
Banff & Buchan	99	54	55%
Formantine	116	69	59%
Garioch	123	67	54%
Kincardine & Mearns	173	83	48%
Marr	245	126	51%
Total Received	864	457	53%

Table 6a - Pre Application Validation – for Local or Major Development initial response within 3 working days - target 85%

	Year Total		
	No. Rec'd	Reply within 3 W/days	
Buchan	132	92	70%
Banff & Buchan	108	94	87%
Formantine	136	92	68%
Garioch	149	130	87%
Kincardine & Mearns	188	147	78%
Marr	272	210	77%
Total Received	985	765	78%

Table 6c - Pre Application Validation – for Local or Major Development initial response within 3 working days - target 85%

5.1 Attribute 9

5.1.2 Pre-application Service (Continued)

The performance figures are acceptable bearing in mind the capacity and resourcing issues experienced in 2023-24 and the fact that focus was required on statutory processes. Currently, this pre-application service does not attract a discretionary fee.

In addition, there is a separate full pre-application advice service for large scale energy, transmission and infrastructure projects. This service was implemented on the 9th of October 2023. This relates to national and major developments under the Planning Acts and developments under the Electricity Acts for generating stations and transmission infrastructure (Section 36 and 37 applications). All related information and guidance are provided on the Website. [Planning pre-application advice - Aberdeenshire Council](#). Under discretionary fee-paying powers, fees are applicable for this service.

In summary, this provides an “end-to-end” service which covers the period from early project inception stage up to the formal submission of an application and includes initial high-level meetings; pre-application information submissions; consultation meeting; site visits; and detailed post meeting feedback reports. There is also an opportunity, where appropriate, for review/update meetings. Since its implementation in October 2023, under this process, 17 pre-application enquiries for Large Scale Energy, Transmission and Infrastructure proposals have been received.

5.1.3 Engagement

In terms of engagement, the Planning Authority holds an annual Agent Forum in partnership with colleagues in Building Standards. The forum provides a platform to exchange information, update on legislation and service changes as well as gathering customer feedback. Participation rates are usually approx. 50 Agents/ Developers however a [recording](#) of the meeting is sent out to our up-to-date list of customers to ensure a wider reach.

A customer satisfaction survey is circulated annually along with a post decision survey to ensure there are regular touch points for customer feedback. The information received from the surveys feed directly into the service improvement plan. The customer satisfaction questionnaire & analysis was completed in October 2023 - [Development Management Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire](#). The feedback has been analysed and collated into [themes](#). This information is then incorporated into the improvement plan which is monitored on an annual basis by an external CSE auditor.

The customer satisfaction target of 90% was set and achieved for a number of years but post the C19 pandemic the satisfaction rate has dropped to 77% in June 2021, in 2022 the satisfaction rate was 76% and in 2023 the satisfaction rate was 64%. This is set in a backdrop of ongoing issues with the staffing and recruitment challenges during 2023. The satisfaction rate is published [online](#) and linked in our [customer charter](#). Feedback from the survey and subsequent actions are highlighted in the customer feedback section of the website within a section – [you said, we did](#). The questionnaire was circulated to 600 customers which resulted in 112 returns giving a response rate of 19%

Housebuilders were consulted on the housing land audit between the 27 April – 26 May 2023. In addition to this an independent facilitated session to seek feedback was held with Housebuilders on the 15th of June.

Customer [Briefing notes](#) are circulated to all Agents and Developers providing an update on any changes to the Planning Authority and they are also available online.

Engagement also occurs regularly with communities through the Area Teams – ward meetings & Community Council meetings/events. Work relating to the production of the forthcoming Local Development Plan has involved ongoing consultations through publicised engagement surveys on Engagement Aberdeenshire [Local Development Plan 2027 | Engage Aberdeenshire](#) In the four month period since 1 January 2024, over 1,500 visits to the LDP Engagement Aberdeenshire pages have been recorded with 520 contributions received.

The ongoing work for the Open Space Audit and Play Sufficiency Assessments have involved particular outreach events consulting with our young people. This has been coordinated in conjunction with the education service who have approached head teachers and through a cascading approach, young people have been directed to relevant surveys and completed them in groups.

Refer to Appendix 5 for a good practice example on attribute 9: Agent Forum and Appendix 6 for a good practice example on Attribute 9: Extension to Macduff Aquarium.

5.2 Attribute 10

This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities

- » Does the Planning Authority have a community engagement strategy and infrastructure in place to ensure engagement is early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate?
- » Has the Planning Authority undertaken community engagement, for example consistent and effective use of the Place Standard Tool, to inform decision-making processes?
- » Has the Planning Authority encouraged and promoted planning applications to be submitted through the e-development portal?
- » Has the Planning Authority engaged with a good representation of the community including young people, gypsies and travellers, people with protected characteristics, including disability, race, age, sex and sexual orientation, and including people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds?
- » Has the Planning Authority supported the production of Local Place Plans when requested?
- » Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that stakeholders are satisfied with their collaboration with the Planning Authority?

5.2.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 2 - Making Good Progress.

5.2.2 Community Engagement Strategy

Aberdeenshire Council has an approved Development Plan Scheme (DPS): <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans-and-policies/ldp-2028/>

The DPS is based on Scottish Government guidance on effective community engagement and identifies levels of engagement and a spectrum of participation that informs different levels of engagement. This spectrum identifies 5 levels of engagement: Informing; Consulting, Involving, Collaborating and Empowering. Details of the activity appropriate to each of these levels is set out in the DPS for all plan related activities so that our communities and customers know what to expect when they engage with us.

It is important that we engage with all those who may have an interest in the Local Development Plan during its

preparation and we aim to be open and honest in relation to engagement and consultation. This includes traditionally underrepresented groups including young people and gypsy travellers and specific methods are identified to facilitate meaningful engagement. At all times we also make sure that help is provided for those with sight loss or other disabilities to understand and contribute to any engagement.

[Defining our customers for Development Management](#) maps out demographics and customer groupings for Aberdeenshire as well as their needs and preferences. Within the document the characteristics of customer groupings are reviewed on an annual basis along with potential new customers.

The [Customer Consultation Strategy](#) summarises customer groups, their requirements, and preferences along with the consultation techniques to be used for each group (table 1). Table 3 records the results from each consultation technique in relation to customer groups along with service improvements. It also contains an annual timetable for the implementation of different consultation techniques as well as reviewing success rates.



5.2 Attribute 10

5.2.3 Local Place Plans

Measures have also been taken to make the Local Place Plans process as simple as possible to allow communities to express what they think is important in their area, what needs to be protected, what needs to be enhanced and, if new development is to be promoted, what scale and where this should be. It is recognised that this is a new process and are continually refining this as more and more communities use this opportunity to get involved in planning.

A dedicated Local Place Plan webpage has been created on the Council's website: [Local Place Plans introduction - Aberdeenshire Council](#). This includes guidance for Community Bodies seeking to prepare a Local Place Plan, an introductory video guide and links to examples of Local Place Plans. A [Local Place Plan Support Information Enquiry Form \(office.com\)](#) is available for organisations to seek support from the Planning Authority. Support is provided by the Planning Information and Delivery Team in the first instance. Dialogue is maintained with the six Area Teams.

As of 31 March 2024, 20 community bodies had been supported by the Planning Information and Delivery Team. This includes through awards of grants to 6 Community Bodies of up to £500 to cover associated costs, and responding to general enquires from Community Bodies. As of 31 March 2024, no Local Place Plans had been registered in Aberdeenshire.

Other engagement activities recognise the importance of places and bespoke activities include Town Centre Health Checks which review the town centres across Aberdeenshire and allow communities to identify potential improvements.

As a large rural area, it is recognised that all our places and communities are different and tailor our engagement with a mixture of online and face to face in order to ensure that our engagement activity is as effective as possible. It is recognised that further work could be undertaken to make resources available to communities e.g. equipment to enable communities to hold in person community engagement activities, and for guidance to help communities better understand the planning system and complex planning matters.

Refer to Appendix 7 for a good practice example on attribute 10: Youth engagement survey on open space in Aberdeenshire settlements and Appendix 8 for a good practice example on Attribute 10: Local Place Plans



Image 9 - Aboyne Village Green



5.3 Improvement Action Plan (Engage Theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5=No progress)
9. The Planning Authority has good customer care	Ranking of 2 - Making good progress
10. The Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities	Ranking of 2 - Making good progress

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified according to their level of importance (High/ Medium/Low) and by when (Short/ Medium/Long term).

Improvement Action <i>What action will you take?</i> <i>What will the outcome be?</i>	Owner	Importance <i>High</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>Low</i>	Timescale <i>Short term – 1 year</i> <i>Medium term – 3 years</i> <i>Long term – 3+ years</i>	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	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	1-2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Team Managers• Planning Staff• Area Managers / Teams

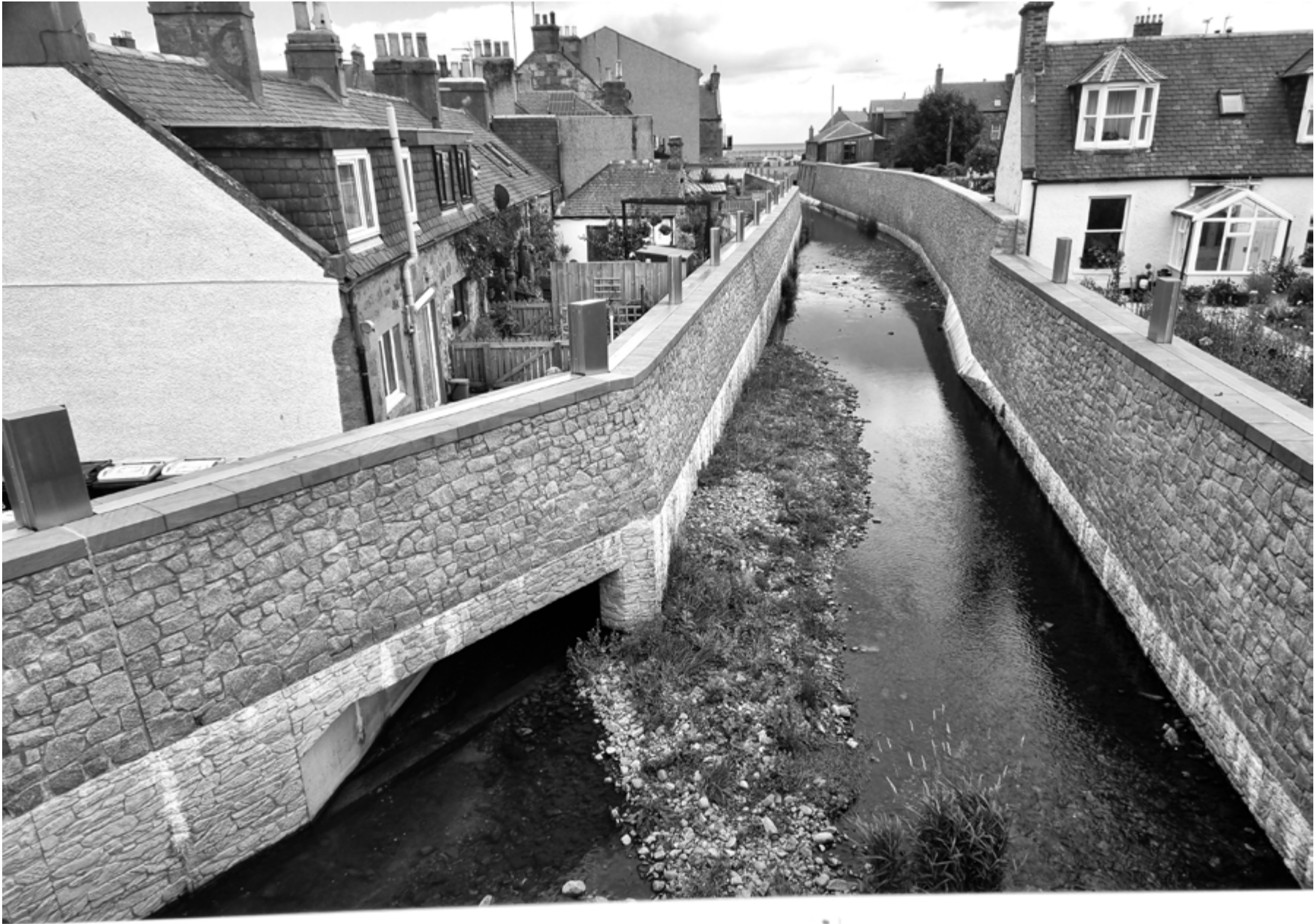


Image 10 - Carron Water Canal - Stonehaven





6.0 PLACE

“

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.

”

6.1 Attribute 11

The Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places

- » Is the Planning Authority aware of the [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#), the evidence that sits behind them and is it using them in decision-making processes?
- » Has the Planning Authority identified tools and approaches to delivering sustainable, liveable and productive places and is implementing them?

6.1.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 3 - Making Fair Progress.

6.1.2 Place, Wellbeing & Delivering Sustainable, Liveable & Productive Places

Generally, Aberdeenshire fares better than most other areas of Scotland, with a good standard of living, strong economy, low crime rates and generally high levels of income. However, this positive overview can mask issues of inequality and poverty experienced across our communities. The demographics of Aberdeenshire provide clear evidence for how the Council needs to adapt and prepare for future challenges. Aberdeenshire's population has risen from approximately 189,000 residents in 1981, to 263,000 in 2021 – an increase of 39%, exceeding the national average increase of 6%. Since 1981 there's been a noticeable reduction in the percentage of children and young adults in the population, whilst our working age population is in decline. Our growing ageing population (65 and over) significantly impacts healthcare, social services, and the economy. These factors are crucial in shaping our communities and understanding their dynamics. Therefore, "place" must become a central pillar for public sector engagement with communities. ([Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment 2023-24](#) ([aberdeenshirestorage.blob.core.windows.net](#)))

Aberdeenshire is uniquely positioned to lead the drive towards net zero and seize energy transition opportunities. It is anticipated that during 2024-25 multiple large energy transition infrastructure projects will progress through the planning system and move to implementation. These

projects are critical to meeting Scotland's Net Zero aspirations: The Acorn Carbon Capture project, Scotwind Offshore Wind sites, INTOG applications for clean electricity supply to oil and gas fields and the associated SSEN Transmission infrastructure to connect North of Scotland onshore and offshore wind sites to various points south through both offshore and onshore cabling. These are once in a generation infrastructure developments that will require significant investment, resources, skilled workforce and consequently will have a great impact on communities across Aberdeenshire.

Since its inception in 1996, Aberdeenshire Council has adopted a place-based approach with the creation of six administrative areas to ensure we are representing and responding to the needs of our communities. This local area approach and strong local focus is embedded in the way that we work. However, to continue to deliver services in a challenging financial climate the Council is reviewing its Place strategy to deliver a model of service delivery that builds on current success but more deliberately supports effective partnership working to deliver the outcomes needed in our communities. Our communities are at the heart of what we do and how we work, and the new place policy and strategy that is being developed will build on the solid foundations already in place and ensure that Planning is central to informing policy and decisions within the new

corporate place-based service delivery model.

A place-based approach is about understanding the assets, issues and needs of a place, and coordinating action and investment to deliver better outcomes, promote interconnections and strong relationships, and improve the quality of life for communities. Developing the Place Policy and Strategy will underpin our commitment to work more closely with our partners to deliver the services that will have the greatest impact for our communities.

Our place-based approach is about understanding our places and planning policy responses, so they are coordinated to deliver improvements across a range of outcomes.

Our Place Strategy is founded on the Place Principle agreed by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and seeks to work more closely with communities in their role as custodians of local places and seek solutions through working with partners at a local level. The Place Principle is fundamental to NPF4, which promotes a shared understanding of place and the need to take a more collaborative approach to a place's services and assets to achieve better outcomes for people and communities.



6.2 Attribute 12

The Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

- » Has the Planning Authority provided clear and proportionate expectations of Section 75 agreements and set these out in the LDP and pre-application discussions and they are concluded within 6 months of resolution to grant?
- » Does the Planning Authority take a proportionate approach to imposing conditions?
- » Does the Planning Authority have an ambitious local housing land requirement that exceeds the Minimum All Tenure Housing land requirements in NPF4 and is it on track to support delivery?
- » Are the number of processing agreements the Planning Authority has agreed with applicants increasing?
- » Does the Planning Authority have an effective delivery programme in place that supports the delivery of development on the ground?

6.2.1 Narrative

The Planning Authority has given itself a Ranking of 3 - Making Fair Progress.

6.2.2 Section 75 Agreements

In 2023-24, there was a total of 5 legal agreements relating to Major Development applications and 62 legal agreements relating to Local Development applications. For those not on Planning Processing Agreements (PPAs) which equate to 19 applications, on average these took 40.9 weeks (Major) and 20.7 weeks (Local). For those on PPAs (48), 100% of Major Development applications and 82.2% of Local Development applications, that were the subject of legal agreements were determined within their agreed timescales.

Overall, for the 19 planning applications that were the subject of a legal agreement and were not on a PPA, the average time taken was 22.9 weeks. This figure shows that there has been an improvement in average timescales taken for applications, that have been the subject of legal agreements, compared to 2022-23 (44.7 weeks).

There remains in place a process in the Scheme of Governance [Planning Delegations](#) ([aberdeenshire.gov.uk](#)) that allows for delegation of refusals to Officers of applications where there is clear evidence that a legal agreement is not being progressed for reasons out with the control of the Council. Timescales set out are 4 months for Local Developments and 6 months for Major Developments from the point of decision.

A Legacy Case Strategy remains in place where Legacy Cases (subject to a Legal Agreement or not) are monitored for progress monthly and applications that will become Legacy Cases are identified 2 months in advance of their 1-year timeframe.

Legal agreements relate primarily to the provision and delivery of Developer Contributions and Affordable Housing. In the LDP 2023, Section 14 – The Responsibilities of Developers – Policy RD2 Developer Obligations [Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan](#)

- [January 2023 - Introduction and Policies](#) sets out the policy requirements for contributions to the provision of necessary infrastructure and services. There remains detailed information available on the Website [Developer Obligations - Aberdeenshire Council](#). Supplementary Guidance (February 2024) on Developer Obligations and Affordable Housing in relation to the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan is also available: [Supplementary Guidance on Developer Obligations and Affordable Housing](#) ([aberdeenshire.gov.uk](#))

Levels of developer contributions can be discussed at the Pre-application stage and the Developer Obligations Team are consulted on Pre-application submissions where appropriate.



6.2 Attribute 12

6.2.3 Planning Conditions

To support the delivery of appropriate development but also aid performance in the speed of decision-making, where necessary and appropriate, planning conditions are regularly but proportionally imposed on planning approvals. To achieve consistency, there is a suite of model conditions set out in the Best Practice Manual which can be accessed by all Development Management staff. These model conditions have been checked for adherence to the 6 tests contained within Circular 4/1998 - The Use of Conditions in Planning. The use of appropriate conditions is also monitored and discussed with consultees through regular liaison meetings.

A Model Conditions Working Group, led by a Senior Planner in Development Management, was created several years ago, to undertake the creation of the Model Conditions document and review updates when necessary. Due to previous staff vacancies, membership of this group is currently being reviewed and work will commence shortly to review with the aim to reduce the number of conditions and adopt a more pragmatic risk based approach. This will also tie in with investigating the adoption of the Uniform conditions monitoring module which will enable better tracking and reporting on conditions.

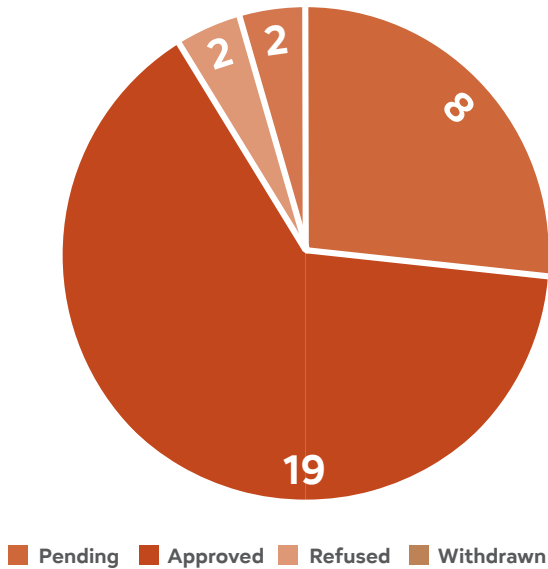
In most planning application cases though, and where it is critical to the assessment, it is necessary to have important upfront information submitted and this is routinely requested at the pre-application stage and by using Regulation 24 letters on planning applications, rather than imposing conditions.

In 2023-24, 31 Section 42 applications to vary/remove conditions were validated. Of these, 19 were approved, 2 refused, 2 withdrawn and 8 were pending at the end of March 2024. Most applications that were approved related to historical occupancy conditions relating to essential needs houses, where planning policy now does not require

such conditions. In proportion to the number of planning applications determined the figures indicate that the use of planning conditions is proportionate, necessary and accepted by applicants.

The Aberdeenshire LDP 2023 has 34 policies. Only 9 of these policies set out requirements in their text, for developments being potentially allowed, subject to conditions e.g. conditions may or will be applied. Only 2 applications were the subject of an appeal to the DPEA (1) or LRB (1) to vary or [remove a planning condition between April 2023 – March 2024](#).

An improvement action is the development and use of the Conditions Module on Uniform to help monitor and administer the discharging of planning conditions.



Graph 2 - S42 Applications 2023-24

6.2 Attribute 12

6.2.4 Local Housing Land & Developer Delivery

The MATHLR (Minimum All-Tenure Housing Land Requirement) is the minimum amount of land, by reference to the number of housing units, that is to be provided by each Planning Authority in Scotland for a 10-year period. For Aberdeenshire, NPF4 sets out that for Aberdeenshire the MATHLR is 7,500 units.

Under NPF4, the concept of maintaining a five-year effective supply has been removed, and new national guidance on how to undertake housing land audits in light of NPF4 is yet to be formally published (as of May 2024). In the interim, a comparison was drawn for the Housing Land Audit 2023 of the five-Year Effective Supply of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire against a five-year period of the MATHLR figures (2023-2027). This showed that there was 10.3 years supply in Aberdeenshire, when compared against the NPF4 MATHLR figures. The Housing Land Audit (HLA) 2023 used a base date of 1 January 2023, however it is anticipated that the HLA will move to a base date of 1 April going forward to align with other authorities and expected guidance.

The Aberdeenshire Local Housing Strategy is currently under review, with a draft issued for public consultation in May 2024. This document will set out a Housing Supply Target, which is derived from the Housing Needs and Demands Assessment 2023 (published January 2024). The Housing Supply Target will inform the setting of the Local Housing Land Requirement in the next Local Development Plan. The Local Housing Strategy 2024-2029 is expected to be approved in September 2024.

In accordance with the statutory requirement to publish within 3-months of adoption of the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2023, Aberdeenshire Council published its Delivery Programme in April 2023. The Delivery Programme is to be kept under review, by a

dedicated 'Delivery Team' and is scheduled to be re-published by March 2025. Work has also begun to look at what future Delivery Programmes will look to take account of changes brought about by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. A Proposed Delivery Programme will be published alongside the Aberdeenshire Proposed Local Development Plan in due course. Challenges exist in the short/medium term around storage and presentation of data associated with the Delivery Programme. A level of upskilling is also required to ensure that the Team are fully equipped to bring forward a 'new style' Delivery Programme e.g. training around development costs and viability, identifying actions to facilitate and enable energy developments and establishing a housing land pipeline for the Local Housing Land Requirement.

The Aberdeenshire [Housing Site Prospectus](#) has been created to complement the Delivery Programme and provides details of housing sites currently available for development with no named developer at this time. This provides a basis from which initial discussions can take place. Based on experience from the Housing Site Prospectus, there is merit to suggest that an equivalent for employment sites could be beneficial.

6.2.5 Processing Agreements and Extensions of Time

Processing Agreements are encouraged for all National and Major Development applications and can also be used where appropriate for Local Development applications. [Planning Processing Agreements - Aberdeenshire Council](#). Another tool used to project manage timescales on planning applications are formally recorded extension of times (in relation to statutory determination periods).

To support the delivery of appropriate development, in 2022-23, a total of 535 processing agreements/extensions of time were used. In 2023-24, a total of 635 processing agreements/extensions of time were used so there has been an increase in the use of these project management tools. Of these, 9 were for Major Development applications, 542 were for Local Development applications and 84 were for Other Development applications. 80.5% of these applications were determined within their agreed timescales.

Often reasons for applications going beyond their agreed processing agreement or extension of time timescale, are related to factors beyond the control of the Council or applicants/agents/developers are unwilling to enter into such agreements or amend timescales.

6.3 Improvement Action Plan (Place Theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5=No progress)
11. The Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places	Ranking of 3 - Making fair progress
12. The Planning Authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	Ranking of 3 - Making fair progress

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified according to their level of importance (High/ Medium/Low) and by when (Short/ Medium/Long term).

Improvement Action <i>What action will you take?</i> <i>What will the outcome be?</i>	Owner	Importance <i>High</i> <i>Medium</i> <i>Low</i>	Timescale <i>Short term – 1 year</i> <i>Medium term – 3 years</i> <i>Long term – 3+ years</i>	Resources
Attribute 12: Create an Aberdeenshire Employment Site Prospectus	Planning Information & Delivery	Medium	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service Managers• Team Managers• Planning Staff
Attribute 12: Review monitoring of Planning Process Agreements and extension of time recording and processes	Development Management	High	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service Managers• Team Managers• Planning Staff• Business Support Team



Image 11 - Chapelton Village Green



7.0 APPENDICES

7.1 APPENDIX 1

NPIF GOOD PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Which attributes of a high performing Planning Authority does this relate to:

	Attribute	Title
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	This Planning Authority has sound governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	This Planning Authority has effective leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	This Planning Authority has good customer care
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development



7.1 APPENDIX 1

TITLE: Recruitment and retention: doing things differently within Development Management

Description / Outcome	
Context	With a UK shortage of Planning professionals and a decreasing number of University Planning courses available to students, especially in Scotland, Development Management had to think differently on how to recruit for 13 vacant planning posts in April 2023.
What happened?	<p>To address the recruitment and retention challenges the following workforce framework initiatives, derived from staff consultation and feedback were implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Developed links with Robert Gordon University Architectural Department and Aberdeen University Geography Department to encourage students into the Planning profession from a broader degree skills base. The focus was on transferrable skills and key attributes required for the planning profession rather than the requirement to have an accredited planning qualification. The careers service within each University worked with Aberdeenshire Council to promote the opportunities in planning and work in this area has continued, with the planning team now being a work experience partner for Aberdeen University. The work experience package allows a student to apply for a work experience day in Planning and implementing this ensures that the planning profession is continually being promoted to students.The refocus on transferrable skills and key attributes allowed professionals from a broader work experience background to apply including applicants interested in a career change.Participated in University recruitment fairs and as part of this process developed a career in planning leaflet to promote the profession to a diverse degree skills base in partnership with the HR Team.Updated the recruitment package with additional information and the opportunity for relevant degrees to apply and the opportunity to be mentored and trained as a Planner on the job with Aberdeenshire Council.Updated the interview process with a focus on transferrable skills and key attributes.Implemented a work experience programme in partnership with Aberdeen University Careers Service and Secondary School Advanced Higher Geography students which provides opportunities to promote the planning profession. The work experience programme allows students or 6th year school pupils to apply for a work experience day based from the Stonehaven Office within the Planning Authority. The day involves an introduction to the workplace, Planning team and structure, Council and democracy, Site visit walk around Stonehaven discussing planning issues including flooding, Introduction to the National Planning Framework, Local Development Plan, viewing maps and learning how to process an application.Developed an induction, mentoring and training programme to ensure the development and progression of new staff from a more diverse background.Implemented exit interviews to inform improving staff retention.Planning staff workshops & training focusing on building the new team as important to dedicate time to ensure 13 new staff are fully integrated into the Planning Authority.Developing a new Planning career progression scheme which allows recognition based on work experience and learning on the job rather than RTPI accreditation levels. <p>The outcome of the new recruitment approach has been positive, with 13 vacancies within Development Management in April 2023, 11 of these posts were filled by December 2023.</p>



7.1 APPENDIX 1

TITLE: Recruitment and retention: doing things differently within Development Management

Description / Outcome	
Areas of collaboration	Implementing the Development Management workforce framework has been led by the Management Team in partnership with HR and staff, incorporating many ideas from staff suggestions and feedback. Partnerships have been developed with local universities to promote career opportunities for local students who want to seek local employment after graduation.
What was the overall result?	Implementing the workforce framework has allowed the service to re-focus and adapt to different methods of recruitment and training and staff development to attract and retain 11 new staff within Development Management.
Lessons Learned	<p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The key success was changing the recruitment process and implementing a focus on transferable skills and key attributes rather than the requirement to have an accredited planning qualification. This allowed students or professionals from a broader degree or work experience skills base to apply for the Development Management staff vacancies.Developing a detailed induction package, checklist, training and mentoring programme with lots of useful educational resources such as videos and presentations has been extremely useful. This resource can continually be utilised and developed by new and current staff for training and refreshers.
	<p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">To attain RTPI Chartered membership status is a lengthy process (5 years) if your qualification is classed as not relevant. With the closure of accredited Planning Schools numerous discussions have been held with RTPI membership to broaden their membership criteria as to what is classed as a relevant degree as having a relevant degree reduces the time taken to achieve chartered membership status to 4 years. At present the RTPI has been immovable on this and as a result Aberdeenshire Council has made the decision to review the Career Progression Scheme for Planning Officers to remove links to progression based on RTPI membership status and instead focus on progression based on an individual's experience and performance.Embedding 11 new staff into 3 area teams with an emphasis on home working has been a challenge but ensuring a rota of staff across teams and a structured mentoring and training programme has helped to integrate staff.
	<p>Lessons Learned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Succession planning - the importance of working in partnership with local Universities and schools to ensure a long-term promotion of the planning profession. Due to the cost-of-living crisis there has been an increasing number of students choosing to study at their local University and wanting to seek local employment after graduation. The Universities have been monitoring this trend and placing a key focus on developing local recruitment opportunities.



7.1 APPENDIX 1

TITLE: Recruitment and retention: doing things differently within Development Management

NPF 4			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Liveable Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Productive Places	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Place and Wellbeing Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate change and natural crisis	<input type="checkbox"/> Design, quality and place	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Wealth Building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Movement
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate mitigate and adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/> Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods	<input type="checkbox"/> Business and industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Spaces
<input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality homes	<input type="checkbox"/> City, town, local and commercial centres	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural homes	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Civic
<input type="checkbox"/> Soils	<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure first	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stewardship
<input type="checkbox"/> Forestry, woodland and trees	<input type="checkbox"/> Heat and cooling	<input type="checkbox"/> Tourism	
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic assets and places	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue and green infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Culture and creativity	
<input type="checkbox"/> Green belts	<input type="checkbox"/> Play, recreation and sport	<input type="checkbox"/> Aquaculture	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings	<input type="checkbox"/> Flood risk and water management	<input type="checkbox"/> Minerals	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coast development	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety		
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Infrastructure		
<input type="checkbox"/> Zero waste			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable transport			



7.2 APPENDIX 2

NPIF GOOD PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Which attributes of a high performing Planning Authority does this relate to:

	Attribute	Title
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	This Planning Authority has sound governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	This Planning Authority has effective leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	This Planning Authority has good customer care
<input type="checkbox"/>	10	This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development



7.2 APPENDIX 2

TITLE: Work experience and apprenticeship scheme

	Description / Outcome
Context	Aberdeenshire Council Planning Authority have developed a package to promote a career in planning and the opportunities within the profession. With a national shortage of qualified planners, it's important to work collaboratively to promote the profession and ensure succession planning for the next generation of planners by engaging with University students, school pupils and professionals interested in changing careers and entering the profession.
What happened?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Working collaboratively with Robert Gordon and Aberdeen Universities to encourage students into the Planning profession from a broader degree skills base.Aberdeenshire Council Planning has signed up to be a work experience partner for Aberdeen University. This initiative allows a student to apply for a work experience day in Planning. Promotional materials have been produced for the careers service to highlight the benefits and opportunities in a career in planningPromotion of 4 x summer student planning placements (Survey Assistants) during 2023 were offered across the Policy and PID Teams offering paid work experience in the service. Tasks included fieldwork, desk-based research on a range of topics and work areas including open space and town centres. One summer student has subsequently been employed as a Planning Officer. The success of this exercise means it is being extended to 5 x student summer placements for 2024-25.The Admin Team recruited a modern apprentice and the staff member recently won an ACE award from the staff internal awards recognition scheme.Student placements have also been undertaken within HET. This has involved supporting students with their dissertations in conjunction with other bodies such as Zero Waste Scotland on the reuse of materials in conjunction with a review of the future of the Councils material store and the review of Conservation Areas across Aberdeenshire.The work experience programme allows students or 6th year school pupils to apply for a work experience day based from the Stonehaven Office within the Planning Authority. The day involves an introduction to the workplace, Planning team and structure, Council and democracy, Site visit walk around Stonehaven discussing planning issues including flooding, introduction to the National Planning Framework, Local Development Plan, viewing maps and learning how to process an application.Working collaboratively with RGU architectural students for a 3D mapping project of Stonehaven costal area and place planning and climate resilience.Mackie Academy place planning project presentation to representatives from the Planning Authority.
Areas of collaboration	<p>Partnerships have been developed with local universities to promote work experience opportunities of collaborative working between students and the planning team on specific projects such as Stonehaven place planning and climate resilience. This is a Robert Gordon University (RGU) Architecture group project which examined Stonehaven, firstly in the broadest sense (beyond policy) examining the interpretation of place and possible strategies for the future. A key focus was climate change and flood resilience and how the town could develop and adapt in the coming years. The students have presented to the Planning team, and it is hoped that further work can be developed using this project to inform local place planning in Stonehaven.</p> <p>Working with schools to promote work experience opportunities and assistance from the planning team on specific projects.</p>



7.2 APPENDIX 2

TITLE: Work experience and apprenticeship scheme

	Description / Outcome
What was the overall result?	Successful work placements and collaborative projects with students and Academy pupils. Developed a work experience package and a careers partner with Aberdeen University.
Lessons Learned	Successes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Developing partnership with Aberdeen and Robert Gordon Universities for work experience, student placements and collaborative projects. Work experience partner with Aberdeen University, offering one day introduction to planning placement future work would be to develop a similar partnership relationship with Robert Gordon University.Developing a work experience day for Academy pupils and discussions to follow on setting up a formal agreement with the school work experience team and also explore opportunities to promote and discuss planning issues in Primary schools.
	Challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Resourcing work experience days as staff have busy schedules but the team have put together a manageable timetable and rota for the day and all are keen to promote the profession and opportunities. Taking time to invest in potential future planners is important for the future of the profession and it is hoped that students will consider Aberdeenshire Council as a future employer. Lessons Learned: <ul style="list-style-type: none">The importance of developing the next generation of planners as well as encouraging debate and input into shaping sustainable local communities from students and school pupils.



Image 12a - A career in Planning at Aberdeenshire Council program



Image 12b - 6th year pupil from Banchory Academy on a site visit walk with a planner around Stonehaven



Image 12c - Stonehaven: past, present and future presentation - RGU students, lecturer, and Aberdeenshire Council Planning staff

7.2 APPENDIX 2

TITLE: Work experience and apprenticeship scheme

NPF 4			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Liveable Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Productive Places	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Place and Wellbeing Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate change and natural crisis	<input type="checkbox"/> Design, quality and place	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Wealth Building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Movement
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate mitigate and adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/> Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods	<input type="checkbox"/> Business and industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Spaces
<input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality homes	<input type="checkbox"/> City, town, local and commercial centres	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural homes	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Civic
<input type="checkbox"/> Soils	<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure first	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stewardship
<input type="checkbox"/> Forestry, woodland and trees	<input type="checkbox"/> Heat and cooling	<input type="checkbox"/> Tourism	
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic assets and places	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue and green infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Culture and creativity	
<input type="checkbox"/> Green belts	<input type="checkbox"/> Play, recreation and sport	<input type="checkbox"/> Aquaculture	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings	<input type="checkbox"/> Flood risk and water management	<input type="checkbox"/> Minerals	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coast development	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety		
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Infrastructure		
<input type="checkbox"/> Zero waste			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable transport			



7.3 APPENDIX 3

NPIF GOOD PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Which attributes of a high performing Planning Authority does this relate to:

	Attribute	Title
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	This Planning Authority has sound governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	This Planning Authority has effective leadership
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	This Planning Authority has good customer care
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development



7.3 APPENDIX 3

TITLE: Shaping improvements with our customers: Customer Service Excellence reaccreditation

Description / Outcome	
Context	<p>Development Management is accredited to Customer Service Excellence which is a nationally recognised standard for public sector organisations, developed by the UK Government Cabinet Office. The Standard tests an organisation against 57 components with a particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism, staff attitudes and customer insight. In order to achieve the standard Development Management has to provide evidence against the criteria during an independent audit assessment on an annual basis. During the audit the assessor not only considers the evidence provided, but also speaks to staff in different roles and levels, as well as a range of key customers and stakeholders.</p> <p>The Customer Service Excellence Standard is not only an independent validation of achievement, but also crucially a skills development tool and driver for continuous improvement and culture change – ensuring that the customer and staff are always at the heart of the decision-making process when Planning Authority change and improvements. The audit report and feedback helps to form the basis of the continuous improvements set for the service each year.</p>
What happened?	<p>Customer service reaccreditation was achieved in February 2024. Refer to the award certificate and the compliance plus certificate which highlights that 4 were gained at the February Audit for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Developed links with Robert Gordon University Architectural Department and Aberdeen University Geography Department to attract students to the Planning profession, emphasizing transferable skills over specific qualifications. The universities’ career services and Aberdeenshire Council promoted planning opportunities, leading to a work experience partnership with Aberdeen University. This partnership offers students a day of work experience in Planning, continually promoting the profession.1.3.5 - We have made positive changes to services as a result of analysing customer experience, including improved customer journeys.2.2.1 - We can demonstrate our commitment to developing and delivering customer focused services through our recruitment, training and development policies for staff.4.2.3 - We can demonstrate that we benchmark our performance against that of similar or complementary organisations and have used that information to improve our service.4.3.4 - We learn from any mistakes we make by identifying patterns in formal and informal complaints and comments from customers and use this information to improve services and publicise action taken. <p>An additional compliance plus was gained in February 2024 and a reduction in the partial compliances from 4 to 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1.3.4 – You have reviewed the format of the Customer Survey and achieved an increase return rate by using follow up reminders. The comments have been captured as improvement tasks/actions. This is good progress. However, the levels are not improving, 64% and you may wish to consider and interim target which will be realistically achievable given the mitigating circumstances around this performance measure (recruitment crisis)2.1.6 - You are committed to empowering all employees to actively promote a customer focused culture and there is evidence of this listed elsewhere in this report. However, at the assessment there was evidence that the ability for all team members to participate was not consistent across teams. Some team members feel their ability to engage lack’s structure, and that when they do try to seek answers the solutions are not consistent. It is appreciated that the nature of your work means that things are not always black and white, but this consideration of consistency seemed to be around consistency of communication. It appears that ‘the loop’ is not always closed. This is why I have awarded a partial compliance.2.2.3 - The PPP rollout for staff is in progress, this is not fully in place and the approach/ structure has not yet been established consistently with a variety of styles from informal to formal. Some team members do not yet feel fully engaged in this process. PPP’s will be reviewed 6 monthly and annually and training needs will be considered via the Planning Training Database and linked to the revised career progression scheme. This new ‘rollout’ combined with some current inconsistency in the delivery of PPP, one to ones and team meetings and a lack of structure noted in some areas, are the rationale behind this partial compliance.



7.3 APPENDIX 3

TITLE: Shaping improvements with our customers: Customer Service Excellence reaccreditation

Description / Outcome	
Areas of collaboration	Developing the Customer Service Management System creates a consultation framework for collaboration and feedback with consultees, customers and staff which shape future service improvements and delivery.
What was the overall result?	<p>The Development Management Team within the Planning and Economy Service of Aberdeenshire Council successfully passed the recertification audit in February 2024 and were awarded the Cabinet Office Customer Service Excellence Standard – a prestigious national award for excellence in customer service. The 2-day audit culminating in the award of 50 compliances and 4 compliance pluses (out of 57 components) with 3 partial compliances.</p> <p>Accreditation to the standard involves an annual independent audit assessment programme to ensure that standards remain high and improvements to the service are continually being implemented.</p>
Lessons Learned	<p>Successes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Championing cross departmental working on the customer experience within the council.The establishment of the Service improvement Log.Working with partners and external experts such as the Retail consultant on a pre application to expedited permissions.Report templates have been improved based on staff insight.The new staffing framework – developed collaboratively - is in place.The Net Zero training day was well received and seen as a team building session.The senior managers proactively seek and support opportunity e.g. Robert Gordon University as a collaboration partner on 3D mapping and Student projects such as Stonehaven: past, present and future.Customer engagement is a priority:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Quote from customer interviewed at audit, ‘Aberdeenshire Council appreciate what we, as customers, bring to the table- more so than other planning departments I deal with’. <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Aberdeenshire Council operates on an area basis for governance and service provision. This can lead to inconsistency between area teams therefore continually working to ensure that both internal and external customers can expect a similar level of service across all planning teams.The implementation of shadowing has proved beneficial, you may wish to consider if it might be useful to expand shadowing opportunities between managers and more front-line roles.Celebrate winning awards more widely and consistently especially when staff have gone that extra mile.The contribution that staff make is highly valued, but greater recognition can be developed through Personal Performance Plans that are currently being rolled out.The software packages such as Uniform and Power bi are being utilized but staff felt their functionality could be further developed to give better quality of information and streamline processes.The portal is being promoted as a self-serve option for customers for tracking application progress. However, a review on whether this meets the information customers need would be useful feedback for the Scottish Government portal development.Employees who are engaged in external groups and wider communities informally report back to staff e.g. Young Planners Chair. This could be formalised through a dedicated feedback slot such as lunchtime learning.



7.3 APPENDIX 3

TITLE: Shaping improvements with our customers: Customer Service Excellence reaccreditation

Description / Outcome	
Lessons Learned (continued)	<i>Challenges (continued):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Ensuring that all performance metrics are presented in the format submitted to the Scottish Government, removing the local preference of percentages to average weeks.Utilising the implementation of project plans and service improvement log to gain useful metrics on the positive impact the appointment of the Continuous Improvement Officer. There is progress in the qualitative and quantitative demonstration of the value of this post, but this remains an ongoing opportunity for development.Benchmark with planners across Scotland, but you may wish to drill down further by considering how you could deliver more meaningful benchmarks with other rural parts of Grampian.
	Lessons Learned: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Improving consistency within an area-based service delivery model.Continuing to work with local Universities to encourage graduates into the planning profession as well as developing collaborate projects in partnership with lecturers and students such as Stonehaven: past, present and future.With diminishing resources and budget constraints, the importance of sharing knowledge between Local Authorities to develop digital solutions, training and policy development.



7.3 APPENDIX 3

TITLE: Shaping improvements with our customers: Customer Service Excellence reaccreditation

NPF 4			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Liveable Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Productive Places	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Place and Wellbeing Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate change and natural crisis	<input type="checkbox"/> Design, quality and place	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Wealth Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Movement
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate mitigate and adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/> Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods	<input type="checkbox"/> Business and industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Spaces
<input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality homes	<input type="checkbox"/> City, town, local and commercial centres	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural homes	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Civic
<input type="checkbox"/> Soils	<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure first	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stewardship
<input type="checkbox"/> Forestry, woodland and trees	<input type="checkbox"/> Heat and cooling	<input type="checkbox"/> Tourism	
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic assets and places	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue and green infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Culture and creativity	
<input type="checkbox"/> Green belts	<input type="checkbox"/> Play, recreation and sport	<input type="checkbox"/> Aquaculture	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings	<input type="checkbox"/> Flood risk and water management	<input type="checkbox"/> Minerals	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coast development	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety		
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Infrastructure		
<input type="checkbox"/> Zero waste			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable transport			



7.4 APPENDIX 4

NPIF GOOD PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Which attributes of a high performing Planning Authority does this relate to:

	Attribute	Title
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	4	This Planning Authority has sound governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	This Planning Authority has effective leadership
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6	This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	This Planning Authority has good customer care
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	12	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development



7.4 APPENDIX 4

TITLE: Planning Enforcement Audit

Description / Outcome	
Context	The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 notes that the purpose of planning is to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest. Aberdeenshire Council has a dedicated Planning Enforcement Team. The current structure, of a centrally based team with dedicated Senior Planner support, was established in 2014. The Enforcement Team acts to investigate and resolve allegations of alleged breaches of planning control including compliance with conditions of planning permission. An internal audit was carried out to ensure there were robust processes in place and operating effectively in respect of planning enforcement. An audit of this area was last carried out in 2017/18, with the main recommendations focused on improving written procedures with more detail and improving the records being kept against each case.
What happened?	Council Auditors commenced the audit of Planning Enforcement in October 2023 and completed the work in February 2024. All procedure notes were reviewed as well as a sample of enforcement cases submitted within the previous 12 months. The case reviews were to determine if the current procedures were being followed and if the decisions made were robust. During the audit process, Senior Enforcement Planners were interviewed and questions asked to clarify processes and justification of any anomalies identified. Other information assessed by the auditor included the Council's Planning Enforcement Charter, primary legislation and information on enforcement within the Aberdeenshire Council Website.
Areas of collaboration	The improvements identified in the previous audit have been developed and the customer's ability to bring alleged breaches more swiftly to the Enforcement Team's attention has been improved. The focus of the audit was to ensure that detailed procedures are now in place and any decisions are clearly documented. In addition, the Enforcement Team have developed a framework for collaboration and feedback with internal consultees including Environmental Health, Roads and Built Heritage. This improved way of working will both identify and resolve breaches of planning control in a coordinated way, depending which legislation is more appropriate, and also ensure consistent Council feedback to both complainants and those subject of complaints. Regular liaison meetings are helping to shape future service improvements and delivery.
What was the overall result?	The findings of the internal audit demonstrated a sound system of governance within Planning Enforcement. It concluded that no severe or major issues/risks were identified. The Enforcement Team have a well-developed series of written procedures and processes for staff, alongside well documented case files, and clear information for customers on the Council's website and in the Planning Enforcement Charter. The findings reflect the significant work undertaken by the Enforcement Team since the previous internal audit in 2016/17 to put a sound framework in place for planning enforcement. The audit confirmed that a sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the area audited.



7.4 APPENDIX 4

TITLE: Planning Enforcement Audit

Description / Outcome	
Lessons Learned	Successes: The level of net risk was assessed as minor, with the control framework deemed to provide substantial assurance over the effectiveness of processes in place in respect of planning enforcement. The outcome of the audit was very positive and reflective of the work carried out by the Enforcement Team since the previous audit. Written Procedures were identified as being generally comprehensive and up to date. In relation to customers, clear information is set out online and in the Council's Planning Enforcement Charter. Following the audit, the Planning Enforcement Team have updated their procedures/staff guidance to reflect the recommendations made to ensure consistency and ensure a high level of customer experience is maintained. These have been shared with all Officers and action taken within the agreed time frame. It was noted that in relation to documentation, detailed records were held on the planning enforcement system.
	Challenges: Whilst comprehensive records are maintained on the planning enforcement system, much of the data is being processed offline using alternative means. The uniform software package is being utilised but there are limitations in its functionality and this could be further developed to enhance efficiency and provide assurance that all cases are being progressed to a satisfactory conclusion. In addition, "live" cases are not being shown on the enforcement case overlay on maphub which Development Management colleagues use to check for constraints. There is also no link between planning and enforcement uniform modules which would provide an end-to-end automated process once an application submitted to regularise a breach is determined. There is a map function within the "Report a Breach" form on the website however this is limited in its functionality for properties without addresses and does not currently pull through with grid reference or a map for rural sites without a postal address. These matters require development from IT and are outwith the control of the Enforcement Team.
	Lessons Learned: The Enforcement Team are active members of the Scottish Planning Enforcement Forum and share experiences with others across Scotland but are limited in their abilities to take direct action or take legal proceedings due to limited budgets and the legislative processes.

7.4 APPENDIX 4

TITLE: Planning Enforcement Audit

NPF 4				
<div><div></div></div> Sustainable Places	<div><div></div></div> Liveable Places	<div><div></div></div> Productive Places	<div><div></div></div> Place and Wellbeing Outcomes	
<div><div></div></div> Climate change and natural crisis	<div><div></div></div> Design, quality and place	<div><div></div></div> Community Wealth Building	<div><div></div></div> Movement	
<div><div></div></div> Climate mitigate and adaptation	<div><div></div></div> Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods	<div><div></div></div> Business and industry	<div><div></div></div> Spaces	
<div><div></div></div> Biodiversity	<div><div></div></div> Quality homes	<div><div></div></div> City, town, local and commercial centres	<div><div></div></div> Resources	
<div><div></div></div> Natural Places	<div><div></div></div> Rural homes	<div><div></div></div> Retail	<div><div></div></div> Civic	
<div><div></div></div> Soils	<div><div></div></div> Infrastructure first	<div><div></div></div> Rural development	<div><div></div></div> Stewardship	
<div><div></div></div> Forestry, woodland and trees	<div><div></div></div> Heat and cooling	<div><div></div></div> Tourism		
<div><div></div></div> Historic assets and places	<div><div></div></div> Blue and green infrastructure	<div><div></div></div> Culture and creativity		
<div><div></div></div> Green belts	<div><div></div></div> Play, recreation and sport	<div><div></div></div> Aquaculture		
<div><div></div></div> Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings	<div><div></div></div> Flood risk and water management	<div><div></div></div> Minerals		
<div><div></div></div> Coast development	<div><div></div></div> Health and safety			
<div><div></div></div> Energy	<div><div></div></div> Digital Infrastructure			
<div><div></div></div> Zero waste				
<div><div></div></div> Sustainable transport				

7.5 APPENDIX 5

NPIF GOOD PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Which attributes of a high performing Planning Authority does this relate to:

	Attribute	Title
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	This Planning Authority has sound governance
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	This Planning Authority has effective leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	This Planning Authority has good customer care
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development



7.5 APPENDIX 5

TITLE: Agent Forum

Description / Outcome	
Context	The Agent Forum is a collaborative annual event aiming to bring together Developers and Agents to discuss key topics such as policy and legislative updates, performance, staffing and service improvements/changes with Planning Authority staff, consultees and key partners.
What happened?	<p>The Agent Forum for 2023 was held virtually on the 24 November jointly with Development Management and Building Standards with approximately 40 Agents and Developers in attendance. The meeting is held virtually and recorded for distribution to those that can't attend. Agents are asked in advance if they have any topics/presentations they would like discussed, agenda items or questions in advance to ensure the forum is production and informative for all participants. The following information is sent out to invitees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● An email invite which included asking for any agenda items and questions● An email invite with the agenda● Follow up email thanking them for attending and addressing questions raised by participants and a copy of the presentation and a meeting recording of the virtual agent forum● Q&A from the Forum details questions & responses and was circulated in the post meeting email● Feedback is sought post meeting to ensure it is built into the next forum.● The forum is held annually and provides a platform to exchange information, update on legislation & service changes as well as gathering customer feedback.
Areas of collaboration	The Agent Forum provides customer engagement and feedback with Developers and Agents. The agenda for the forum is developed collaboratively along with the request of questions or items for discussion. The aim is to provide a forum that is a useful information exchange and addresses key topics that Agents and Developers want to discuss with the Planning Authority, consultees or key partners.
What was the overall result?	The Agent Forum is a collaborative event which also includes useful post meeting information. The feedback is positive and ensures that we compile and agenda that customers want to discuss.







7.5 APPENDIX 5

TITLE: Agent Forum

Description / Outcome	
Lessons Learned	Successes: Moving to a virtual forum has increased the number of customers who are able to attend and with the addition of a recording being circulated it means that all customers have access to the information presented and discussed. Feedback has suggested that a move to hybrid would be welcomed for the next forum.
	Challenges: It's been difficult to replicate the informal but often informative discussions that would be held over coffee with a move to a virtual form, but it is hoped that the option of a hybrid meeting going forward will help to facilitate this.
	Lessons Learned: Organising the Agent Forum on an annual basis provides a useful mechanism for sharing information and updating on progress on relevant issues within the Planning Authority, consultees or key partners. Having it as a firm fixture in the calendar is appreciated by both the Planning Authority and Developers/ Agents who attend and acts as a crucial element of our engagement with this particular customer group.

7.5 APPENDIX 5

TITLE: Agent Forum

NPF 4				
 Sustainable Places	 Liveable Places	 Productive Places	 Place and Wellbeing Outcomes	
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate change and natural crisis	<input type="checkbox"/> Design, quality and place	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Wealth Building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Movement
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate mitigate and adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/> Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods	<input type="checkbox"/> Business and industry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Spaces
<input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality homes	<input type="checkbox"/> City, town, local and commercial centres	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural homes	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Civic
<input type="checkbox"/> Soils	<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure first	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship
<input type="checkbox"/> Forestry, woodland and trees	<input type="checkbox"/> Heat and cooling	<input type="checkbox"/> Tourism		
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic assets and places	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue and green infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Culture and creativity		
<input type="checkbox"/> Green belts	<input type="checkbox"/> Play, recreation and sport	<input type="checkbox"/> Aquaculture		
<input type="checkbox"/> Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings	<input type="checkbox"/> Flood risk and water management	<input type="checkbox"/> Minerals		
<input type="checkbox"/> Coast development	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety			
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Infrastructure			
<input type="checkbox"/> Zero waste				
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable transport				

7.6 APPENDIX 6

NPIF GOOD PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Which attributes of a high performing Planning Authority does this relate to:

	Attribute	Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2	The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	This Planning Authority has sound governance
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	This Planning Authority has effective leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	7	This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	8	This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	9	This Planning Authority has good customer care
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development



7.6 APPENDIX 6

TITLE: Extension to Macduff Aquarium

Description / Outcome	
Context	Full Planning Permission application (APP/2023/2313) for the alterations and extension to Macduff Aquarium to provide a café/restaurant (Class 3 Use) associated landscaping and alterations to car park was submitted by Live Life Aberdeenshire Council on 22 December 2023. The planning permission was granted on 18 April 2024 following determination by the Banff and Buchan Area Committee on 16 April 2024.
	The proposal is to be funded by a share of the £20 million bid that was awarded to Aberdeenshire Council from the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund. The existing tourism facility, run by Live Life Aberdeenshire, has been operated by the Council for more than 25 years. It regularly welcomes more than 50,000 visitors annually, contributing to the local area's economy and complimenting other existing tourist attractions along the Northeast 250 route.
What happened?	This significant extension to this tourism facility aims to promote and enhance the visitor experience via the modernization of the visitor experience exhibits and educational programmes and constitutes a high-profile project envisaged as contributing a positive impact to the local area via social, physical health, outdoor recreation along with wider economic and tourism benefits. Both Visit Aberdeenshire and Visit Scotland had indicated their support for the proposal recognising that the scheme has the potential to make a "significant contribution to the North East tourism offer" and would not only provide the opportunity to transform the visitor experience with the aquarium itself, but that the improved landscaping and links to coastal paths would also "enhance the wider destination offering, helping to encourage extended, year round visits and spend in Macduff and the surrounding area".
	The Prior to the submission of the planning application, the Planning and Economy Service were approached for pre-application advice on the proposal in June 2022, as part of this process consultation was undertaken with 8 consultees. A response was provided by the Service in July 2022 providing advice on the key planning issues and clarity on elements of the initially submitted proposal requiring further consideration; summarising the responses from consultees and setting out the requirements for supporting information to accompany any future planning application.
	Further pre-application was sought on a revised proposal in July 2023, as part of this process consultation was undertaken with 7 consultees. A response was provided by the Service in September 2023, again summarising the responses from consultees, confirming the requirements for supporting information and the Service view on the proposal.
	Public and stakeholder engagement events were undertaken by the applicants in September 2022 and were attended by local business groups and residents. A summary of the comments received and responses were outlined within the Design and Access Statement which accompanied the formal planning application submission.
	Following the detailed pre-application discussions, the application was validated with the relevant supporting information provided at the validation stage to allow the Service and key consultees to comment on the proposal in a timeous manner.
	The application was determined under the Council's Scheme of Governance, with the application recommended for approval to the Banff and Buchan Area Committee on 14 April 2024. Following a unanimous decision of support at the Area Committee meeting from Councillors, the application was issued on 16 April 2024.



7.6 APPENDIX 6

TITLE: Extension to Macduff Aquarium

Description / Outcome	
What happened? (continued)	<p>The planning report presented to the Area Committee meeting of 14 April 2024 provided a summary of the proposal, key planning issues and material considerations raised and assessed and includes a recommendation on the proposal. A copy of valid representations received were also made available to the Area Committee members.</p> <p>At the Area Committee meeting, the lead officer presented the item, via the use of a power point including application drawings and site photographs and was available to answer any questions raised by Councillors at the meeting. The Area Committee meeting is live streamed, and members of the public can view the meeting live, or the meeting is recorded and made available for future viewing. Both the applicant/agent and third parties, who have submitted a valid representation, could submit a request to speak to address Committee on a planning item, in this case no interested parties submitted a request to address the Area Committee on this proposal.</p>
Areas of collaboration	<p>The case study is an example of collaborative working and project management to provide pre-application advice on a high-profile development that was the subject of key funding. It was considered that a development of this type would generate public interest and would require the input and agreement of a number of consultees. The aim was to engage with stakeholders at the pre-application stage to allow the Service to clearly set out requirements and identify issues, with a view to receiving a complete submission with all the relevant supporting information to allow the Service to assess and determine the application in an efficient and effective manner and with a view to reaching a positive outcome.</p> <p>Lead Officer- Development Management Planner (Banff and Buchan/Garioch area team)- Stakeholder input and assistance was dependent upon the different stages of the pre-application and formal planning application determination processes.</p> <p>At the pre-application stage, Development Management engaged in communications with the applicant and internal and external consultees, namely Roads Development, Environmental Health, Contaminated Land, Built and Natural Environment, Flood and Costal Protection and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. This process involved seeking views on the proposal from consultees and feeding back info to inform the development of the proposal prior to the submission of a formal planning application.</p> <p>At the formal planning application stage, Development Management continued earlier engagement with the applicant and the key internal and external consultees. The planning application was the subject of advertisement and neighbour notification which allowed interested third parties the opportunity to submit representations. All relevant material issues raised within consultation responses and representations were duly considered by the lead officer during the determination stage, with information and points of clarification discussed with the applicant and relevant consultees and representees to allow the lead officer to reach an informed recommendation on the acceptability of the submission.</p>



7.6 APPENDIX 6

TITLE: Extension to Macduff Aquarium

Description / Outcome	
What was the overall result?	<p>The proposal is seen as complimentary to the existing Macduff Aquarium tourist facility, being delivered by the Council to serve the tourism and growth in the local town and surrounding area. Work is scheduled to commence late 2024.</p> <p>The case demonstrates the benefits of positive engagement with stakeholders including consultees and the Planning Authority at the pre-application stage, to allow analysis and clear communication of issues, process, and expectations. The approach adopted demonstrates the benefits of collaborative working and that important developments that could raise complex matters to resolve can be dealt with in an efficient and effective manner.</p> <p>The approach adopted by the Service ensured that the planning application, on validation, included all relevant supporting information and statements to allow consultees and interested 3rd parties an opportunity to submit comments in line with statutory deadlines. The early engagement and proactive approach to the processing of the formal planning application allowed the Service to report the planning application and issue the decision within an acceptable timeframe. The Service maintained good levels of communication at all stages to ensure that the applicant was provided with regular updates on the progress of the proposal both pre-and post-planning application submission.</p> <p>The key outcomes from this project validate, the importance of continuing to develop positive working relationships and maintaining clear communication with the wide range of stakeholders and customers that we interact with as part of our service delivery. In a wider context and linked to Customer Service Excellence (CSE), Development Management continue to focus on improvement projects to improve service delivery and the customer service and continue to actively liaise with key consultees on areas of good practice.</p>
	<p>The ability to front-load the process, provide consistency in terms of contact and communication from Development Management and facilitate an understanding of how the project is intended to be implemented allowed consistent advice to be given and any issues to be resolved quickly.</p>
	Lessons Learned



Image 13a - Current entrance to Macduff Aquarium



Image 13b - View from new outlook point back towards main building

7.6 APPENDIX 6

TITLE: Extension to Macduff Aquarium

NPF 4			
<div><div></div>Sustainable Places</div>	<div><div></div>Liveable Places</div>	<div><div></div>Productive Places</div>	<div><div></div>Place and Wellbeing Outcomes</div>
<div><div></div>Climate change and natural crisis</div>	<div><div></div>Design, quality and place</div>	<div><div></div>Community Wealth Building</div>	<div><div></div>Movement</div>
<div><div></div>Climate mitigate and adaptation</div>	<div><div></div>Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods</div>	<div><div></div>Business and industry</div>	<div><div></div>Spaces</div>
<div><div></div>Biodiversity</div>	<div><div></div>Quality homes</div>	<div><div></div>City, town, local and commercial centres</div>	<div><div></div>Resources</div>
<div><div></div>Natural Places</div>	<div><div></div>Rural homes</div>	<div><div></div>Retail</div>	<div><div></div>Civic</div>
<div><div></div>Soils</div>	<div><div></div>Infrastructure first</div>	<div><div></div>Rural development</div>	<div><div></div>Stewardship</div>
<div><div></div>Forestry, woodland and trees</div>	<div><div></div>Heat and cooling</div>	<div><div></div>Tourism</div>	
<div><div></div>Historic assets and places</div>	<div><div></div>Blue and green infrastructure</div>	<div><div></div>Culture and creativity</div>	
<div><div></div>Green belts</div>	<div><div></div>Play, recreation and sport</div>	<div><div></div>Aquaculture</div>	
<div><div></div>Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings</div>	<div><div></div>Flood risk and water management</div>	<div><div></div>Minerals</div>	
<div><div></div>Coast development</div>	<div><div></div>Health and safety</div>		
<div><div></div>Energy</div>	<div><div></div>Digital Infrastructure</div>		
<div><div></div>Zero waste</div>			
<div><div></div>Sustainable transport</div>			

7.7 APPENDIX 7

NPIF GOOD PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Which attributes of a high performing Planning Authority does this relate to:

	Attribute	Title
<div></div>	1	The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
<div></div>	2	The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
<div></div>	3	This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
<div></div>	4	This Planning Authority has sound governance
<div></div>	5	This Planning Authority has effective leadership
<div></div>	6	This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
<div></div>	7	This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
<div></div>	8	This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
<div></div>	9	This Planning Authority has good customer care
<div></div>	10	This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
<div></div>	11	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
<div></div>	12	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development



7.7 APPENDIX 7

TITLE: Youth Engagement Survey on open space in Aberdeenshire settlements

	Description / Outcome
Context	<p>To fulfil the requirement to engage with young people when preparing the Open Space Audit and Play Sufficiency Assessment, Aberdeenshire Council undertook an online youth survey. Officers had already visited all the open spaces that they thought young people would use across 92 settlements, to assess their quality. However, officers did not know how often these spaces are used, which spaces are the most popular, whether people avoid certain spaces due to safety concerns or vandalism, or it is too far away.</p> <p>Therefore, a questionnaire was developed to find out what young people think about the open spaces that they use, and how. For example, a play park, woodland, a kickabout space or another outdoor space to play or meet up.</p>
What happened?	<p>An online survey was created, which ran between 11 March and 3 May 2024. We met face to face with members of the Youth Forum at Ellon Academy on 21 February 2024, to carry out a test of the survey (see photo 1). Two group sessions tested the survey (there was around 15 people in each group). They either completed the survey in a group or individually on their mobile phone or using a paper copy. Their results were also included in the survey. Schools were given posters to display, instructions on how to carry out group surveys, and were encouraged to post about this on their social platforms. The Policy Team also posted about the youth consultation on their X (Twitter) platform.</p>
Areas of collaboration	<p>For example, communities, protected characteristics, developers, key agencies, planning committee, Planning Authority staff, other local authority staff.</p> <p>We worked with an Education Support Officer within the Council to discuss our approach and to cascade the survey material to all the primary and secondary schools (hard copies were posted out), as well as Parents Councils, and those not in school (e.g. home schooled and special needs). (A separate consultation with communities and key agencies on the draft Open Space Audit and draft Play Sufficiency Assessment was undertaken between 31 May and 26 July 2024.)</p>
What was the overall result?	<p>A total of 496 responses were received across Aberdeenshire. These were from 123 groups, and 373 individuals. We have gained knowledge from a range of young people on their views of open spaces and what they require, although this is settlement specific, rather than specific sites. Nonetheless, the results will inform what current and future requirements there may be for open spaces across Aberdeenshire, and whether there are spatial implications or site selection issues for the next Local Development Plan. They also showed common themes on what young people like and dislike about where they play or meet up. The results will also be added to the Play Sufficiency Assessment and the Open Space Audit, which will inform the Open Space Strategy.</p>



7.7 APPENDIX 7

TITLE: Youth Engagement Survey on open space in Aberdeenshire settlements

	Description / Outcome
Lessons Learned	<p>Successes:</p> <p>We received views from a good number of young people collectively within the youth age profile, we have a good male and female split, and we had a good geographical split across Aberdeenshire.</p>
	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>What didn't work well was getting a more even distribution between the age categories (engagement was before and after Easter, so the timing may not have been appropriate, and nurseries were not engaged with), and we mostly received comments from those aged 12 to 15. Additionally, not being able to use the map function to pinpoint sites and comment on them meant we couldn't identify specific issues – this was because an email address would have been required to use EngageHQ, which was deemed inappropriate, or pupils may not have an email address yet. Furthermore, it was teachers' discretion to run the consultation exercise with their pupils (we did join a headteachers meeting to inform them on the engagement that was coming).</p>
	<p>Lessons Learned:</p> <p>While it would have been great to have a list of toddler/nursery (and other youth) groups to reach younger children, and have the consultation that avoided the holidays, staff resources and the timing to get to get everything done on time, meant we were restricted to what we did and when.</p>



Image 14 - Planning Officer presenting to pupils



7.7 APPENDIX 7

TITLE: Youth Engagement Survey on open space in Aberdeenshire settlements

NPF 4			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Places	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Liveable Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Productive Places	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Place and Wellbeing Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate change and natural crisis	<input type="checkbox"/> Design, quality and place	<input type="checkbox"/> Community Wealth Building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Movement
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate mitigate and adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods	<input type="checkbox"/> Business and industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Spaces
<input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality homes	<input type="checkbox"/> City, town, local and commercial centres	<input type="checkbox"/> Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural homes	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Civic
<input type="checkbox"/> Soils	<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure first	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural development	<input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship
<input type="checkbox"/> Forestry, woodland and trees	<input type="checkbox"/> Heat and cooling	<input type="checkbox"/> Tourism	
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic assets and places	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue and green infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Culture and creativity	
<input type="checkbox"/> Green belts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Play, recreation and sport	<input type="checkbox"/> Aquaculture	
<input type="checkbox"/> Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings	<input type="checkbox"/> Flood risk and water management	<input type="checkbox"/> Minerals	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coast development	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety		
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Infrastructure		
<input type="checkbox"/> Zero waste			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable transport			

7.8 APPENDIX 8

NPIF GOOD PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Which attributes of a high performing Planning Authority does this relate to:

	Attribute	Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	This Planning Authority has sound governance
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	This Planning Authority has effective leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	This Planning Authority has good customer care
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
<input type="checkbox"/>	11	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development



7.8 APPENDIX 8

TITLE: Local Place Plans (LPPs)

	Description / Outcome
Context	Local Place Plans (LPPs) were introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 to encourage communities to be more active participants in shaping their “Place” for their future. To improve people’s engagement and involvement in the planning system. To offer communities a way to proactively feed into the local development plan at an early opportunity. Local Authorities had to develop additional guidance notes, presentations, and processes to support the introduction of LPPs. LPPs being a new community led plan, needed to be launched to all Communities across Aberdeenshire, we formally invited Communities to develop a LPP in May 2023.
What happened?	<p>1. Preparation – Develop a webpage, to host informational materials; a quick reference guide, an enquiry support form, how to prepare a LPP, a checklist of what must be submitted, links to external supporting documents, links to similar style plans and contact details for further information. Developing timescales to coincide with the Local Development Plan. These actions were carried out internally by colleagues between August 2022 – December 2022. Preparing Local Place Plans - Aberdeenshire Council</p> <p>2. Engagement – Identify key stakeholders, host meetings, workshops, listened to initial concerns and develop subsequent supporting documents. After our initial workshops, communities feedback the need for a funding stream to assist with engagement events and materials used to support these events. We worked with colleagues in Area Teams to develop a LPP Fund, awarding grants up to £500 to support engagement events. Most events took place from January 2023 – onwards.</p> <p>3. Education – We assisted communities in comprehending the aims and objections of a LPP through a number of methods; meetings, community council forums, telephone calls and emails. We also assisted colleagues in their understanding of a LPP and how these may align with their Service objectives and the underlining principle of Place. We also looked to develop our own understanding and attended external seminars to share ideas and listen to work being carried out in other Local Authorities. This part of the process started in May 2023 and is ongoing.</p> <p>4. Feedback – We actively listened to Communities and tried to incorporate their suggestions where possible. We tried to be clear on the process, timescales, and funding available. We provided updates to Councillors and colleagues and adjusted as required throughout the process.</p>
Areas of collaboration	Lead Officers – Planning Information and Delivery Team. Several stakeholders have been involved in different stages throughout the process. Stage one the preparation stage, we worked with colleagues in Policy Team and local Area Teams. The Engagement stage focused on communities namely Community Councils and other groups. We had been approached by developers looking for further information. Education was the next stage, all above listed stakeholders were involved in this stage. We tried to engage with a broad audience. Feedback stage has mostly been from Communities and Planning colleagues. We have worked closely with Area Teams and our Community Planning colleagues, recognised the close links between LPPs and Community Action Plans. Area Teams within Aberdeenshire have established links with Communities and knowledge of existing concerns within settlements that communities may wish to include in a LPP.
What was the overall result?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Outputs – We have been contacted by 20 Community groups wishing to develop a LPP for their settlement. We have awarded funds to the value of £2,329.19 to six Community groups to assist with their engagement events to feed into their LPP. We have conducted 8 workshops across Aberdeenshire internally and externally, focusing on key objectives of developing a LPP. We currently have one draft LPP submitted, we have been asked for comments that will assist the group in their final LPP.



7.8 APPENDIX 8

TITLE: Local Place Plans (LPPs)











































	Description / Outcome
What was the overall result?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Outcomes- We have engaged with many Communities and hope to have improved relationships between Planning and Communities. Through various workshops we hope there is a greater understanding of the Local Development process, how communities can feed into this process and the role they can play in shaping in their place. It is envisaged that once a LPP is submitted and registered, local authorities may be able to offer support to assist communities in taking forward specific projects from their LPP and this will hopefully contribute in a positive way to the development and health of a settlement.
Lessons Learned	<p>Successes: We have engaged with many communities and established working relationships moving forward. We have collaborative links with other local authorities, sharing knowledge, experiences and expertise. We secured a small joint funding pot, by working closely with Area Team colleagues, this allowed us to award funding to support groups with their initial engagement. We have been approached by a developer looking to work positively with a Community Council to develop a LPP.</p>
	<p>Challenges: Communities feeling overwhelmed with volume of information and lack of expertise to be able to develop their LPP. Concerns have been around lack of volunteers, ability to engage effectively with the wider community and expertise with regards to mapping. Lack of substantial funding to allow communities to reach out to external agencies, for them to develop their LPP. Resulting in those communities that have access to funding able to progress. Concerns from colleagues regarding integration into the Local Development Plan. Challenges regarding raising communities’ expectations and unable to deliver proposals within their LPPs. Timescales and having sufficient time for best integration into the Local Development Plan.</p>
	<p>Lessons Learned: Communities need reassurances and clear guidance and processes. Access to more resources to work closer with community groups on a more one to one basis, to assist with mapping or how best to carry out engagement. Could have experts able to assist a variety of community groups. Access to additional funding for the development of a LPP.</p>



Image 15 - Local Place Plans - Project Logo

7.8 APPENDIX 8

TITLE: Local Place Plans (LPPs)

NPF 4			
 Sustainable Places	 Liveable Places	 Productive Places	 Place and Wellbeing Outcomes
 Climate change and natural crisis	 Design, quality and place	 Community Wealth Building	 Movement
 Climate mitigate and adaptation	 Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods	 Business and industry	 Spaces
 Biodiversity	 Quality homes	 City, town, local and commercial centres	 Resources
 Natural Places	 Rural homes	 Retail	 Civic
 Soils	 Infrastructure first	 Rural development	 Stewardship
 Forestry, woodland and trees	 Heat and cooling	 Tourism	
 Historic assets and places	 Blue and green infrastructure	 Culture and creativity	
 Green belts	 Play, recreation and sport	 Aquaculture	
 Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings	 Flood risk and water management	 Minerals	
 Coast development	 Health and safety		
 Energy	 Digital Infrastructure		
 Zero waste			
 Sustainable transport			



7.9 APPENDIX 9

NPIF GOOD PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Which attributes of a high performing Planning Authority does this relate to:

	Attribute	Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	3	This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	This Planning Authority has sound governance
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	This Planning Authority has effective leadership
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
<input type="checkbox"/>	7	This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
<input type="checkbox"/>	8	This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
<input type="checkbox"/>	9	This Planning Authority has good customer care
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	10	This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	11	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
<input type="checkbox"/>	12	This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development



7.9 APPENDIX 9

TITLE: GrowBanff@TheVinery

Description / Outcome	
Context	The Vinery was a derelict Category B listed building, constructed in 1872. The Vinery (greenhouse) and associated bothy, thought to be gardener's accommodation and potting sheds, sat within the former flower garden (known as Airlie Gardens today) of Duff House. In 1906/7 the gardens as well as Duff House and much of the surrounding estate was gifted to the Burgh Councils of Banff and Macduff for recreational purposes and the land became Common Good with the Vinery, bothy and turret being all that remain of the extensive greenhouses. Today, Airlie Gardens is prominently situated within the town of Banff and is a gateway site to the town centre and is within the Banff Conservation Area. The site is highly visible, located beside the A98, a key coastal route which passes through Banff as part of the NE250. The garden area has been maintained and open to the public, however the Vinery became derelict approximately 25 years ago. First impressions of the derelict site reflected poorly on the town. A Banff Locality Planning exercise identified that 75% of people felt the condition and deterioration of buildings was a negative characteristic. The building had been on the Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland (BARR) for several years and was beginning to fall victim to break ins and vandalism, while the structure continued to deteriorate. Intervention was needed to contribute to the transformation of the townscape and increase community pride.
What happened?	The GrowBanff@TheVinery project was developed in response to the decline in the physical appearance of the Vinery coupled with the identified social regeneration needs of the town. A tripartite approach was adopted to maximise the potential of the derelict building. A community willing to see change and a third sector partner able to realise the community's vision, Aberdeenshire Council worked in partnership with the community and the Scottish Government to transform the site into a flagship, garden gateway to Banff. Through funding received from the Scottish Government and Aberdeenshire Council, a full restoration of the Vinery, including the bothy and turret were carried out between 2021 and 2022, to provide a site which would improve health and wellbeing, increase skills, and reduce social isolation. This has seen the greenhouse brought back into its original use for growing, the bothy used to promote cooking skills and to host community groups, while the turret is being used as a garden store. The garden is being planted with vegetables and flowers to provide produce to assist in these activities.
Areas of collaboration	Building on the joint success of the Banff Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme and the Bridge Street Public Realm Improvement Scheme, the restoration of the Vinery was initiated, led and managed by a project delivery team of planners and officers in the Planning and Economy Service (Historic Environment Team and Regeneration & Town Centres), working with colleagues across Aberdeenshire Council (Business and Industry Team; Landscape Services; Property; Legal; Banff and Buchan Area Office; Employability Support Team; Community Learning and Development and; Community Payback Team) and external consultants and contractors (GD Lodge Architects, Ken Barbour Builders). However, to embed true engagement a Community Reference Group was also established, consisting of local groups and agencies (Banff & Macduff Men's Shed; Deveron FM; VisitAberdeenshire; Hanover Housing; Airlie Gardens Residents Association; Friends of Duff House; Rotary Club of Banff and Historic Environment Scotland). The group were fundamental to the project delivery process, tasked with assisting in selecting an operator and acting as a conduit between the Council and the community.



7.9 APPENDIX 9

TITLE: GrowBanff@TheVinery

Description / Outcome	
What was the overall result?	GrowBanff@TheVinery meets a need for social regeneration identified in the Banff Vision and Action Plan which is part of Aberdeenshire Council's Regeneration Strategy. The following project aims to address issues such as, targeting barriers to employment and poverty; improving health and wellbeing; improving quality of place; improving social capital and boosting the economy. An open call identified an operator who could deliver the above aims. Aberdeen Foyer, a charity based in the north-east of Scotland, provide opportunities for young people and adults affected by poor mental health, low skills or unemployment. Within just 8 months of opening, Foyer were able to report that 11 jobs had been created, 8 of those who were long-term unemployed; 78 people were supported through skills programmes; 57 volunteers took part in activities such as gardening and cooking, 504 people participated in wellbeing activities, 15 community groups used the space weekly and facilitated opportunities for advice/signposting to 352 people on topics including accessing food, money advice and energy efficiency. As well as the social outcomes, the project has brought a derelict building back into use for the benefit of the community. During the construction phase, the work being carried out by Aberdeenshire Council staff was recognised by a motion made by local MSP Karen Adam in the Scottish Parliament, noting the good work of the team in the restoration of The Vinery. Since its completion in 2022 the Vinery won The Ian Shepherd Award in the Aberdeenshire Architectural and Landscape Design Awards 2023, presented to the overall winner of the scheme. It was also shortlisted for Best Project Scotland in RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence 2023 and was a finalist in the Excellence in Planning for Heritage and Culture RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2023.
Lessons Learned	Successes: Project involved considerable community involvement which shaped the end use of the project based on the requirements of the town, resulting in a very positive and well received addition to Banff. Beginning in 2018 with a two-stage process which attracted 500 responses, using online surveys and face-to-face sessions including visits to the neighbouring sheltered housing residents. In stage two the most popular suggestions for the buildings use were put back out to the community for them to select their preferred use. Strong communication with the community ensured that there was continued enthusiasm for the project whilst construction was underway. A community reference group was established in July 2019 with representatives from a variety of local groups, ensuring the project was reflective of local needs. A community event was held in October 2019 which showcased the core project's themes of health and wellbeing. The Architect took his plans and visualisations for the building to the neighbouring sheltered housing accommodation, speaking with residents and discussing what was proposed for the building and the wider site. A Facebook page was created, and a quarterly newsletter distributed to site neighbours and other stakeholders to provide regular updates on the restoration of the building as well as the operator and their plans for the site.
	Challenges: There is a skills shortage in the northeast of Scotland with a lack of skilled contractors and conservation accredited architects, resulting in a lack of tender responses. Covid-19 delayed the project starting by a year resulted in the knock-on effects of other aspects of the project. Restrictions on the number of contractors on site such and illnesses resulted in the construction phase taking longer than planned. The project was also impacted by the cost of construction and materials rising during this time resulting in a budget shortfall. This was mitigated by the overall scheme being revised and removing elements of the site proposal. Developing a derelict building with no future use or a group to run it required an innovative approach as we could not follow the council's standard community asset transfer process as there was no group. Covid-19 saw the withdrawal of the original operator, resulting in the need for the team to establish connections with a new operator for the site.



7.9 APPENDIX 9

TITLE: GrowBanff@TheVinery

NPF 4			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Liveable Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Productive Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Place and Wellbeing Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate change and natural crisis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Design, quality and place	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Wealth Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Movement
<input type="checkbox"/> Climate mitigate and adaptation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods	<input type="checkbox"/> Business and industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spaces
<input type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality homes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> City, town, local and commercial centres	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resources
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural Places	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural homes	<input type="checkbox"/> Retail	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Civic
<input type="checkbox"/> Soils	<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure first	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural development	<input type="checkbox"/> Stewardship
<input type="checkbox"/> Forestry, woodland and trees	<input type="checkbox"/> Heat and cooling	<input type="checkbox"/> Tourism	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic assets and places	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue and green infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/> Culture and creativity	
<input type="checkbox"/> Green belts	<input type="checkbox"/> Play, recreation and sport	<input type="checkbox"/> Aquaculture	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings	<input type="checkbox"/> Flood risk and water management	<input type="checkbox"/> Minerals	
<input type="checkbox"/> Coast development	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and safety		
<input type="checkbox"/> Energy	<input type="checkbox"/> Digital Infrastructure		
<input type="checkbox"/> Zero waste			
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainable transport			



Clockwise from bottom left:
Image 16a - The Vinery - completed works exterior
Image 16b - The Vinery - completed works interior
Image 16c - The Bothy - completed works exterior



