

National Planning Improvement Framework

2023 - 2024



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Introduction

Dumfries and Galloway is located in the south-west of Scotland and is the third largest of the 32 local authorities in Scotland by geographical area, covering approximately 6,426 square kilometres, and has a coastline of approximately 350 kilometres.

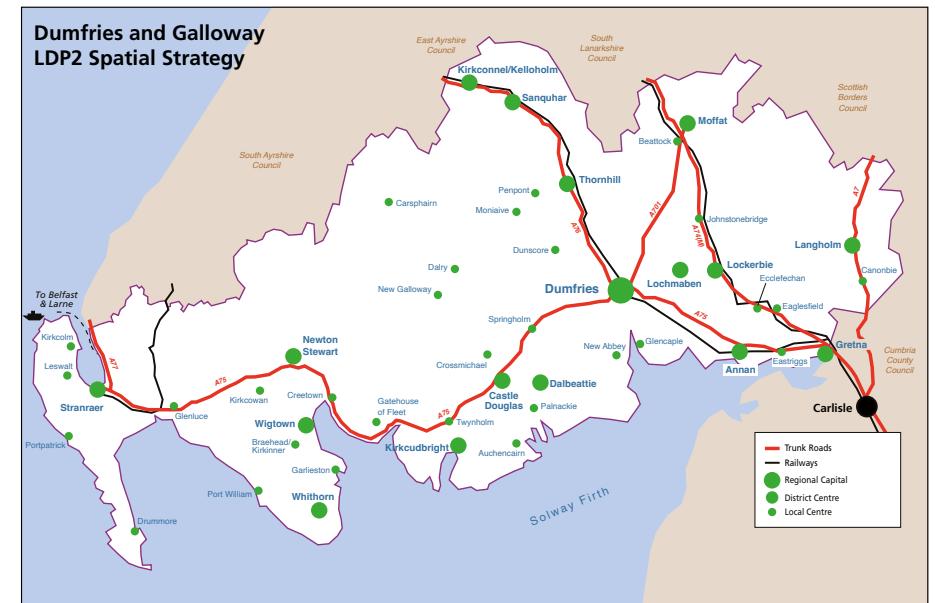
The topography includes uplands and river valleys which have influenced the location of settlements, transport routes, forestry, agriculture and economic and energy generation activity. The region also hosts important habitats and biodiversity and a range of outdoor activities.

The majority of the region's population is concentrated in small towns and villages with large but sparsely populated rural areas. There are only three settlements in the region with a population over 5,000 – Annan, Dumfries, and Stranraer.

The population of the region in 2022 is estimated to have been 145,900, a decrease of 3.6% from 151,324 in 2011. This accounts for 2.7% of the total population of Scotland.

The region has a low population density estimated at 22.7 residents per square kilometre compared to a Scotland average of 69.8 residents per square kilometre.

In Dumfries and Galloway, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over is 27.1%, which is the second highest ratio of the council areas in Scotland. There has been a steady decline in the under 16 age group. In the last two years, there have been over 1,000 more deaths each year than births.



Council Plan on a Page



VISION: Our ambition is to be a **successful region**, with a **growing economy**, based on **fairness, opportunity** and **quality public services**, where all citizens prosper. Working in partnership, with **connected, healthy** and **sustainable communities**.

The region will be **the natural place to live, work, visit and invest**.

Principles

Safeguard our future

- Address the climate emergency
- Protect our natural capital

Support our citizens

- Put customers at the heart of services
- Support the most vulnerable and in need
- Address inequalities
- Offer digital services

Support our communities

- Empowering communities and individuals
- Work in partnership
- Focus on local and place
- Invest to enable change

Be a responsive Council

- Communicate openly
- Maintain high standards
- Maintain sustainable finances
- Make best use of resources
- Be organised to deliver

Themes and Strategic Outcomes

Economy

- There is a diversified and growing local economy that benefits all
- Our workforce and their skills base are growing
- Rural communities and places are vibrant and thriving
- Enhancing the region's natural capital benefits local communities and businesses
- Businesses are supported to start and grow
- Investment in the region benefits communities and the local economy

Travel, Connectivity and Infrastructure

- Roads, paths, cycling and walking networks in the region are improved
- Communities are protected from the impact of floods
- Sustainable travel in the region contributes to net zero²
- The Council is a low carbon organisation
- People have access to services that are modern, efficient and responsive
- Digital connectivity supports thriving rural communities

Education and learning

- Places of learning are inclusive, sustainable and meet the needs of local communities
- We get it right for every child
- Children, young people and adults transition successfully through all life stages
- Young people and adults succeed in what they want to achieve
- Participation in creativity and play is part of early and lifelong learning experiences
- Local people can build their skills and confidence

Health and Wellbeing

- Prevention and early intervention assist people to have independent lives
- Access to personal support and care helps keep people safe
- People are active, resilient and improving their health and wellbeing
- Help is provided to tackle the causes and effects of poverty, inequality and increased cost of living
- People have access to high quality, affordable housing that supports their independence, prosperity and wellbeing

Context

The Planning (Scotland) Action 2019 introduced new statutory reporting for planning authorities.

This mandatory requirement means that we must prepare a report annually that will assess our performance and identify actions for improvement.

Dumfries and Galloway Council is part of Cohort 3 for the pilot led by the Improvement Service to create a National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF). The Planning Service has undertaken a performance assessment and has identified areas for improvement focused on the attributes of a high performing planning authority.

Within these five themes there are 12 attributes.

Theme: People

1. Has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity.
2. Has a valued and supported workforce.

Theme: Culture

3. Has embedded continuous improvement.
4. Has sound governance.
5. Has effective leadership.

Theme: Tools

6. Has robust policy and evidence base.
7. Makes best use of digital technology.
8. Has effective decision-making processes.

Theme: Engage

9. Has good customer care.
10. Has effective engagement & collaboration with stakeholders and communities.

Theme: Place

11. Supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places.
12. Supports the delivery of consented development.

Scoring Matrix

A scoring matrix (appendix 1) has been used to determine the self-assessment score for each attribute.



Peer Review Meeting

A Peer Review Meeting took place with key customers of the Planning Service in Dumfries on Wednesday 9 April 2025.

Customers both internal and external to the service were invited to attend. The representatives were:

- **1 Community Council**
- **2 Architects/Developers**
- **3 Key Agencies/Consultees**
- **3 Representatives from our Partner Council**

Also in attendance were 4 members of Dumfries and Galloway Council Planning Service staff who were there to introduce each of the themes and observe the discussion taking place.

The National Improvement Champion was also in attendance. The group was facilitated by Nick Wright from Nick Wright Planning Consultancy who helped guide the group through the improvement attributes and actions as well as ensuring everyone had an open and honest discussion about actions and any issues.

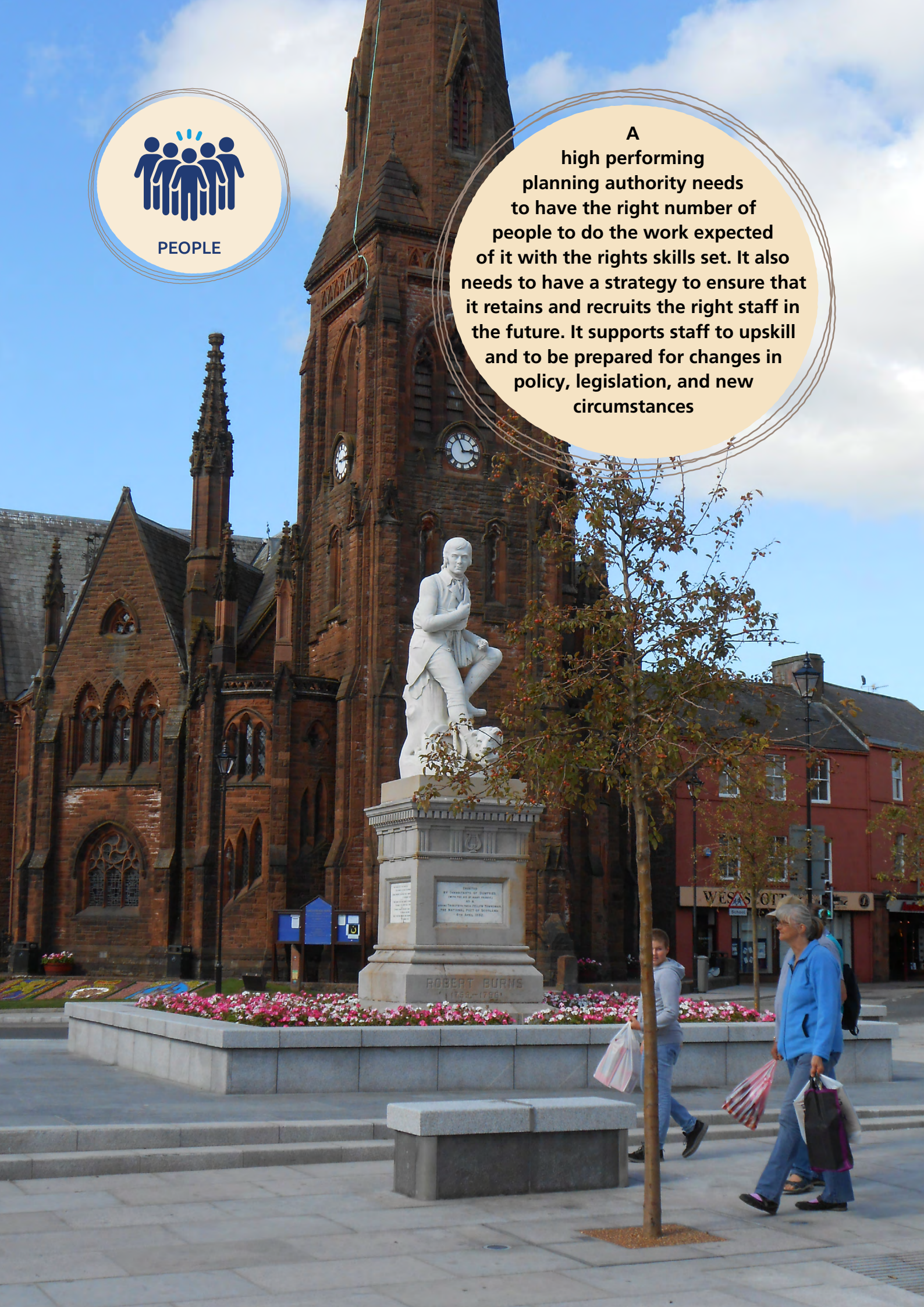
The purpose of the peer review was to look at the report and to review the scoring of attributes and identified improvement actions. The draft of the Improvement Framework was shared with the peer review participants prior to the meeting. The comments made by the peer review group have been incorporated into the final version of this report.





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



ATTRIBUTE 1: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SUFFICIENT RESOURCES AND SKILLS TO MAXIMISE PRODUCTIVITY

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?

Staffing and Structure

In 2023/24, our planning service teams sat within the Council's Economy and Infrastructure Directorate, our Chief Planning Officer was the Head of Economy and Environment Service.

The Head of Economy and Environment had one Service Manager (Planning and Development Manager) to fulfil the duties of the planning authority. They were supported by four Team Leaders:

- **Team Leader (Planning Applications)**
- **Team Leader (Major Developments)**
- **Team Leader (Development Planning)**
- **Team Leader (Systems and Performance)**

At the end of the reporting period (31 March 2024) the Planning Service had 29 permanent members of staff both full and part-time posts. 12 were Chartered Town Planners. The average age of the workforce was 47.



RTPI Qualified Staff	Headcount
Head of Service (Chief Planning Officer)	1
Service Manager	1
Development Management	6
Development Planning	4
Licentiate	1
Other (Including staff no RTPI eligible)	17

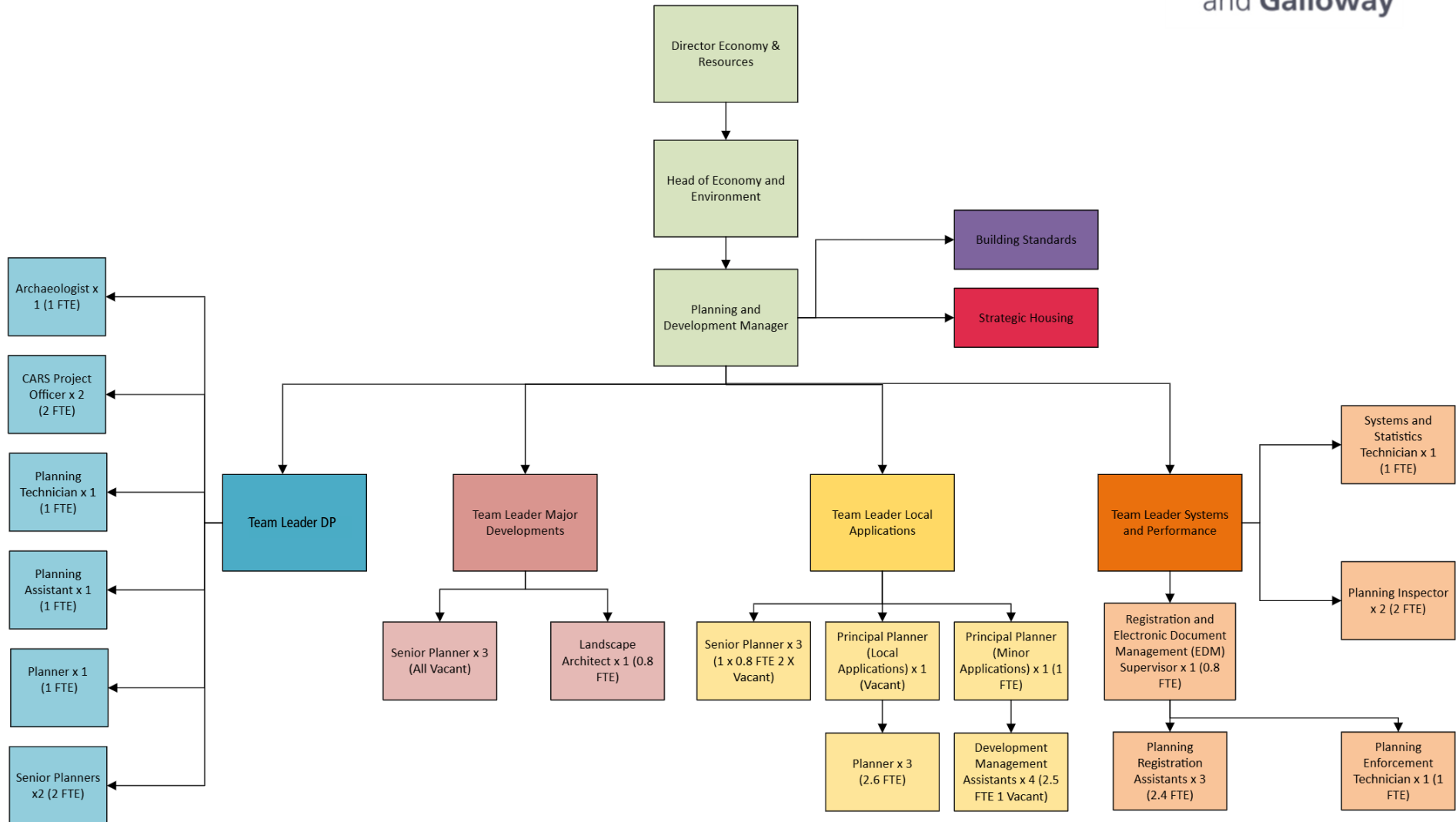
Stage Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	1
30-39	3
40-49	13
50 and over	13

Planning Service	Staff Total	FTEs	Vacancies
Head of Service (Chief Planning Officer)	1	1	0
Service Manager	1	1	0
Team Leaders	4	4	0
Principal Planners (DM)	2	2	1
Senior Planner (DM)	6	1.8	4
Senior Planner (LDP)	2	2	0
Planner (DM)	3	2.6	0
Planner (LDP)	1	1	0
Development Management Assistant (DM)	4	3.5	1
Planning Inspectors	2	2	0
Planning Assistant (LDP)	1	1	0
Technician	6	5.4	0
Registration Supervisor	1	0.8	0
Archaeologist	1	1	0
CARS Officer	2	2	1



Planning Structure

as at 31 March 2024



Development Management Team

An independent review of the development management staff structure was undertaken in 2022. The review identified that the current staff structure was not considered to be sustainable or resilient and it must be better resourced and aligned. Key gaps in the structure were identified.

In the period 2023/24, the teams were restructured to include a Team Leader (Major Developments), a Team Leader (Planning Applications) and a Team Leader (Systems and Performance). A Principal Planner (Minor Applications) post was created within the Planning Applications Team to support the Team Leader. Team Leader posts were advertised and recruited in the period 2023/24. The Principal Planner (Minor Applications) was recruited in November 2023. A Principal Planner (Local Applications) is planned to be progressed in 2024/25.

In the period 2023/24, we experienced a loss of experienced planners due to retirement or alternative job opportunities.

To bridge the capacity shortfall until permanent staff could be recruited, seven contractors were employed either via a recruitment agency or within an agreement with a national planning consultancy to fulfil the of posts: 3 Senior Planners; 4 Planners and 1 Development Management Assistant.

At the end of March 2024, six contractors remained in place to support the development management service.

The Development Management Review recognised the pressure on the Enforcement Team with the service having one Planning Inspector and a recently created Enforcement Technician post to cover the whole region. An additional Planning Inspector post was successfully recruited to in December 2023.

The Review also recognised the pressures on the Planning Registration Team due to the increased number of applications being submitted. In 2023, an additional full-time Planning Registration Assistant post was

created to support the two existing part-time Planning Registration Assistants. The post was recruited to in October 2023.

In December 2023, we recruited a Systems and Statistics Technician. Prior to this, the development of the Idox system and developing management performance tools was carried out by officers alongside their normal duties. It was recognised in the Development Management Review that additional resources should be focused on the development of our existing systems and in particular, providing best performance monitoring systems.

The combination of the loss of experienced planners, the increase in application numbers, and difficulties recruiting to permanent posts saw significant challenges for the development management service during 2023/24. The challenges led to an impact on service delivery and customer service during this period, and whilst we responded to the challenges with permanent recruitment to some posts and the use of external contractors for unfilled vacancies, positive impacts were not immediate, and this is evidenced by the performance statistics for this period. However, a recruitment program is planned for 2024/25 with a recruitment pack created to show case the region of Dumfries and Galloway which is hoped to attract potential candidates. We are also exploring how we can attract local people to stay in the area through a "grow our own" strategy.

Development Planning Team

The Development Planning Team has seen a significant reduction in the number of posts in recent years including the loss of specialist heritage, biodiversity and landscape officers. In 2023/24, the team comprised the DP Team Leader, two Senior Planners, one Planner and one Planning Assistant. The team is supported by a Planning Technician. The team also included an Archaeologist and two Conservation Area Regeneration Officers for Stranraer and Dumfries respectively. The team is at the start

of the process for Local Development Plan (LDP3) and is currently within the timescales set out in the published Development Plan Scheme. However, we acknowledge that as the LDP3 process continues, alongside the increasing demands for Local Place Plans (LPP), and additional requirements introduced by the 2019 Planning (Scotland) Act, there is a high risk of delays to the LDP3 timetable going forward.

Budget and Income

The service does face budget pressures mitigating against unfunded duties placed on the service by Scottish Government, the preparation of LDP3, LPP and the development of digital systems.

Planning application fee income for 2023/24 was £1,535,836.

The Pre-application Enquiry service is split into three application types: permitted development enquiries; Householder and Local Enquiries; and Major and Complex Enquiries. All three types of pre-applications saw a decrease in submissions in 2023/24 from the previous year. A fee increase is proposed in 2024/25 in line with inflation and a review of the pre-application services has been identified in the workplan to ensure the service still delivers for users of the service.

The service continues to charge for discharge of condition and non-material variation applications. Both saw an increase in number in the period 2023/24.

Non-Statutory Income for 2023/24 was £62,213.

Consultations and Expert Advice

With the increasing complexity of work involved in addressing the policy context of NPF4, in determining planning applications or preparing LDP3, there is a greater input of specialist advice required and input from both internal and external consultees.

Obtaining timely internal consultation responses in areas such as Roads, Environmental Health, Flood Risk has been challenging. This reflects the staffing pressures faced across the Council. In 2022, we undertook process mapping of the planning assessment process. This started a conversation with our internal colleagues to seek ways to reduce the length of consultation response times. This has led to improved communication between departments, highlighting priority applications at the earliest opportunity, the use of digital systems to track workloads and application responses. In 2024/25, Environment Health and Trading Standards will be utilising the relevant Uniform modules which are hoped to increase joined up working. Planning consultations from both internal and external consultees in the last year have been more timeous. In the period 2023/24, we started to record within Uniform when consultations were received so we can monitor response times accurately.

A project board was established to oversee the development of LDP3, the first stage being the preparation of an Evidence Report. The purpose of the board is to provide strategic guidance and support to the team preparing LDP3, share information and work in a joint, collaborative manner in line with the place principle and sign off key stages. Membership of the board comprises officers from a range of council services including economic development, strategic housing which includes a gypsy / traveller officer, flood risk management, waste management, environment and sustainability, education, roads and transportation including SWestrans, community assets, skills and employability, children and young people, community engagement, community planning and corporate policy. Officers from South of Scotland Enterprise, the Health Board and Integrated Joint Board and a representative from the key agencies group also attended.

In 2024/25, we are closely monitoring the impacts of the requirements introduced by the Planning Act on the Development Planning team and the timetable for LDP3.

Summary of Attribute 1

The period 2023/24 was a challenging year for the Planning Service. As a result of the independent development management review carried out, we have identified the need for a change in the structure of the service to deliver timely decisions and improved customer service.

Whilst there is budget pressures, a sufficient budget was allocated in 2023/24 to deliver the required service.

The loss of numerous experienced staff within a short period of time had a significant impact on service delivery and this will continue to be seen in the period 2024/25 as we recover from this period and the backlogs created.

The service will continue to deliver on the recommendations of the development management review in the period 2024/25 and address the staffing shortages with the use of contractors. Whilst this is not considered financially sustainable in the long term, it will provide an opportunity for recruitment in 2024/25 of permanent members of staff. The permanent recruitment undertaken in 2023/24 has made a tangible difference in relation to planning registration and planning enforcement.



ATTRIBUTE 2: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A VALUED AND SUPPORTED WORKFORCE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?



Workforce strategy

As part of the Development Management Review, succession planning across the whole of the planning service has been identified as an improvement area. The aspiration is to identify service requirements for future years with a view to ensuring the service can function effectively going forward. The workforce demographic has changed, with older staff leaving the service. This has provided an opportunity to review the staff structure and the opportunity to develop existing junior staff who currently do not have a planning qualification or eligibility to join the RTPI. We have been successful in previous years in supporting staff through their Masters qualification in Planning. In 2024/25 it is planned for staff to enrolled on the Scottish Governments BSc (Hons) Town Planning course.

The Development Planning team employed a summer placement student for a 12-week period. They undertook important on-site monitoring tasks related to the preparation of a play sufficiency assessment and town centre health checks. The placement is planned to be undertaken again in 2024/25.

All staff are offered an employee exit questionnaire and a meeting with their line manager to discuss the reasoning for them leaving. It is not compulsory and there is a low uptake within the Planning Service.

Staff Development

The service is supportive of staff development and training and the importance of improving the skills of existing staff.

Staff are encouraged to attend RTPI / CPD events where they are available. Due to our location, attending external events can be difficult because of the travel in time for events. The region has a RTPI Chapter who have organised several events. However, with the pressures faced by the teams in 2023/24, opportunities for staff development internally

have been limited; this is recognised as an area for improvement. Several internal CPD events have been planned in 2024/25 which is intended to be start of a rolling program of internal CPD events.

Staff Health and Wellbeing

The Council is committed to supporting the wellbeing of staff and maintaining healthy, happy and productive teams to deliver vital services to our communities. Staff receive regular well-being bulletins which provide a variety of information and advice. The Council has established Wellbeing Champions who are trained in Mental Health First Aid and SafeTalk. They are available to all staff who may wish to seek support.

Engaging with Staff

Staff from Development Management were engaged in the Development Management Review process and were provided with the opportunity to make comments / ideas about the Planning Service. The comments were outlined within the report and suggestions made by staff were included in the recommendations of the review. Due to staff leaving and the use of contractors with Development Management, a further staff survey for 2023/24 was postponed. A staff survey for both Development Management and Development Planning staff is planned once the recruitment process has been completed within Development Management.

Summary of Attribute 2

It is recognised that due to the challenges faced in 2023/24, this has had a significant and direct impact on staff.

In the period 2024/25, we will continue to review the resilience of the staffing structure to ensure it is robust.

We will ensure opportunities for existing staff to develop are made.



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	4
2. The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce	4

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

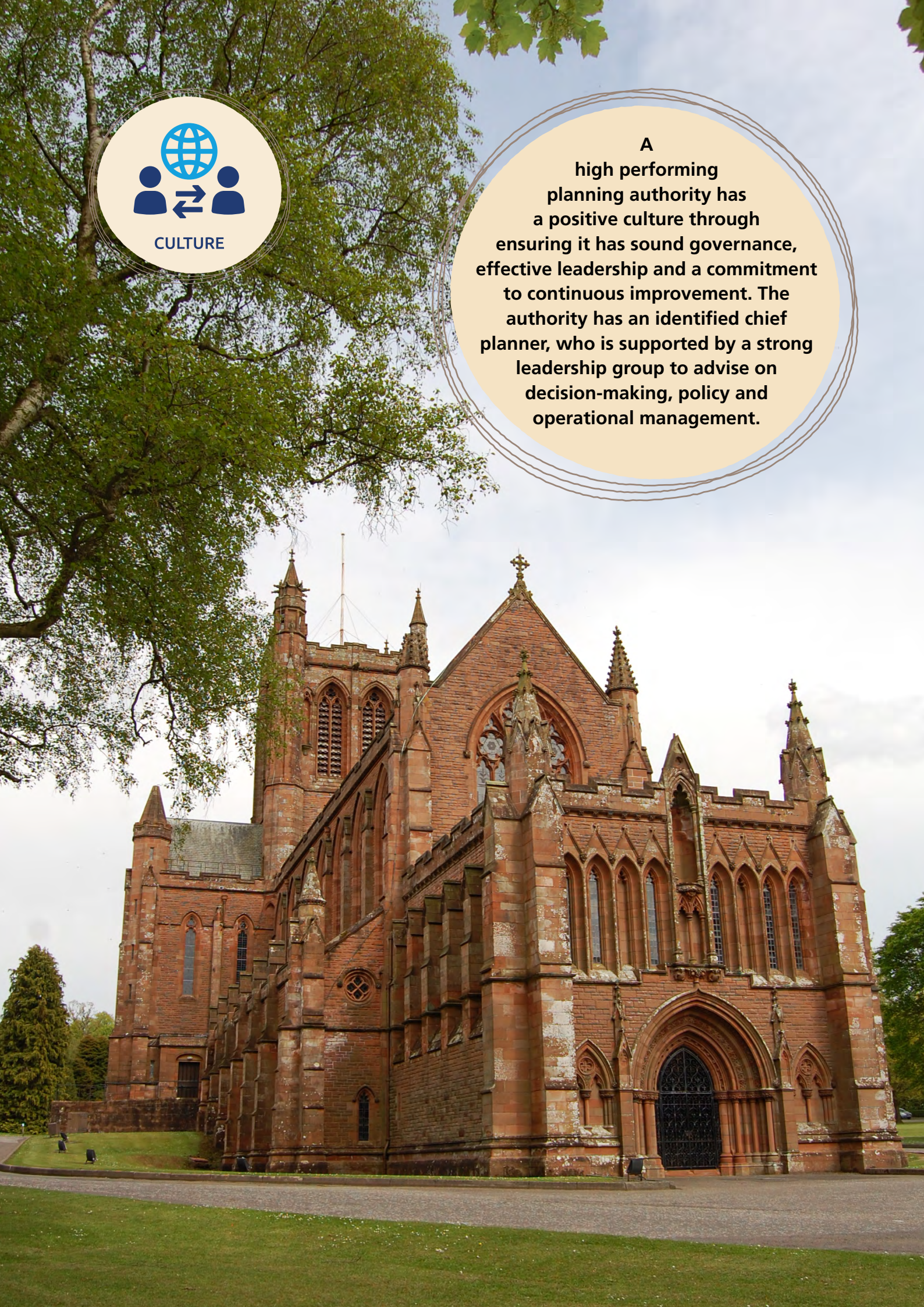
Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
		High	Short term – 1 year	
		Medium	Medium term – 3 years	
		Low	Long term – 3+ years	
Attribute 1: Continue with a recruitment programme to fill remaining vacancies of the new structure in conjunction with minimising the use of agency staff. Continue to Review how to deploy them most effectively.	Planning and Development Manager	High	Short Term	Planning and Development Manager/HR/Scottish Government/DGC Strategic Leadership Team
Attribute 1: Creation of a project board for LDP3.	Team Leader (Development Planning)	High	Short Term	LDP Team
Attribute 2: Continue with workforce planning to create opportunities for staff development to prepare for future challenges.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders
Attribute 2: Undertake an annual staff surveys to seek the ideas and challenges faced by staff.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
		High	Short term – 1 year	
		Medium	Medium term – 3 years	
		Low	Long term – 3+ years	
Attribute 2: Develop work experience and education opportunities with external partners such as architects, developers, universities, SoSE and Community Councils.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders/ External parties
Attribute 2: Undertake internal CPD events and opportunities for staff to meet as a wider team.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Team Leaders
Attribute 2: Continue to work with technical consultees to ensure timeous and constructive consultations responses. Review enhancement in mentoring and training of all staff.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Team Leaders/Consultees



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.



ATTRIBUTE 3: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EMBEDDED CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?



Continuous Improvement

Self-reflection is recognised by the planning authority as being important to improve service delivery. The independent review of the development management service and the workplan which continues to be implemented was the start of the process of self-reflection.

In the period 2023/24, we achieved the following;

- A review of the application validation process;
- A review of the planning enforcement process;
- The digitalisation of all paper planning applications;
- A review of planning guidance available on the website;

A working group of staff from development management met monthly during the reporting period of 2023/24 to discuss and implement changes to the development management service. In 2024/25, this is intended to be expanded to include the Development Planning team as a single, joined-up approach across the service.

The Planning Performance Framework has been a reference point for service improvements in previous years, and it is considered that the NPIF will continue to be an important tool in continuous improvement within the service.

2023/24 has seen significant challenges to application processing times and customer service. In 2024/25, it is planned to review the tools available to monitor and improve performance within the development management team, this includes the use of Power Bi as a reporting tool. This coming year will also provide the opportunity to review how the Development Management and Development Planning teams work more collaboratively to share data which will support the housing land audit, LPD3 and the application of planning policy.

Assessment of Performance

The Service is proactive in reporting back to Members through the Economy and Infrastructure Committee and via Pentana. We are actively responding to customer feedback, appeal decisions and learning from any complaints to improve the service.

In the Planning Performance Framework for 2022/23, we made three commitments for 2023/24, all which have been fulfilled.

Commitment 1: Review and update the planning pages of the Council's website to improve the customer journey/assist self service.

The planning pages and planning documents were updated during 2023.

Commitment 2 - Review and update all the Development Management Charters

The Development Management Charter was updated in April 2024.

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Commitment 3 - Implement the remaining items of the Development Management Review Action Plan

Monthly meetings are being held to review the action plan. 90% of the action points are now complete. The outstanding actions have been delayed until the new staff has become established, outstanding actions have been included in the action plan for the NPIF.

Award Recognition

Due to the pressures on the service during 2023/24, there has not been sufficient capacity to enter submissions into relevant external awards. With the available resources, focus was directed on delivering the Council's own Design Awards to recognise high quality schemes within the region.

The third Dumfries and Galloway Council Design Awards was held during 2023. Submissions for development or building works completed between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2023 were invited with a closing date of 15 June 2023. 35 entries covering a variety of residential and commercial projects, including re-use of existing buildings and new build, were received. Judging took place in July 2023 and the Awards ceremony took place on 18 September 2023.

Peer Review and Knowledge Sharing

The Planning Service regularly engage with other authorities through Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) where Dumfries and Galloway are represented on the Executive Committee (by the Service Manager) and on various subgroups. Representatives regularly attend HOPS to keep aware of good practice. Dumfries and Galloway use the HOPS Knowledge Hub to reach out to other authorities for advice or ideas on processes and in particular digital transformation.

Planning Inspectors regularly attend Scottish Planning Enforcement Forum (SPEF) meetings and are actively involved in planning enforcement discussed with colleagues from other Councils.

The Council's Archaeologist is a member of the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) and regularly attends their meetings.

The Planning Performance Framework process in previous years has allowed for peer review with another planning authority. This has continued with the NPIF and our partner East Renfrewshire Council.

Complaints

Complaints received are managed by a central corporate complaints team that receive, manage and allocate complaints to various services within Dumfries and Galloway Council. To ensure complaints are dealt with in a consistent and timely manner, corporate templates are used. The Council has an adopted Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP).

Feedback is provided to services via a quarterly report, it is considered this feedback could be strengthened within the service. In 2024/25, it is planned to create a dedicated SharePoint site when feedback from complaints can be readily available by staff and actions or learning points built upon. A Power Bi report to monitor complaints is also being reviewed.

Complaints received in 2023/24:	18
Complaints Upheld/Partially Upheld 2023/24:	7
Complaints referred to SPSO:	6

One complaint was upheld by the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman during 2023/24. This related to the erection of a detached domestic garage. The SPSO believed an assessment of the effect on the neighbours garden had not been fully undertaken.

Summary of Attribute 3

We are focused on continuing to progressing the actions with the development management review. We recognise the single approach required across the Planning Service and we are addressing this through the creation of a working group with includes representatives from Development Management and Development Planning teams.

We continue to learn from others and share our best practice to deliver continued change and improvement.



ATTRIBUTE 4: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SOUND GOVERNANCE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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 evidence of ongoing training for members?
- Have more than x% of officer recommendations have been overturned by councillors at committee or Local Review Body.

Scheme of Delegation

Dumfries and Galloway Council has an effective scheme of delegation which was last updated in November 2024.

The service considered that this strikes the correct balance to ensure that applications are determined at an appropriate level.

95.9% of applications are determined under delegated powers in 2023/24.

Elected Member Training

Statutory training is provided to all members of the Planning Application Committee and Local Review Body before they can actively participate in those committees. Seminars are undertaken with Members as and when they are required.

There are regular meetings between the Planning and Development Service Manager and the Principal Solicitor for Planning to ensure both services are kept up to date with planning developments and best practice. They both meet with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Planning Applications Committee prior to committee.

A committee agreement is planned to establish member/officer working groups which will be used to inform LDP3, if agreed this would complement member seminars which is open to all elected members. The service is also seeking to engage with all members on site and settlement work, that would take place at a ward level.

Local Review Body

The Local Review Body receives advice as required from an experienced planner not involved with the case and a representative from corporate services to ensure the decision-making process at the LRB is based on appropriate planning context and policy framework.

16 Local Reviews were determined in 2023/24.

43.8% of officer decisions have been upheld at the Local Review Body.

Summary of Attribute 4

We are making fair progress around sound governance.

We have an effective scheme of delegation in place with 95.9% of applications being determined under delegated powers.

We continue to review the need and frequency of member training to ensure sound decisions are being made.

ATTRIBUTE 5: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?

Chief Planning Officer

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) requires that each planning authority must appoint a Chief Planning Officer. The appointment and role of the Chief Planning Officer became a statutory requirement in April 2024. The person should hold chartered membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and should have the relevant skills and experience for the role of Chief Planning Officer including effective communication, stakeholder relationship management externally and throughout the authority, planning and delivery skills and leadership skills. The Chief Planning Officer guidance

indicates that the role is to help strengthen leadership on planning and corporate recognition of the importance and positive influence of planning within their authorities.

The Head of Economy and Environment, Steve Rogers, is the Chief Planning Officer for Dumfries and Galloway Council and is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

The Head of Economy and Environment is involved in a wide variety of groups with Dumfries and Galloway Council including:

- Council's Strategic Leadership Team
- Economy and Infrastructure Directorate Management Team
- Economy and Environment Service Management Team
- Climate Emergency Cross Party Working Group
- Strategic Economic Investment Oversight Group

As part of this role, they are involved in corporate decision-making and policy within Dumfries and Galloway Council.

- The Head of Economy and Environment is also part of the following external bodies:
- Annan Harbour Regeneration Project - Funders Meeting
- Stranraer Marina Expansion Project Board
- Chapelcross Programme Board
- South of Scotland – Officers Group
- Borderlands Partnership Board
- UKSPF Programme Panel
- Convention of the South of Scotland
- Regional Economic Partnership



Leadership team

The Chief Planning Officer meets regularly with the Planning and Development Manager to discuss corporate and service issues.

Due to the resource challenges that were faced by the planning service during the reporting period team meetings between the Service Manager and Team Leaders were limited. The Service Manager did meet informally with individual Team Leaders to discuss specific applications or projects, service improvement work and to progress improvement actions. How corporate information is cascaded through the service is being reviewed going forward.

A working group chaired by the Chief Planning Officer met regularly during the period 2023/24 to discuss and action points with the development management review and sought to process actions for continuous improvement.

In the period 2024/25 this group is intended to be expanded to include development planning.

Summary of Attribute 5

We are making fair progress with effective leadership. We have identified a Chief Planning Officer, Steve Rogers.

The challenges of 2023/24 have impacted on communication of the leadership team as efforts have been concentrated on delivering the service. This has been identified as an action for improvement.

The working group looking at service improvements continued to meet on a regular basis during the reporting period and this is intended to be continued.

Improvement Action Plan (Culture theme)

Attribute	Score
	(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
3. This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	3
4. This Planning Authority has sound governance	3
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
		High	Short term – 1 year	
		Medium	Medium term – 3 years	
		Low	Long term – 3+ years	
Attribute 3: As identified as an action in the DM Review, create a suite of Power Bi reports to monitor performance and workloads	Team Leader (Systems and Performance)	Medium	Long Term	Team Leader Systems and Performance/ Systems and Statistics Technician
Attribute 3: Organise future DGC Design Awards.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leader (DP)
Attribute 3: As identified as an action in the DM Review, create a SharePoint site to record planning complaints/comments which is accessible to all of the service.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
		High	Short term – 1 year	
		Medium	Medium term – 3 years	
		Low	Long term – 3+ years	
Attribute 3: Review the working relationship between development management and development plan teams to assist in the preparation of LDP3 and Housing Land Audit	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Medium Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders/Case Officers
Attribute 3: Submit for awards where appropriate	Planning and Development Manager	Low	Long Term	All Team
Attribute 3: As identified as an action in the DM Review, continue to review and update customer guidance on the website.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders
Attribute 4: Review the need and frequency of Member training and workshops for those attending PAC and LRB.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders
Attribute 4: Creation of officer/member working groups for LDP3.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Short Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leader (DP)
Attribute 5: As identified as an action in the DM Review. review how information is cascaded through the service.	Planning and Development Manager	High	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders



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**

ATTRIBUTE 6: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A ROBUST POLICY AND EVIDENCE BASE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?
- Has the application of the Local Development Plan's policies been found to be deficient at appeal or judicial review?

Local Development Plan

Dumfries and Galloway Council adopted its second Local Development Plan (LDP2) on 3 October 2019. The Development Plan Scheme (DPS) which is updated at least annually was last updated in March 2024. It sets out that LDP3 will be adopted in December 2027 ahead of the Government target of 2028. This target is subject to change and as acknowledged earlier, the increasing demands of Local Place Plans and the additional requirements introduced by the 2019 Planning (Scotland) Act mean there is a high risk of delays to the LDP3 timetable. The details are set out in the published DPS and at the moment work is progressing in line with the timescales set out in the DPS.

Regional Spatial Strategy

An indicative Regional Spatial Strategy for the South of Scotland was prepared in conjunction with Scottish Borders Council in April 2021. Both authorities will work together to update the Strategy once the Regulations and Guidance are in place. In the meantime, the Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy is being used to inform the Evidence Report.

Evidence Report

The Evidence Report for LDP3 is planned to be taken to Full Council on 12 December 2024 with the intention of sending the report and supporting information to the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division for the Gate Check process in January 2025. The Gate Check is the first stage in the plan preparation process and must be completed in order to be able to move to the next stage which is preparing the Proposed Plan.

Local Development Plan Policies

We are not aware of any policies which have been identified as being deficient at appeal and there have been no Judicial Reviews since the adoption of LDP2.

Summary of Attribute 6

The service is making fair progress and can demonstrate a robust policy and evidence base. Our current Local Development Plan was adopted on 3 October 2019.

We are currently on target to deliver LDP3 prior to the Scottish Government's deadline of 2028.

ATTRIBUTE 7: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY MAKES BEST USE OF DATA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?



E- development Portal

In 2023/24 96% of applications were received via the Scottish Government's eDevelopment portal. We are currently working on a project to integrate applications submitted via the Council's website into Uniform and the Document Management System automatically.

A planned corporate refresh of the Council's website is due in 2024/25 with the aim of making the website more customer friendly. The Planning Service will be actively engaging with this process.

Data Government Strategy

The Document Management System is hosted by Idox. We have an agreement with the third party provided regarding the storage of our planning data.

In 2023/24, we undertook a project to digitise all paper planning records, and this was completed in March 2024. All planning records are now in a digital format.

GIS and Spatial Data

Dumfries and Galloway Council has a very small GIS team consisting of two officers who support the whole of the Council. We have ambitions to use spatial data to a greater extent, in particular with relation to the Local Development Plan. We are currently working on a project to spatially display the Housing Land Audit in future years.

In 2024/25, we plan to introduce the function for customers to be able to search for site constraints spatially on the website. We are looking to expand the functionality of spatial data in 2025/26 to improve customer experience and availability of data on the website.

Digital approaches to engagement

The Development Management Review identified the need for investment in digital processes and systems. The Development Management service is fully digital. All information on planning applications is available on the Public Access Portal.

A planned project in 2024/25 is to encourage customers to self-serve and utilise the benefits of the newly designed corporate website to view information on the Planning Service and view applications.

In March 2024, we undertook our first annual customer survey, this was done using an electronic survey, which makes the process for the customer to complete and submit the survey much simpler. This will continue in future years.

A link to an online form is also provided at the end of every notice of planning permission for customers to submit a Notice of Initiation, Notice of Completion or customer feedback.

As part of the engagement work to inform the Evidence Report, an online survey using the Place Standard Tool is proposed. Engagement with local schools is intended to be carried out online. The Development Planning team will be working with the Council's communications team to ensure that digital approaches are used alongside more traditional methods to engage people in the preparation of LDP3.

The Development Planning team are also working with the GIS team to explore whether we can move the call for sites and ideas online and ask people to plot the sites they would like considered.



Summary of Attribute 7

We are making fair progress with the use of data and digital technology. We have a high rate of applications submitted via the eDevelopment Portal.

In 2024/25, we are seeking to use digital systems and spatial data to a greater degree in our processes and measuring of performance. We have an identified programme of works planned to achieve this.

ATTRIBUTE 8: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?



Decision-making timescales

Like many other authorities, the last few years have seen significant issues with the recruitment of staff.

The latest Scottish Government Statistics are available at **Planning Applications Statistics 2023/2024**

Due to the small number of major applications received each year, trends are difficult to predict. We currently have a team of 3 external consultant Senior Planners, which is considered sufficient to deal with the major and associated applications. The team also includes a Landscape Architect to provide specialist advice on renewable energy developments.

The greatest pressure has been with local applications which has seen a decrease in application determination times in 2023/24. This challenge is being addressed by numerous changes to the service proposed in 2024/25.

The average timescale for determining householder applications remains better than the Scottish Government average but has increased over the period.

With the recruitment of permanent full-time staff in the later months of 2024/25, along with the new structure it is considered a continuous improvement in determination timescales will be seen in 2025/26 and beyond.

Local reviews and appeals

16 Notices of review to the Local review Body were decided in 2023/24. 43.8% of officer decisions were upheld by the Local Review Body. 6 appeals were made to the DPEA. 50% of decisions were upheld.

There were no judicial review cases in 2023/24.

Enforcement

In accordance with the Planning (Scotland) Act, the planning authority is required to keep an up-to-date Planning Enforcement Charter which is updated every two years. The current Charter was published in September 2023. A review is due prior to September 2025.

Dumfries and Galloway Planning Enforcement Charter sets out how enforcement cases will be investigated. Complaints are triaged into priority categories and acknowledged within 10 working days of receipt.

Investigations and site visits are carried out with specified timeframes depending on the priority category they fall into.

In 2024, we introduced a decision report, which is a formal report sent to any third party who has reported an alleged breach of planning which sets out, the process which has been undertaken, the details of the investigation and the final decision of the planning authority.

The planning authority is committed to adhering to the timescales within the Planning Enforcement Charter in the face of year on year increases in the numbers of enquiries and alleged planning breaches being reported. Between 2020 and 2024, there has been a 130% increase in the number of emails the Planning Enforcement Team received per year. This has led to a 180% increase in the number of enforcement cases opened each year between 2020 and 2024.



Summary of Attribute 8

We are making fair progress with effective decision making. However, 2023/24 has been a challenging year and this is reflected in the decision-making timescales.

A series of planned improvements are proposed in 2024/25 for development management with the aim of improving planning application determination timescales and customer service.

We do have an up-to-date Enforcement Charter and have reviewed our enforcement processes to ensure we can deliver on the timescales within the Charter despite the increase in enforcement cases.

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	3
7. The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	4
8. The planning authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
		High	Short term – 1 year	
		Medium	Medium term – 3 years	
		Low	Long term – 3+ years	
Attribute 7: Continue to develop the use of digital technology to deliver the planning service, including the use of potential tools such as AI.	Team Leader (Systems and Performance)	High	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leader System and Performance/ Improvement Service
Attribute 7: Identify opportunities and new ways of working using GIS, to enable the Planning Service to be more efficient and effective.	Team Leader (Systems and Performance)	High	Long Term	Team Leaders/Improvement Service
Attribute 7: Work with colleagues within the Council's webteam to deliver updated website	Team Leader (Systems and Performance)	High	Short Term	Team Leaders/Web Team

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
		High	Short term – 1 year	
		Medium	Medium term – 3 years	
		Low	Long term – 3+ years	
Attribute 8: Undertake a review of the current pre application service in the light of ongoing Scottish Government national review.	Planning and Development Manager	High	Long term	Team Leader (Planning Applications), Architects/ Agents, Scottish Government
Attribute 8: Continue to monitor resourcing to achieve target timescales for adoption of LDP3.	Team Leader (Local Development Team)	High	Short Term	LDP Team
Attribute 8: Continue to work on the proposed LDP3 in accordance with emerging legislation and guidance.	Team Leader (Local Development Team)	High	Long Term	LDP Team
Attribute 8: Continue to deliver the Action Plan following the Development Management Review.	Planning and Development Manager	High	Medium Term	All Development Management
Attribute 8: Continue to monitor enforcement capacity in response to increasing case numbers.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Team Leader (Systems and Performance)



A high performing planning authority should ensure a wide range of people are involved in shaping their future places. Engagement should be fair and inclusive, early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate and should include difficult to reach groups. The authority should engage with a wide range of partners at a national, regional and local level to ensure a joined-up approach and that links are made across policies and programmes. The planning authority should demonstrate good customer care, transparency and effective communication.



ATTRIBUTE 9: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS GOOD CUSTOMER CARE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?



Pre-Application advice

The planning service encourages the submission of pre-application enquiries and welcome early engagement by all applicants and agents prior to the submission of an application. The service offered by the Council is broken down into three application types: permitted development enquiries, householder and local developments and major and complex enquiries.

The serviced has been chargeable since April 2018, prior to the introduction of the Scottish Government introducing discretionary fees for pre-application enquiries. The fees have remained unchanged; however they intend to be increased in 2024/25 in line with inflation.

The available data shows there has been a decrease in the number of pre-application enquiries being submitted in 2024/25.

A free telephone service to householders is offered to provide initial advice on proposals or how to submit an application.

A project to review the pre-application service has been identified for 2024/25 to ensure the service is still fit for purpose, whether the fees are still appropriate for the services offered and what services can be delivered with the resources available.

It is recognised that a robust pre-application service with early and effective consultation and engagement will assist in avoiding delays and difficult situations during the planning application process.

Engagement with customers

On a regular basis, an agent's forum is held. Agents who have submitted applications within the previous year are invited to attend the event. The forum allows the planning authority to provide any national and local planning updates and allows an opportunity for agents to give feedback to the planning authority on any current issues.

An Agents Forum was held on 20 February 2024 and was well attended. Agents received two update emails from the Planning and Development Manager on 1 August 2023 and 29 January 2024 with planning updates.

We recognise the importance of engaging with our customers, ensuring there are mechanisms in place for feedback to be received and for the service to review/implement any suggestions we receive. This has been identified as an important action point going forward. Planning is often complex and difficult to navigate, we recognise the importance of ensuring our communication is clear and we use language with is appropriate for the customer.

In terms of engagement events for LDP3, a series of roadshow events are planned to take place during May and June 2024. All the towns and villages with an inset map in the current Local Development Plan are intending to be visited, a total of 48 locations. The information obtained through the roadshows is intended to inform the Evidence Report.

The roadshows will provide an opportunity to display information on the plan preparation process, highlight the issues that had come to light in the evidence gathering that had taken place up to that point and that would be taken into account when preparing the plan and provided an opportunity to consult on the draft play sufficiency assessment.

The sessions will be mainly staffed by officers from the development planning team but ward officers from the Council's community development team along with staff from Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway will be invited.

The Council's Archaeologist undertakes a number of well attended lectures and talks across the region on the service provided, the archaeology of the region and significant finds.

There are 2 active Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes (CARS) ongoing in the region, 1 in Stranraer and 1 in Dumfries. The Stranraer scheme is coming to a close, the officer is working with property owners to ensure the works to their buildings is completed in time. The

Dumfries scheme launched in March 2022, the officer is working with the property owners of the identified priority projects and is actively seeking projects for the small grants scheme.

Customer Satisfaction

The Council also sends out a link to a customer survey with each decision notice issued and the survey is available online on the Council's website.

There has been a low take up with applicants and agents completing the survey with applicants / agents preferring to speak directly to the Case Officer, Team Leader or Service Manager if they are happy or dissatisfied with the process or service they have received.

In 2023/24, 14 customer feedback forms were received.

Summary of Attribute 9

There has been a decline in the level of customer service offered during the period 2023/24 due to the pressures faced by the service as a result of staffing difficulties and an increase in applications.

We recognise a need to better seek and record the views of our customers to improve our service. This is being addressed with a first annual customer survey begin carried out in April 2024. This will be done annually thereafter.

We have carried out regular engagement with agents during 2023/24 and this will continue.

A series of engagement events will take place across the region in relation to LDP3 and the views incorporated in the Council's Evidence Report.

ATTRIBUTE 10: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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 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?

Community Engagement

The DPS contains a Participation Statement which sets out how, when and why people should get involved in the preparation of LDP 3. As the DPS is updated on an annual basis the Participation Statement will continually be updated as the LDP3 process develops.

In preparing the Evidence Report, the planning authority is required to seek the views of particular groups of people and have regard to those views when preparing the Evidence Report. The Evidence Report will be informed by the views of those who will be affected by the plan and those who will be involved in its implementation. A series of roadshow events will take place during May and June 2024, at a total of 48 locations. The roadshows will be widely advertised on the Council's webpage, on the Council's Facebook page, and all Community Councils, Elected Members, Council Ward Officers and Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway will be asked to use their networks to advertise the events and display the poster that has been prepared. An email will also sent to those who have subscribed to the LDP email alerts and articles will be included in the community council newsletter and community bulletin.



One of the purposes of the roadshow will be to find out what people's views are on where they live using the Place Standard Tool. This will provide a useful way of getting people to discuss a wide range of issues affecting their community, although it is recognised that not all of these will be directly related to planning matters.

The information that will be available at the roadshow will also be made available online so that people unable to attend any of the roadshows can access the same information and submit their views and opinions.

Local Place Plans

A LPP Policy and Process document to establish how the Council would provide support to communities interested in preparing an LPP was reported to and approved by councillors in March 2023.

The opportunity to prepare a LPP was advertised via email, social media and press releases. A video on LPPs (produced by Third Sector Dumfries & Galloway) along with a mapping toolkit and other information documents were published on the Council's LPP webpage - Local Place Plans | Dumfries and Galloway Council. Communities interested in preparing an LPP were invited to complete and submit an Expression of Interest Form, providing basic information such as the name of the community group and contact details.

The Council set up a Local Place Team, which have responsibility to arrange an initial meeting with groups who submit an Expression of Interest and provide ongoing support to the community group. Teams were established for each ward and consist of a planning officer, an economic development place officer and the ward officer. This initial meeting was crucial in establishing connections between the community group and those officers who can provide the most assistance. It also provides an opportunity for community groups to ask any questions that they might have regarding LPPs.

A small grant scheme of up to £2,000 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is available to community groups who have expressed an interest in preparing a LPP. To date, £45,590 has been distributed to groups.

A webinar was held in October 2023 for groups interested in finding out more about LPPs and whether they should submit an expression of interest. An email will be sent to all community groups who had expressed an interest in preparing a LPP advising them that their LPP would need to be registered or be able to be registered by July 2025 for the Council to be able to take the LPP into account when preparing LDP3.

By March 2024 30 expressions had been received which has created a significant amount of work for the local place teams. 1 LPP had been registered by the Council – Kirkconnel and Kelloholm.

As more LPPs come forward for registration, the Council and partners are considering how best communities can be supported in delivering their LPPs. The Council recognises that the bottom-up approach offered by LPPs offers a transformational opportunity for them to move towards an enabling culture by providing an opportunity for LPPs to be aligned with other strategic and place-based activities. This is an area of work currently being developed.



Stakeholder Collaboration

The DPS that was prepared at the start of the LDP3 process was consulted on. We also completed a consultation mandate (Council requirement) at the start of the plan preparation process that was considered by committee.

There are many stakeholders that we need to ensure are involved in the LDP preparation process: local communities; landowners; developers; key agencies; elected members; infrastructure providers; etc

As outlined in attribute 9, the Planning Service undertakes an annual survey for stakeholders and a survey is available in respect of feeding back on the application process. The results from these surveys are summarised on an annual basis and form the basis of an action plan for the coming year.

Summary of Attribute 10

A Participation Statement has been prepared for Local Development Plan 3 (LDP3) and planned engagement workshops will be carried out during 2024/25.

We have made fair progress on supporting communities in developing local place plans and this will continue during 2024/25.



Improvement Action Plan (Engage theme)

Attribute	Score
	(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
9. This planning authority has good customer care	4
10. The planning authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
		High	Short term – 1 year	
		Medium	Medium term – 3 years	
		Low	Long term – 3+ years	
Attribute 9: Explore approaches to share information, gain feedback with stakeholders and build relationships – such as focus groups, agents forums, webinars.	Planning and Development Manager	High	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders
Attribute 9: Hold engagement events in preparation of the Evidence Report.	Team Leader (Development Planning)	High	Short Term	LDP Team
Attribute 9: Explore and deliver the best methods for involving elected members, community groups, the public and those with protected characteristics in the development of LDP3.	Team Leader (Development Planning)	High	Long Term	LDP Team

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
		High	Short term – 1 year	
		Medium	Medium term – 3 years	
		Low	Long term – 3+ years	
Attribute 9: Explore how to make information about the planning service more easily available to local communities eg sharing what exists, using online/social media, user friendly language.	Planning and Development Manager	High	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders/ Communication Team
Attribute 9: Carry out an annual customer survey each year.	Team Leader (Systems and Performance)	High	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leader Systems and Performance
Attribute 9: Build on existing tools and develop new ways to improve customer service, utilizing digital technology where possible.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders
Attribute 9: Continue to carry out annual Agents Forums.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders
Attribute 10: Continue to work together with communities to deliver Local Place Plans.	Team Leader (Development Planning)	Medium	Long Term	LDP Team



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.

ATTRIBUTE 11: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF SUSTAINABLE, LIVEABLE AND PRODUCTIVE PLACES

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?

Place and wellbeing Outcomes

The Planning Service are aware of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and the evidence that sits behind them. Whilst not specifically mentioned, the principles are embedded in Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) and specifically within policies OP1 and OP2 of LDP2.

The information in the Council's Evidence Report and NPF4 will be used by the planning authority to consider how best to incorporate the place and wellbeing outcomes into LDP3.

The Development Planning team are also engaging with the Community Planning Partnership to fully understand how the outcomes set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and relate to other plans and strategies, how they are being delivered at a local level and what the relationship is with LDP3.



Tools and approaches to deliver sustainable, liveable and productive places

We are currently exploring options that will allow us to continue to support delivering sustainable, liveable and productive places as we progress with LDP3.

We are working with South of Scotland Enterprise (SoSE) and Scottish Borders Council to develop a Housing Action Plan for the South of Scotland. The Development Planning team are keen to establish an Infrastructure Delivery Group to help inform and deliver LDP3. It will include representation from infrastructure providers such as Scottish Water and Scottish Power Energy Networks along with Council colleagues from roads and active travel. We are also keen to include colleagues from the NHS as the provision and availability of health and social care facilities is a concern for local communities.

We are required to take any registered LPPs into account when preparing LDP3. Community groups are being encouraged to use the Place Standard tool as part of their initial engagement with the community, this approach should ensure that all the aspects of what makes a place are being considered when LPPs are drafted.

Summary of Attribute 11

We are making fair progress around supporting the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places through our Local Development Plan Policies.



ATTRIBUTE 12: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF CONSENTED DEVELOPMENT

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- 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?

Section 75 agreements

Policies in relation to contributions to infrastructure (Section 75 agreements) are specifically addressed in the LDP2 and the Supplementary Guidance on Developer Contributions. This Guidance sets out specific areas where contributions may be sought (including affordable housing and education) and that such contributions will only be sought where necessary and in accordance with the five tests set out in Planning Circular 3/2012.

The Council's developer contributions policy is set out in one of the three overarching policies in LDP2 (Policy OP3) and this is supported by Supplementary Guidance. The current Supplementary Guidance on Developer Contributions was adopted in February 2020. A separate Likelihood Table for education contributions (which sets out which schools currently have a capacity issue and so require a developer contribution) is maintained and regularly reviewed as school rolls change. Developer contribution requirements are always explained in pre-application reports.

All reports which are determined by the Planning Applications Committee include a time limit of 6 months for legal agreements to be signed following a decision. If the legal agreement is not completed within this period without good reason, the application can be refused by the Head of Economy and Environment.

Work is being undertaken to establish whether the monitoring of Section 75 agreements can be automated and streamline the process of recording them.

The Planning Service is mindful of the overuse of conditions and the enforceability of conditions to ensure they meet the 6 tests set out in Planning Circular 4/1998. Historically, the Planning Service has a range of standard conditions. In recent years, these have been reduced and updated where required. A workshop with all case officers is planned in 2024/25 to discuss the use and effectiveness of the conditions we apply.

Local housing land requirements

The proposed local housing land requirement will be set out in the Evidence Report. It will seek to exceed the Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement set out in NPF4. A Housing Need and Demand Assessment is in the process of being prepared and will be used to inform the local housing land requirement figure.

The requirement to produce a delivery programme alongside the proposed plan should establish a deliverable housing land pipeline for the local housing land requirement. The work being undertaken to prepare a Housing Action Plan for the South of Scotland will be used to assist with delivery.

Processing agreements

In 2023/24, processing agreements were in place for 11 applications. The proportion of applications having a processing agreement is relatively low due to the nature of the developments received by the planning authority. An action point for 2025/26 will be to investigate if the use of processing agreement can be increased.

Delivery Programme

As set out above, a Delivery Programme will be prepared to support the delivery of LDP3. The Action Programme put in place to support the delivery of LDP2 is being updated into a Delivery Programme under the transitional arrangements.

Since April 2019, as part of a Council restructure, the Planning Service has been located within the directorate known as Economy and Resources, under the Head of Economy and Development, thus bringing Planning and Economic Development under the same Head of Service. Accordingly, the already strong links between the Council's Planning Service and Economic Development Service became even stronger.

Strategic Housing also falls within the responsibility of the Planning & Development Manager. The Planning Service, and the LDP team in particular, work closely with Strategic Housing. Officers from both services meet regularly and officers from the Planning Service attend the Strategic Housing Development Forum, which also includes all of the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) operating in the region. These meetings, together with scheduled quarterly meetings with individual RSLs operating in the area, are used as a method of highlighting development proposals by the RSLs early in the process and ensuring that communications between RSLs, Strategic Housing and Planning are open and frequent, so as to effectively deliver much-needed affordable housing.

Summary of Attribute 12

We are making fair progress as we support the delivery of appropriate development through our policies and procedures.

An Action Programme put in place to support the delivery of LDP2 is being updated into a Delivery Programme under the transitional arrangements.

The Evidence Report will include a proposed local housing land requirement figure which will seek to exceed the Minimum All Tenure Housing Land Requirement set out in NPIF.

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	3
12. This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
		High	Short term – 1 year	
		Medium	Medium term – 3 years	
		Low	Long term – 3+ years	
Attribute 12: Review the processes for recording Section 75 agreements internally	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders
Attribute 12: Engage and support communities on Local Place Plans and Borderlands Place Plans and how they interface with LDP3.	Team Leader (Development Planning)	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders
Attribute 12: Review the effectiveness of planning conditions, taking account of ongoing national work.	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Short Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders/HOPS
Attribute 12: Review mechanisms for increasing the use of processing agreements	Planning and Development Manager	Medium	Long Term	Planning and Development Manager/Team Leaders

Appendix 1

