

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Plan 2024

South Lanarkshire Council





A high performing planning authority needs to have the right number of people to do the work expected of it with the rights skills set. It also needs to have a strategy to ensure that it retains and recruits the right staff in the future. It supports staff to upskill and to be prepared for changes in policy, legislation, and new circumstances.

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
1. The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	4
2. The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce	3

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

Improvement Action <small>What action will you take? What will the outcome be?</small>	Owner	Importance <small>High Medium Low</small>	Timescale <small>Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years</small>	Resources
Support staff development further. This includes using the full training budget to upskill staff- particularly in the specialist areas/ technical matters and mentoring of graduates through their APC submission.	Planning Team Leaders and Managers	High	Long Term	Management External agencies (including training courses, events, webinars, conferences)



<p>It also includes carrying out annual PDPs for all staff to ensure their wellbeing is prioritised,</p> <p>This will inform staffing and workforce strategies which will feed into future service plans and help prepare a Planning recruitment and retention strategy in the long term based on a skills assessment.</p>				<p>Benchmarking with other Local Authorities</p> <p>Personnel systems</p>
<p>Appoint in-house specialists.</p> <p>This includes Data Analyst and Developer Obligations roles</p>	<p>HQ Team Leader and Manager</p> <p>Chief Planning Officer</p>	High	Short Term	<p>Management Personnel systems</p>
<p>Use IT budget to improve Uniform and GIS provision, including coding and spatial data.</p> <p>Explore PowerBI for workload management, reporting, and customer service.</p>	Managers	High	Medium Term	<p>Internal IT Service Improvement Service</p> <p>External training sources</p>
<p>Consider introducing further discretionary fees to support further income and proportionate cost recovery for matters such as conditions or pre-application enquiries.</p> <p>Publish a fee charter accordingly.</p>	Managers	Medium	Medium Term	Management
<p>Develop further systems including online forms and payments for NMVs.</p>	Team Leader	Low	Short Term	Administrative and IT services



<p>Update and implement consultee protocols which include consistent methods for consulting and responding.</p> <p>Record data and timescales pertaining to this, and coordinate this with effective internal pre-application advice processes.</p>	Working Group- led by Team Leader(s)	High	Medium Term	Internal services Planning staff
Explore opportunities to implement an apprenticeship scheme with UWS and RTPI.	Chief Planning Officer and appointed Improvement Officer			Engagement with secondary education establishment and other Local Authorities





A high performing planning authority has a positive culture through ensuring it has sound governance, effective leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement. The authority has an identified chief planner, who is supported by a strong leadership group to advise on decision-making, policy and operational management.

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

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

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Appoint an experienced planner to a continuous improvement and performance role to lead on the delivery of continuous improvement projects and implement changes.	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short- Medium Term (appointing officer short term, but implementing changes over the medium term)	Planning staff



This role will primarily be DM focused to create efficiencies in handling applications in order to achieve improved average determination timescales and further reduce legacy cases.				
Update and prepare guidance documents on design for rural housing and placemaking	HQ Team	Medium	Long Term	Policy planning staff
Prepare template reports, conditions, descriptions, and letters	Appointed Improvement/ Performance Officer role	High	Long Term (documents evolve over time)	Appointed Improvement/ Performance Officer role
Prepare an updated Scheme of Delegation for Scottish Government and Committee approval	Management, Chief Planning Officer	High	Short Term	Management Legal Planning Committee approval
Establish a training programme for Elected Members	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium Term	Management and Committee Services





A high performing planning authority needs to have an effective local development plan and other strategies in place to provide a vision for the future of the area. It needs to be able to set and deliver on policy ambitions and priorities by clearly informing decision making and providing certainty and predictability for communities, developers and investment. The authority's development management systems need to be effective in making the right decisions about development and be as efficient as possible in doing this. The planning authority makes best use of digital technology and how it manages and uses data.

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
6. The planning authority has a robust policy and evidence base	3
7. The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	5
8. The planning authority has effective and efficient decision-making processes	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 High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Continue preparation of Evidence Report	HQ Manager	Medium	Long Term	Policy planning staff Data team
Establish a programme of policy topic specialisms within the Development Management team	HQ Manager and Team Leader in	Medium	Long Term	HQ Manager and Team Leader in collaboration with DM teams



	collaboration with DM teams			
Develop a new approach for carrying out the 2023/24 Housing Land Audit that reflects the requirements of NPF4 and the preparation of LDP3	HQ Team	Medium	Medium Term	
<p>Work with IT Services to improve the use of digital technologies, including:</p> <p>Ensuring GIS platforms and licencing arrangements are fit for purpose, to be able to use this for DM assessments and policy preparation.</p> <p>Update the website to promote better self-service, use of online forms for all enquiry types, and the use of a robust duty planner service through promotion of email.</p> <p>Promote better use of Microsoft Teams especially for project work</p>	Management/ appointed Improvement Performance Officer	Medium	Long Term	Policy planning staff
Identify additional digital means of engaging with communities and stakeholders	Management	High	Long Term	IT Service Benchmark with other Local Authorities
Carry out a wholesale review of Uniform.	Establish a working group	High	Medium Term	IT Service



<p>This includes reviewing processes regarding the receipt, allocation, consideration, and determination of planning applications, and updating standard practice accordingly.</p> <p>This requires staff training to be able to code Uniform for system updates to map the application process to generate efficiencies throughout</p>				<p>Benchmark with other Local Authorities IDOX</p>
<p>Reduce the number of legacy applications to subsequently reduce the average time taken to determine all categories of planning applications.</p> <p>Appointment of a Developer Obligations Officer will assist in this by supporting quicker conclusion of legal agreements.</p>	DM staff	High	Short-Long Term (implement efficiencies in the short term, but review and improve on this long term)	<p>Planning Staff Power BI resources for monitoring purposes</p>
<p>Develop pre-application enquiry process (using Uniform) including major application meetings to promote a smoother application process.</p> <p>As above, consider discretionary charging for this service.</p>	Management	Medium	Medium Term	<p>Planning Staff Power BI resources for monitoring purposes</p>



<p>Review the operation of the enforcement function in light of the structural changes that have been made in order to demonstrate/assess improvements.</p> <p>Update the Enforcement Charter accordingly to ensure it reflects the Council's current approach to the use of enforcement controls and the monitoring of development.</p>	Management	Medium	Medium Term	Planning staff
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A high performing planning authority should ensure a wide range of people are involved in shaping their future places. Engagement should be fair and inclusive, early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate and should include difficult to reach groups. The authority should engage with a wide range of partners at a national, regional and local level to ensure a joined-up approach and that links are made across policies and programmes. The planning authority should demonstrate good customer care, transparency and effective communication.

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
9. This planning authority has good customer care	3
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	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
What action will you take? What will the outcome be?		High Medium Low	Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	
Develop and implement an action plan following analysis of the CSE feedback.	HQ Manager/appointed Improvement Performance Officer	Medium	Long Term	Management Performance and Development Officer
Develop a range of engagement methods to ensure all stakeholders in the LDP process are reached	HQ Team	Medium	Long Term	Policy planning staff
Embed the use of the Place Standard tool in the engagement process	HQ Team	Medium	Long Term	Policy planning staff External engagement groups
Prepare and promote staff surveys	Management	Medium	Short- Long Term	Management Corporate resources



A high performing planning authority should demonstrate place leadership by taking a collaborative place-based approach in line with the Place Principle. It should use the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes in decision-making processes, to achieve the three spatial principles outlined in NPF4: sustainable places, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; liveable places, where we can all live better, healthier lives; and productive places, where we have a greener, fairer, and more inclusive wellbeing economy. The planning authority should seek to ensure that there are no impediments to delivering agreed development.



Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
11. The planning authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places	3
12. This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	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 High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Chart progress of Town Centre Masterplans	HQ Team	Low	Long Term	Spatial planning resources Policy planning staff
Review submitted Local Place Plans	HQ Team	Low	Long Term	Policy planning staff
As above, appoint a Developer Obligations Officer who will set up a process and handle all S75 Legal Agreements- simplify the process and engage early with developers to ensure delivery of appropriate infrastructure to local communities	Chief Planning Officer/ Appointed DO Officer	High	Long Term	Management Personnel systems
Carry out review of conditions and include this in consultee protocols- benchmark with other authorities in relation to this. Seek out training courses for technical matters such as flooding, training, contamination in relation to	Management and DM staff	Medium	Short – Long Term	HOPS DM Staff



conditions to ensure quicker cleansing of conditions to enable quicker on site development rather than a reliance on technical experts.				
<p>Increase the use of processing agreements (particularly for major applications and committee items) to provide more certainty to developers and case officers and to assist increased performance improvements- publicise this more readily on the website</p> <p>Introducing such a project management approach to the determination of planning applications will help to reduce the average time taken to determine all categories of planning applications.</p>	DM Team Leaders and Managers	Medium	Long Term	DM Staff IT Service to update website
Continue work on LDP3 to meet the NPF4 target in the MATHLR	HQ Team	Medium	Long Term	Policy planning staff
Continue good relationships with developers to improve delivery of development on the ground.	All	High	Long Term	All
Update HLA and corresponding delivery programme in preparation of LDP3	HQ Team	High	Medium Term	Policy planning staff

