

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

# Improvement Action Plan 2024

Orkney Islands Council





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

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
1. The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	3
2. The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce	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 <small>What action will you take? What will the outcome be?</small>	Owner	Importance <small>High Medium Low</small>	Timescale <small>Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years</small>	Resources
Attribute 1: Investigate feasibility of charging for pre-application planning advice for larger scale development proposals in consultation with developers/agents (links with proposed action to provide tailored multi-disciplinary pre-application advice in Attribute 9 below).	Service Manager – Development Management	High	Medium	Staff time (Planning/ Finance/Developers/Planning Agents)



Attribute 1: Continue to seek opportunities to establish a new post of Historic Environment Officer.	Service Manager – Development and Marine Planning	High	Medium	Staff Time (Planning/ Corporate Director/ Finance/Human Resources) Financial cost of establishing new post
Attribute 1: Complete the Planning and Developer Guidelines setting out the key details and specifications required in respect of Roads and Engineering elements of planning applications.	Service Manager – Development Management	High	Short	Staff Time (Planning/ Roads/Engineering) Financial cost of external consultancy support to develop guidelines
Attribute 1: Explore and support measures to improve data collection, handling and analysis at a Council-wide level.	Service Manager – Development and Marine Planning	Medium	Medium	Staff Time (Planning/Improvement and Performance)
Attribute 2: Prepare a formal workforce strategy document as part of the NSI Workforce Plan detailing opportunities for staff training, development and progression, including exploring the scope for more competitive and proportionate career grades and salary levels.	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short	Staff time (Planning/ Corporate Director/Finance/Human Resources)  Financial cost of changes to career grades and salary levels
Attribute 2: Ensure staff review and development engagement is undertaken in a timely manner.	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short	Staff time (Planning)
Attribute 2: Provide opportunities for new graduate planners to work in both Development Management and Development Planning functions.	Service Managers – Development Management/ Development and Marine Planning	Medium	Medium	Staff time (Planning)



Work with internal and external partners to tackle the impact of social/local media and online misinformation on staff health and well-being.	Corporate Director/ Chief Planning Officer/Service Managers	High	Short	Staff time  (Planning/Communications Health & Safety)
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**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	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	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	



Attribute 3: Implement service improvement actions and the delivery of the National Planning Improvement Framework.	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short	Staff time (Planning)
Attribute 4: Review Planning Scheme of Delegation, in particular, the level of delegation to officers to determine applications.	Service Manager, Development Management	High	Short	Staff time (Planning/ Legal/Committees) following engagement with Elected Members
Attribute 4: Update Council Scheme of Delegation to reflect the statutory role of the Chief Planning Officer.	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short	Staff time (Planning/ Legal/Committees)
Attribute 4: Continue with training programme for Elected Members.	Corporate Director/ Chief Planning Officer	High	Medium	Staff time (Planning/ Legal/Committees)
Attribute 5: Appoint to and fully embed the role of Chief Planning Officer within OIC to ensure that the post-holder is fully involved in key strategic decision-making.	Corporate Director	High	Short	Staff time (Corporate Director)





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

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

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

Improvement Action <small>What action will you take? What will the outcome be?</small>	Owner	Importance <small>High Medium Low</small>	Timescale <small>Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years</small>	Resources
Attribute 7: Implement electronic retention of records on the Uniform system.	Service Manager, Development Management	Medium	Medium	Staff Time (Planning/IDOX)



Attribute 7: Implement the Idox Enterprise system to improve planning casework management.	Service Manager, Development Management	High	Short	Staff Time (Planning/IDOX)
Attribute 7: Investigate the implementation of digital solutions/technology to enhance delivery of the Planning service.	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium	Staff Time (Planning/IT)
Attribute 8: Support work being undertaken by Heads of Planning Scotland to update national standards for the validation of planning applications in order to ensure consistency.	Service Manager, Development Management	High	Short	Staff Time (Planning)
Attribute 8: Review the process of checking planning applications to ensure it is carried out within five working days of receiving the application.	Service Manager, Development Management	High	Short	Staff Time (Planning)
Attribute 8: Review legacy planning application cases to establish solutions that could enable speedier decision making.	Service Manager, Development Management	High	Short	Staff Time (Planning)
Attribute 8 – Review the process for local review cases in order to reduce the average timescales for determining reviews	Planning Advisor to the Local Review Body	High	Short	Staff time (Planning/ Legal/Committees)
Attribute 8 – Consider the provision of additional staffing resource to support the planning control function.	Service Manager, Development Management	High	Short	Staff Time (Planning/ Corporate Director/ Finance/Human Resources)  Financial cost of establishing new post



Attribute 8 – Work with planning agents to improve validation rates.	Service Manager, Development Management	High	Medium	Staff Time (Planning) following engagement with planning agents
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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.	2

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





Improvement Action	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	
Attribute 9: Provide tailored in- person multi-disciplinary pre-application advice for larger scale development proposals (links with action to investigate feasibility of charging for this type of pre-application planning advice highlighted under Attribute 1 above).	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium	Staff (Planning/Engineering/Roads)
Attribute 10: Participate in the national customer survey and analyse the results to identify any improvement actions.	Chief Planning Officer	High	High	Staff (Planning)
Attribute 10: Introduce a customer service survey measuring satisfaction with the pre-application planning advice service.	Service Manager, Development Management	Medium	Short	Staff (Planning)





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	4
12. This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	3

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

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Attribute 11. Explore how to embed high-quality placemaking within Council decision-making and across the development industry, working collaboratively with developers/agents and drawing on national sources of support and guidance from the Scottish Government,	Chief Planning Officer	High	Medium	Staff (Planning/Housing/Capital Projects/Developers/Planning Agents)



Architecture & Design Scotland, Public Health Scotland and the Improvement Service.				
Attribute 12. Engage positively and work collaboratively with Housing Services to deliver adequate housing supply to meet local needs.	Chief Planning Officer	High	Medium	Staff (Planning/Housing)

