

Minister for Local Government Empowerment and  
Planning  
Ministear airson Cumhachdachadh is Dealbhachadh  
Riaghaltas Ionadail  
Joe FitzPatrick MSP  
Joe Mac Giolla Phádraig BPA



Jim Savege  
Chief Executive  
Aberdeenshire Council

20 October 2023

Dear Jim Savege,

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's twelfth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, for the period April 2022 to March 2023.

Across the country, performance against the key markers continues to be stable and there has been little variation in the overall total of green, amber and red markings awarded this reporting period compared with previous periods. It is clear that each of you continue to put in considerable effort to ensuring our planning system continues to run efficiently. I have been particularly pleased to see there has been a marked improvement on speed of determination for major applications across some authorities.

Resourcing remains a key priority which I will continue to discuss with the High Level Group on Planning Performance, which I jointly chair with COSLA. I also have asked officials to bring different parties together to talk about resourcing in the autumn, to identify practical solutions. We need options that work for all sectors, and I think it would be really beneficial to discuss a variety of issues including full cost recovery, the local setting of fees, charges for additional services and approaches which could enable authorities to access the skills and expertise at the time they require.

Finally, I am delighted that we have recently announced the appointment of the National Planning Improvement Champion (NPIC), Craig McLaren, who took up this new post in early September. Craig will play a pivotal role in supporting improvement and will also be looking at how we can improve the way we measure and assess the performance of the planning system in the future.

If you would like to discuss any of the markings awarded below, please contact us at [chief.planner@gov.scot](mailto:chief.planner@gov.scot) and a member of the team will be happy to discuss them with you.

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**  
We invest in people Silver



Joe Fitzpatrick

**JOE FITZPATRICK**

**CC: Paul Macari, Head of Planning and Environment**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™**  
We invest in people Silver



## PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2022-23

Name of planning authority: **Aberdeenshire Council**

The High Level Group on Performance agreed a set of performance markers. We have assessed your report against those markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action. The high level group will monitor and evaluate how the key markers have been reported and the value which they have added.

The Red, Amber, Green ratings are based on the evidence provided within the PPF reports. Where no information or insufficient evidence has been provided, a 'red' marking has been allocated.

No.	Performance Marker	RAG rating	Comments
1	<b>Decision-making:</b> continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Green	<p><b>Major Applications</b> Your average timescale is 21.4 weeks which is faster than last year and faster than the Scottish average of 39.5 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Local (Non-Householder) Applications</b> Your average timescale is 14.9 weeks which is slower than last year and slower than the Scottish average of 14.4 weeks. <b>RAG = Red</b></p> <p><b>Householder Applications</b> Your average timescale is 7.8 weeks which is the same as last year and faster than the Scottish average of 8.9 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
2	<p><b>Processing agreements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and</li> <li>availability publicised on website</li> </ul>	Green	<p>You have evidenced that the use of processing agreements is offered for all major development. You have recently reviewed your processing agreement procedure and now offer extension of time letters for local developments on a case by case basis. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>You have shown that information on processing agreements is publically available on your website. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
3	<p><b>Early collaboration</b> with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and</li> <li>clear and proportionate requests for supporting information</li> </ul>	Green	<p>You encourage pre-application discussions and have provided a case study example where informal and initial pre-application discussions were held regarding a prospective major development application and subsequently a formal pre-application enquiry was submitted. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>You have been undergoing a review of your pre-application processes for local and major applications which includes improvement to website information, clear validation requirements and uniform templates for each application. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
4	<b>Legal agreements:</b> conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Amber	<p>Your average timescale for applications with legal agreements is 44.7 weeks which is faster than the previous year but slower than the Scottish average of 41.1 weeks.</p> <p>You note in your PPF that the Legacy Case Strategy remains in place to help reduce their timescales for conclusion. This includes a mechanism to refuse applications if there is clear evidence that a legal agreement is not being progressed outwith the authorities control.</p>
5	<b>Enforcement charter</b> updated / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was last updated in July 2021 which is within the last 2 years.

6	<b>Continuous improvement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report</li> </ul>		You have completed 7 out of 11 service improvements identified in the previous reporting period, with 3 on-going and 1 not complete. You have identified a range of 13 improvement commitments for the coming reporting period.
7	<b>Local development plan</b> less than 5 years since adoption	Green	The Local Development plan was adopted in January 2023 and is therefore only 3 months old at the end of the reporting period.
8	<b>Development plan scheme – next LDP:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>next LDP project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale</li> </ul>	Green	As the current Local Development Plan has recently been adopted, a Development Plan Scheme for the next LDP has not been published yet. However you have provided updates on the next stages and have set out that Development Plan Scheme is expected to be adopted in 2024.
9 & 10	<b>LDP Engagement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government are engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation.</li> </ul>	Green	You have started early engagement for the next development plan preparation, undertaking a consultation on the draft Development Plan Scheme. You also undertook engagement with Community Councils, development industry and youth groups during the drafting process pre-consultation.
11	<b>Policy Advice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production of relevant and up to date policy advice</li> </ul>	Green	You provide up to date policy advice on your website for the pre-application process. You also prepared and published new guidance on delivering public benefit for NPF4 through archaeology during the reporting period and subsequently the document is now used as national guidance by the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers.
12	<b>Corporate working across services</b> to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)	Green	You have evidenced a range of examples of corporate working across services. Case study 6 highlights how the Development Management Team and Environmental Built Heritage Team were able to have constructive discussions with an applicant which resulted in the withdrawal of an original application and allowed for a revised application to be submitted and approved.
13	<b>Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge</b> between authorities	Green	You have demonstrated sharing good practice on a number of occasions throughout the reporting period, including being part of a Heritage team which involved another authority at the Historic Building Conservation Annual Conference.
14	<b>Stalled sites / legacy cases:</b> conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Amber	You have cleared 66 cases during the reporting period. The number of cases remaining have decreased to 42 from 52 the previous year. You have also noted that of the 44 cases remaining, 20 of those cases have PPAs in place. However there are still large number of cases which are reaching legacy status and the number of legacy cases outstanding remains high.
15	<b>Developer contributions:</b> clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and</li> <li>in pre-application discussions</li> </ul>	Green	<p>You have specifically highlighted the section within the Local Development Plan 2023 which sets out the requirements for developer contributions.  <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>You explain that developer contributions are discussed at the pre-application stage and the dedicated Developer Obligations Team are consulted during this process.  <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>

**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**Performance against Key Markers**

Marker		13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23
1	Decision making timescales										
2	Processing agreements										
3	Early collaboration										
4	Legal agreements										
5	Enforcement charter										
6	Continuous improvement										
7	Local development plan										
8	Development plan scheme										
9 & 10	LDP Early Engagement		N/A	N/A	N/A				N/A		
11	Regular and proportionate advice to support applications										
12	Corporate working across services										
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge										
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases										
15	Developer contributions										

**Overall Markings (total numbers for red, amber and green)**

	Red	Amber	Green
<b>2013-14</b>	0	5	10
<b>2014-15</b>	0	2	11
<b>2015-16</b>	0	3	10
<b>2016-17</b>	0	3	10
<b>2017-18</b>	0	3	12
<b>2018-19</b>	0	2	13
<b>2019-20</b>	0	1	14
<b>2020-21</b>	0	1	12
<b>2021-22</b>	1	3	10
<b>2022-23</b>	0	2	12

**Decision Making Timescales (weeks)**

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	2022-23 Scottish Average
Major Development	115.9	107.8	86.3	77.8	29.5	35.3	23.1	10.9	49.4	21.4	39.5
Local (Non-Householder) Development	18.9	15.8	14.1	9.9	9.1	9.2	9.3	10.0	12.9	14.9	14.4
Householder Development	7.4	7.3	6.8	6.7	6.8	7.1	7.3	7.8	7.8	7.8	8.9