PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

2013/2014

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL

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PAGE IMAGE: PORTSOY & TARVES.   FRONT PAGE IMAGE: PETERHEAD – ABERDEENSHIRE'S LARGEST SETTLEMENT

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL

Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea – the very best of Scotland

The best area

Helping to create and sustain the best quality of life for all through . . .

- happy, healthy and confident people
- safe, friendly and lively communities
- an enterprising and adaptable economy
- our special environment and diverse culture

The best council

Aiming to provide excellent services for all by . . .

- involving, responding and enabling
- finding new and more efficient ways of doing things
- providing elected leadership for our area
- working with our partners in the North East and beyond
- always looking to the future

THE PLANNING SERVICE IS A PART OF INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES WHICH OVERALL HAS A KEY ROLE IN HELPING TO CREATE AND SUSTAIN THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE PEOPLE OF ABERDEENSHIRE AND IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING EXCELLENT SERVICES FOR ALL.

We will achieve this by:-

"Supporting Aberdeenshire Council's vision to be the best area and the best Council through the effective management of the Council's physical assets, by helping to create the conditions for economic growth within Aberdeenshire and the wider region and by providing high quality local services to residents, communities, business and visitors".

| FORWARD

MENIE - ENERGETICA CORRIDOR

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL HAS UNDERTAKEN A PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE AIMS SET OUT BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT FOR MODERNISING THE PLANNING SYSTEM.

The process of change has been carried out during a period of population growth, expanding and buoyant economy and the consequent increase in workload for the Planning Service.

The processing of planning applications has been the main focus of transformational change. The structure has been realigned to give greater resilience and be more responsive to the pressures of economic growth.

Two new teams have been formed; one focused on improving performance on masterplans and major matters and on one assisting development delivery on the ground by co-ordinating the provision of infrastructure and ensuring the Local Development Plan Action Programme is implemented.

In addition, all records and communications are now electronic with paper copies only being used where essential. All of our public documents are available online.

The process of this change has caused some disruption to the level of service in the short term. However, the Service is now organised, staffed and resourced to achieve the results required of it by the Government, stakeholders and most importantly our communities.

There is an appropriate supply of land for development of all types and our plans and policies are up to date. The Service is involved in the growth of the Aberdeen market area including developing an exciting and innovative new town at Chapelton of Elsick. Promotion of development in the Energetica corridor, which

stretches from Aberdeen to the deep water harbour facility of Peterhead, is also a priority for the Service. Finally, the Service is beginning to see success in the regeneration of the northern towns through continuing work with the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland and the Council's Regeneration Funding.

There is, of course, still much to achieve, particularly in the areas of Processing Agreements, Section 75 legal agreements and Developer Obligation timescales and work will continue on these issues.

The Planning Performance Framework is an honest appraisal of what has been achieved so far and where our priorities for improvement lie in the future.

Robert Gray
Head of Planning & Building Standards

INTRODUCTION
THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SUITE OF HIGH LEVEL DOCUMENTS IDENTIFIED IN BOLD BELOW

The Aberdeenshire Council Plan identifies the Council's priorities for the period 2013 – 2016 and sets out how the Council aims to achieve its goal of making Aberdeenshire the best area and best Council in Scotland. The future direction of the Council is guided by the three pillars of Early Intervention, Demography and Economic Development.

Growing the economy is key to the future prosperity of the North East of Scotland. The Planning Service, as part of Infrastructure Services, has an important role to play in supporting the business community and helping this area meet current and future economic challenges.

Supporting the delivery of the **Council's Strategic Priorities** are the **Key Service Challenges** which set the context by which the Planning Service will play a major role in creating the conditions for sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration within Aberdeenshire and the wider region by attracting and supporting businesses and industries and developing communities.

Planning outcomes feed into the **Economic Development Strategy** of the Council. The aim of the current Strategy is to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration within Aberdeenshire and the wider region by attracting and supporting businesses

and industries and developing communities. As such, one of the key priorities to achieve the strategic objectives of encouraging enterprise within Aberdeenshire is to assist with the delivery of a modern planning system.

The **Local Development Plan and Strategic Development Plan** are similarly a major tool in delivering the **Service Objectives** to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration within Aberdeenshire and the wider region by attracting and supporting businesses and industries and developing communities.

FRASERBURGH HARBOUR MOUTH

MISTY ABERDEENSHIRE

PLANNING & THE ABERDEENSHIRE ECONOMY

The economic position of Aberdeenshire is one of relative strength in comparison with most other areas in Scotland. Population projections indicate growth rates in the Aberdeenshire area that are significantly higher than the Scottish average. The 2013 population for Aberdeenshire is 257,740; an increase of 0.9 per cent from 255,540 in 2012. The population of Aberdeenshire accounts for 4.8 per cent of the total population of Scotland.

By 2037 the population of Aberdeenshire is projected to be 299,813, an increase of 17.3 per cent compared to the population in 2012. The population of Scotland is projected to increase by 8.8 per cent between 2012 and 2037.

Estimated population of Aberdeenshire and Scotland, 1987-2013
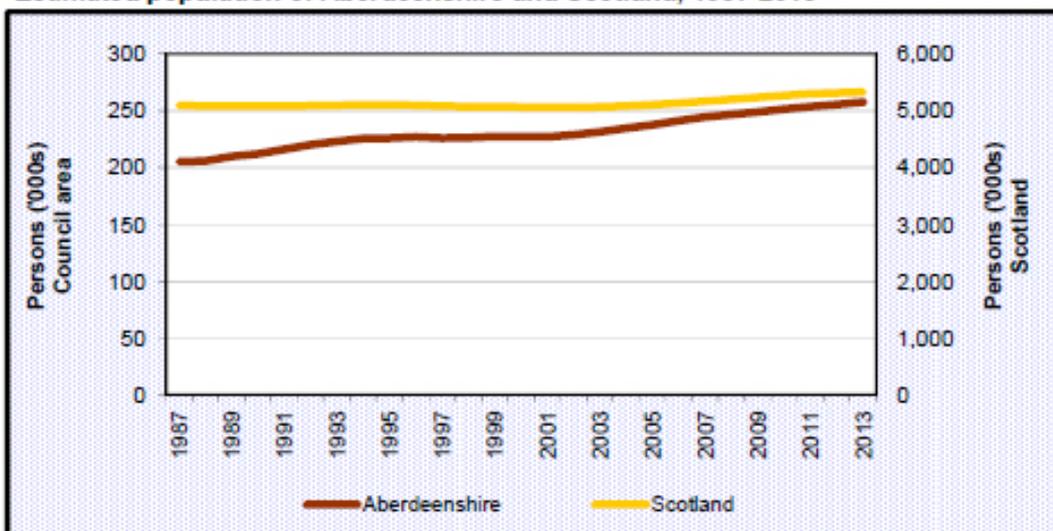
Although this signifies a relatively positive future; a growing population and buoyancy brings with it challenges and pressures very much reliant on a high performing and effectively functioning modern planning service.

PROGRESS AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE PLANNING SERVICE IN 2013/14

The Scottish Government Feedback for Aberdeenshire on the PPF 2012 - 2013 recognised that Aberdeenshire Council demonstrated taking a strong, proactive lead in the delivery of the recently adopted Local Development Plan.

Decision-making performance was indicated as an area of concern and feedback was that steps needed to be taken to speed up this essential element of the planning system. It was recognised however that steps were already being taken through a fundamental re-structuring of the Development Management part of the Service and a number of initiatives to review and take forward improvements to several aspects of service delivery, including the implementation of a new electronic Business System.

It is acknowledged that a significant amount of work was on-going in the last PPF period focusing on improving performance and, in particular, improving the speed of decision making through various improvement mechanisms and initiatives. This focus has continued in the past year. It is acknowledged and accepted that the speed of decision making, particularly relating to major applications and the impact of legacy cases and those subject to Legal Agreements, needs significant improvement.

Cognisance is given to the need for evidence and the demonstration of outcomes in this PPF. Although significant work continues through the Improving Performance Strategy (IPS) important outcomes and feedback from improvement initiatives also form part of this report.

Although premature, elements of improvement outcomes are already apparent following completion of the Development Management Review and implementation of the new Business System (known as Uniform).

The stated Performance Markers (Section 41 Regulatory Act) are referenced and evidenced throughout the PPF report. A priority system has been used to highlight those markers which required the greatest attention through the Feedback (Red/Amber). This is illustrated in table format before appearing in more detail throughout Part 2. Other markers although not highlighted for urgent attention (Green) also appear in terms of updates, further progress and on-going improvement throughout Part 2.

PERFORMANCE MARKER	PRIORITY - RED	PRIORITY - AMBER	PRIORITY - GREEN
Driving Improved Performance	Reduction of average timescales Formal pre-application promotion Validation checklist LRB Review towards improved performance	Developer Contributions advice & proportionality Set up & implement 'Enterprise' monitoring facility	Further benchmarking
Promoting the Plan-Led System	Early MIR Member engagement Proportionate policy advice – Developer Obligations		LDP progress on target
Delivering Development	Reduce/control Legacy Cases Pre 2009 & Plus 1 year Developer Obligations – clear expectations Processing Agreement procedure & use Significantly improve Legal Agreement timescales	Set up/Implement 'Stop the Clock' facility	Continue protocols to ensure timeous responses

PART 1
NATIONAL HEADLINE INDICATORS (NHIS)

Key Outcomes	2013 - 2014		2012 - 2013		
Development Planning:					
› age of local/strategic development plan(s) (full years) *requirement: less than 5 years*	**LDP 2 years 3 months** **SDP 3 days**		1 year 3 months 4 years 2 months		**Note 1**
› development plan scheme: on track? (Y/N)	**No**		Yes		
Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs	**Aberdeen HMA**	**Rural HMA**	**Aberdeen HMA**	**Rural HMA**	
› effective housing land: years supply	6.2 yrs	6.6 yrs	5.7 yrs	6.2 yrs	**Note 2**
› effective housing land supply	5,248 units	3,786 units	4,823 units	3,754 units	**Note 3**
› housing approvals	6,133 units	907 units	549 units	744 units	**Note 4**
› effective employment land supply	375 ha		397 ha		**Note 5**
› employment land take-up	17.4 ha		18.7 ha		**Note 5**
Development Management Project Planning					
› percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice	1		0		
› number of major applications subject to processing agreement or other project plan	-		-		
› percentage planned timescales met					
Decision-making					
› application approval rate	93%		91%		
› delegation rate	89%		88%		
Decision-making timescales Average number of weeks to decision:					
› major developments	115.9		132.9		
› local developments (non-householder)	18.9		22.5		
› householder developments	7.4		8.1		
Enforcement					
› time since enforcement charter published / reviewed (months) *requirement: review every 2 years*	n/a 405 / 250		Feb 2013 304 / 280		
› number of breaches identified / resolved *	n/a				

*Not available until 2015

THE APPLE HOUSE, FASQUE

NOTE 1

Delay of publication of Scottish Planning Policy by approximately 6 months led to a revision of the Development Plan Scheme timetable to incorporate consideration of the final version of that policy - 3 months were added to projected publication date due to need to consult on new issues arising. The Development Plan 2016 is still on target to be delivered within lifespan of the existing plan.

NOTE 2

Aberdeen HMA includes Aberdeen City. The Structure Plan housing requirement is only for housing market areas not Local Authority areas so it is not possible to provide an Aberdeenshire land supply figure here. Source: *Housing Land Audit 2014*, base date 1st January 2014.

For the third year in a row, the effective supply in the Aberdeen HMA has increased and it now stands at its highest level since local government reorganisation in 1996 with 6.2 years' worth of effective housing land. The supply this year has been boosted by progress on sites as many of the LDP allocations which entered the audit in 2012/13 are coming on stream. This clearly demonstrates the successful implementation of the growth strategy in the Structure Plan.

In the Rural HMA, the effective supply is almost the same as it was in 2013 at just under 4,000 units, equivalent to 6.6 years' worth of effective housing land. The extent of the five year effective supply in the Rural HMA is primarily limited by the market in much of the area which affects what can realistically be expected to come forward within five years but the supply remains healthy.

NOTE 3

Aberdeen HMA total is for the Aberdeenshire part of the Aberdeen HMA, does not include Aberdeen City. Source: *Housing Land Audit 2014*, base date 1st January 2014

NOTE 4

There has been a very large increase in the number of housing units granted consent in 2013/14 compared with the previous year as LDP allocations continue to progress, including 4,045 units at Chapelton (new settlement) and a total of around 1,200 units on a variety of sites in Inverurie. Source: *Uniform planning consents 2013/2014.*

NOTE 5

Source: *Employment Land Audit 2013*, base date 1st April 2013. Take up is for financial year 2012/2013.

The marketable land supply has decreased slightly since the previous year as sites have been taken up and others have moved into the constrained supply. However, an increasing proportion of this marketable land is now regarded as being immediately available indicating continued progress on new and existing sites, particularly in settlements closer to Aberdeen City.

PART 2
DEFINING AND MEASURING A HIGH-QUALITY PLANNING SERVICE

1. OPEN FOR BUSINESS
KEY SERVICE OBJECTIVES WITHIN THE SERVICE PLAN

Supporting the delivery of the Council's Strategic Priorities are the key service objectives to:-

› Create the conditions for sustainable economic growth, diversification and regeneration within Aberdeenshire and the wider region by attracting and supporting businesses and industries and developing communities.

› Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations through the development of a framework of access strategies, land-use plans, master plans, policies and guidelines and by managing development through the planning system in accordance with the objectives of the Local Plan.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The approval of the City and Shire Strategic Development Plan provides significant continuity for the development industry.

The existing Development Plan continues to make available significant areas of housing and employment land for development. The Plan contains statements of the expectations for infrastructure to deliver that development. Through the **Action Programme** our confidence in the delivery of this land is tested and where sites are not actively being pursued they are proposed to be removed from the LDP2016 [1].

The existing plan supports National Planning Policy to facilitate sustainable economic growth by encouraging rural development of an appropriate scale in intermediate rural areas. This includes support for tourism, leisure and farm diversification, but with appropriate safeguards for the undeveloped coast and areas of high natural heritage, cultural heritage and sustainability value[2]. In pressured areas around Aberdeen City a range of sites

is provided to meet the development needs of different sectors and sizes of business in the area[3]. Employment land supply has not been identified as a Main Issue for the 2016 LDP and the scale of comments on this topic confirms our position on this issue [4]. Existing allocations continue to meet demands although physical delivery remains an important issue to be resolved [5].

Policies designed to promote regeneration and investment in deprived areas of Aberdeenshire, and the development of the Energetica Corridor remain in place and continue to support other active initiatives [6].

We have taken action to provide policy advice to help resolve specific issues arising from certain development types. Consistency in appraisal of cumulative impacts of wind turbines has been provided by jointly commissioning a **Landscape Capacity Study with Scottish Natural Heritage** [7]. A development framework for energy related developments at South Peterhead is in preparation.

Significant activity has taken place regarding the preparation of **LDP2016** with the analysis of potential development sites, engagement with key stakeholders and elected members to identify what the "Main Issues" might be and ultimately the publication of a **Main Issues Report** and the receipt of 1828 submissions to this document [8].

The content of this MIR has been informed by a *__Monitoring Statement and a Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report__*. Planning Officers have sought the views of community groups, industry stakeholders and other interested parties to help identify the "main issues". Notes of the meetings held, "position papers" providing an in-depth analysis of contentious issues, the Monitoring Statement and SEA Environmental Report, and an analysis of existing LDP policy have all been published on the dedicated website at **Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2016**.

ABERDEENSHIRE IS 'OPEN FOR BUSINESS'

Proposed Development

There has been a slight drop in planning applications received by Aberdeenshire in the last year. Nationally however this remains the highest level of applications received by an Authority.

3828 - 2012 - 2013   **3515** - 2013 - 2014

Planning Fees

Notwithstanding this, planning fees have risen significantly since 2012-2013, reflecting both the volume and scale of development proposals.

Building Warrant Fees

Likewise these fees have also risen significantly since 2012-2013.

(Funding reference to this is made in Part 6 Financial Management)

NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT - WESTHILL
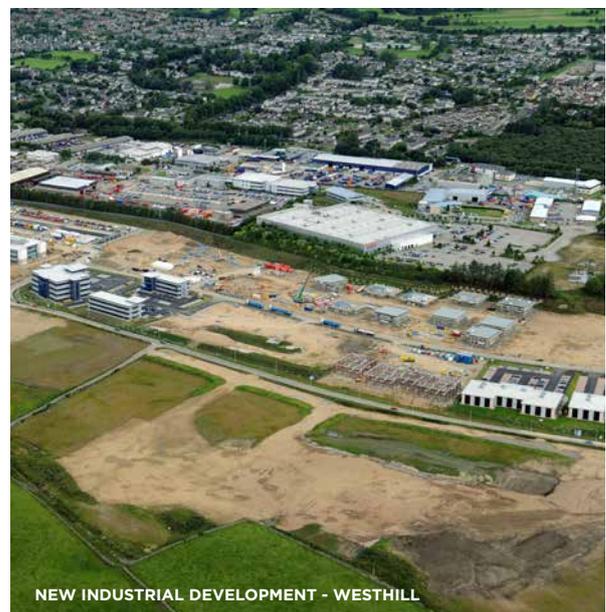
MASTERPLANS/FRAMEWORKS

At the end of the last PPF period 13 masterplans had been approved, 27 were in various phases of being considered and 13 were on target to be considered by Committees. It was anticipated that 20 would have been approved by the end of 2013. The formal masterplan process implemented following the 2012 Local Development Plan has continued to progress masterplans. This responsibility has been escalated and now forms part of the duties of the newly formed Strategic Development Delivery Team. **As such the anticipated target of 20 has been exceeded with 22 masterplans now having been approved.**

OUTCOMES - MASTERPLANS

AREA	TOTAL MP'S REQUIRED	APPROVED (TO JULY 2014)	ONGOING	NO CONTACT
Aberdeenshire	63	22 (13)	18 (27)	23 (23)
Banff &Buchan	11	0	3	8
Buchan	13	5 (3)	2 (3)	6(7)
Formartine	11	4 (2)	4 (7)	4 (2)
Garioch	10	8 (5)	2 (3)	0 (2)
K & M	10	4 (2)	3 (7)	3 (1)
Marr	7	1 (0)	4 (4)	2 (3)

This Openness approach is very much evidenced through a large increase in the number of housing units granted consent in 2013/14 compared with the previous year as LDP allocations continue to progress, (including 4,045 units at Chapelton (new settlement) and a total of around 1,200 units on a variety of sites in Inverurie). Both the Aberdeen and Rural housing market areas experienced an increase in housing approvals.

	2013 - 2014		2012 - 2013	
	Aberdeen HMA	**Rural HMA**	**Aberdeen HMA**	**Rural HMA**
EFFECTIVE HOUSING LAND: YEARS SUPPLY	6.2 yrs	6.6 yrs	5.7 yrs	6.2 yrs
EFFECTIVE HOUSING LAND SUPPLY	5,248 units	3,786 units	4,823 units	3,754 units
HOUSING APPROVALS	6,133 units	907 units	549 units	744 units

For the third year in a row, the effective supply in the Aberdeen HMA (Housing Market Area) has increased and it now stands at its highest level since local government reorganisation in 1996 with 6.2 years' worth of effective housing land. The supply this year has been boosted by progress on sites as many of the LDP allocations which entered the audit in 2012/13 are coming on stream. This clearly demonstrates the successful implementation of the growth strategy of the Strategic Development Plan and delivery through the Local Plan.

ENERGETICA

Energetica is a 25-year programme to create an exemplar, low carbon, sustainable development corridor that will attract energy organisations and individuals to a high quality natural and built coastal environment. The programme is a partnership between Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen City Council and Scottish Enterprise. Energetica covers a 30-mile long area extending from the north of Aberdeen to Peterhead.

Within 2013-14 period the Energetica programme has taken a significant step forward with the appointment of a Development Manager to oversee the project and drive it forward. The new post, the first time a dedicated management role has been created for Energetica, will focus on delivering the project's ambitions and priorities, as set out in the new and refreshed Energetica Strategic Delivery Framework.

PLANNING UPDATE FOR ENERGETICA

› National Planning Framework 3 refers to Energetica, in particular in relation to the Aberdeen to Peterhead and Aberdeen City strategic growth areas.

› Peterhead – see project specific table below.

› Energetica is included in the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan, with specific references under these two strategic growth areas.

› The Local Development Plans for both Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City designate the Energetica area on maps, and include policies, supplementary guidance and planning advice specific to Energetica. Proposed Plans in preparation in reviews of these Local Development Plans carry forward this coverage of Energetica.

› At Blackdog, an application for the early release of 50 of the 1,000 houses in the proposed major development has been submitted to Aberdeenshire Council for consideration as an exemplar Energetica development.

› At the Trump International Golf Course, development is continuing slowly, pending the resolution of the proposal for the offshore wind farm in the vicinity.

› The major development at Cromleybank, Ellon, is currently the subject of transportation investigations into links with the existing road network. A processing agreement for the development is near to being agreed. The new academy at Cromleybank is on schedule for occupation at the start of the 2014-15 academic year.

TRUMP INTERNATIONAL GOLF COURSE

PETERHEAD POWER STATION

› **Ongoing National and Major projects at pre-application stage at Peterhead include :**

LOCATION	PROJECT	CURRENT PROJECT	IMPACT/BENEFITS
Peterhead Port	Upgrade involving the provision of new quayside facilities and deepening of harbour	At pre-application stage EIA Scoping stage	Major contribution to energy sector of the local economy
Peterhead North Connect Interconnector	Electricity interconnector between Scotland and Norway – onshore works associated with interconnector/connector station.	At pre-application stage EIA Scoping stage	Key to an enhanced High Voltage Energy transmission network (as per NPPF 3)
Peterhead Power Station	Carbon capture and storage proposals	At pre-application stage EIA Scoping stage	Key component of meeting national targets for carbon reduction
LDP Allocated Sites	Site M1 to the west of the A90, for which a development framework has been agreed	At pre-application stage	Major development component in meeting the aims of the LDP for Peterhead
Offshore Renewable Projects	Onshore works associated with offshore renewable energy projects and major electricity transmission projects	At pre-application stage EIA Scoping stage	Major contribution to of meeting national targets for carbon reduction and to the energy sector of the local as well as national economy

DELIVERY

An innovative Delivery Team have been in post for one year now and have a key role in co-ordination of Services across the Council. The team are increasingly being approached by the development industry for assistance with a variety of issues.

ACTION PROGRAMME

The Delivery Team have been working closely with the development industry and key stakeholders to update the 2012 Action Programme, and this was updated and republished in May 2014. The Delivery team are building relations with the industry through ongoing communication. Work has now started on the Proposed Action Programme, with a project plan in place to deliver this alongside the Proposed Local Development Plan 2016. Workshop meetings are being arranged with key agencies and stakeholders to update infrastructure information. Contact with the development industry is being made for updates and issues relating to delivery of allocated sites.

As part of the ongoing update of the Action Programme, the Delivery Team monitor applications coming forward on a weekly basis, and also monitor pending planning applications, offering assistance where it is seen to be required.
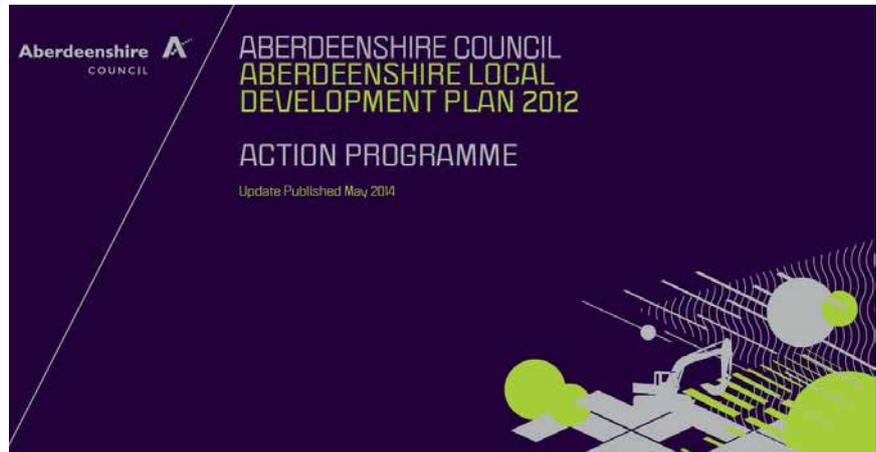
Extract Action Programme :

DELIVERY – MAJOR SITES

For the major sites, the Delivery Team arrange and co-ordinate regular project or progress meetings. Where there are issues with delivery, the Delivery Team seeks information or facilitates meetings between the developers and the relevant services / stakeholders to ensure problems are resolved.

The work does not stop when planning permission is issued and a key role of the Delivery Team is ensuring development on the ground takes place. An example of this is 'Chapelton' which is a new town consisting of 4045 houses, a new school, commercial development, retail and community infrastructure and is being developed by a consortium. Monthly project meetings are held with the Chapelton team, and a range of agencies and services, to ensure that delivery is co-ordinated and sustainable. Discussion of issues such as roads, health care and education are ongoing. Chapelton is now being successfully delivered, with the first house completed in Quarter 4 of 2013/2014. The Delivery Team have received positive feedback from the Chapelton team who acknowledged the invaluable input of the Delivery Team in focussing and co-ordinating resources towards delivery of Chapelton.

CASE STUDY 1 – DELIVERY ON THE GROUND

CHAPELTON OF ELSICK: DELIVERY OF DEVELOPMENT

Since its allocation in the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan in 2012, Aberdeenshire Council and Elsick Development Company have worked closely in progressing the development. A project team was set up at the outset to progress the Development Framework, masterplan and subsequent planning applications. The planning application was granted on 2 October 2013.

Since the delivery team have been in post (July 2012), they have been leading on monthly project meetings in partnership with the Area Office. Attendance at project meetings varies to reflect the issues arising, and ensures that the right people are around the table.

Project meetings have been integral to getting development on the ground, dealing with issues such as:

› Planning conditions
› Road construction consent (RCC)
› S56 details
› Signage and other non-standard details
› Addresses
› Landscaping
› Education
› Scottish water: flow rates, connections
› Building Warrants

Project meetings have been particularly important in this forum given the quality of development promoted at Chapelton.

Alongside these project meetings, the Delivery Team co-ordinate a quarterly community liaison committee meeting and a Steering Group Meeting.

› Partnership working across all Council services
› External stakeholders and key agencies has meant the new town at Chapelton has progressed **from planning permission to release of new houses in less than one year.**

Feedback from Chris Pattison of Turnberry Consulting:

"...The Delivery Team is focussed on the success of the overall project and is able to prioritise or manage their colleagues resources in pursuit of key issues. At the heart of this success is an effective partnership between you and the Area Manager. I think that partnership gives the Delivery Team the authority it needs to act across the Council, and in return, brings the Area Office closer to the delivery process."

The Delivery Team have also been integral to the approval of Development Frameworks at Laurencekirk, Peterhead and Kintore, where progress is now being made on planning applications.

CASE STUDY 2 – DEVELOPMENT PLAN DELIVERY

LAURENCEKIRK DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Site M1 in Laurencekirk is allocated for 885 houses and 11 hectares of employment land. The site is in the control of two developers. The Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2012 requires the site to produce a development framework to cover the key infrastructure requirements (transportation, education), land uses and phasing, and broadly set out the location of open space. This is particularly important where there are various landowners and developers involved, so that all developers equally contribute to the requirements of the site. The site is a large allocation which will meet the needs of Laurencekirk for considerable time. The framework is therefore important in identifying land and provision for future infrastructure. A key requirement of this site, and one which the community are very supportive of, is an alternative route from Fordoun Road to the A90 to take pressure of Laurencekirk High Street. The developers consulted with the local community on two occasions and took comments on board to shape the framework.

The Delivery Team were responsible for progressing the framework and ultimately reporting the framework to the Area Committee. The Delivery Team met regularly with the Developer's, and liaised with other services, stakeholders and agencies as required.

The outcome is a strategy for the long term future of Laurencekirk which is agreed by all parties and the Members of Aberdeenshire Council.

LAURENCEKIRK DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
Prepared by Ryden LLP on behalf of Kirkwood Homes Ltd and A&J Stephen
September 2013
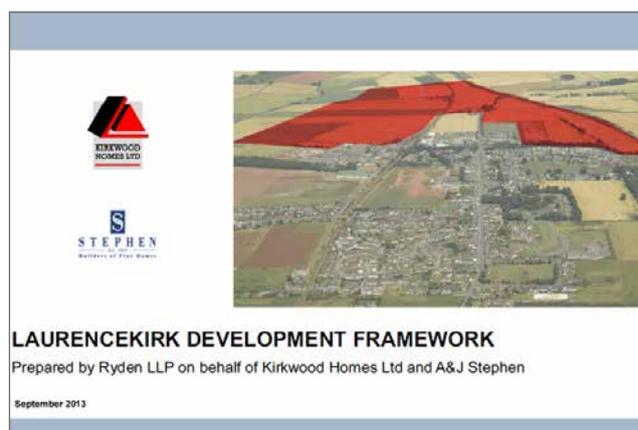
BUILT HERITAGE OF ABERDEENSHIRE - REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT

Service Plan (High Level Targets):

Progress with the development of confident, self-sufficient communities through the delivery of the Council's framework for regeneration aimed to address issues of deprivation and inequalities of opportunity in the target towns of Banff, Macduff, Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

PARTNERSHIP WORK - PROJECTS

› Work with the **Northeast Scotland Preservation Trust (NESPT)** in running a conservation **materials store.**

› The **Northeast Scotland Biological Records Centre (NesBrec)**, successfully run as a partnership for many years, now hosted within Aberdeenshire Council.

› Work with the **Cairngorms National Park** towards restoration of Kindrochit Castle, Braemar.

› Continued support to coastal partnerships **(Moray First Partnership** and **East Grampian Coastal Partnership)** in anticipation of further developments in marine planning.

BUILT HERITAGE OF ABERDEENSHIRE - REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT

› Continuation of **Portsoy Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)** (2011-2016), with funding distributed in small grants in excess of £100,000 to date, of which approx. £5,000 in 2014. One priority project completed, one on site, and two further projects well into development stage; one training event held and one planned for late August.

› Project development underway for **Banff CARS** (2014-2019), with recent appointment of project officer to this £500,000 project.

› Proposed **THI** and **CARS** at **Fraserburgh**; preparation of bids for submission at end of August for a potential £5m project.

HISTORIC ASSETS MANAGEMENT PROJECT (HAMP)

› Review and prioritisation of management of listed and scheduled Council owned buildings and structure

› Appointment of full time post to support the project

› External match funding being sought to progress this area of work.

INDIVIDUAL BUILT HERITAGE PROJECTS

› Major projects designed to protect and enhance the built heritage of Aberdeenshire are underway or completed at:

1. **Haddo Country Park, as part of £1.8 million HLF project**
2. **Stonehaven Clock Tower** **£245,000**
3. **Tullich Kirk and Kirkyard** **£200,000 (est.)**
4. **Kindrochit Castle, Braemar** **£200,000**

HADDO HOUSE/PARK/OFFICIAL OPENING

HADDO COUNTRY PARK

HADDO COUNTRY PARK

KINDROCHIT CASTLE

STONEHAVEN CLOCK TOWER

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT:
SERVICE PLAN PRIORITIES – 2013-14

Continue to review and improve the performance of the Planning and Development service to ensure that all planning applications are processed in an efficient and effective manner without sacrificing service quality.

REVIEW/CHANGE

During 2013/2014 (PPF period) the Planning Service have gone through a significant change to its staffing structure and processes. This included a comprehensive replacement of its electronic business system, the implementation of this occurred in March/April 2014. Review of the Development Management structure has been completed and implementation of the new staffing structure commenced from October 2013 as was the target. Performance targets were the key driver in terms of the Review.

The main outcomes were met as follows :

Review Outcomes	Target	Target Achieved	Comments
Creation of a Strategic Development Delivery Team	October 2013	Yes	Timely and appropriate delivery of some of the larger sites is key to Aberdeenshire's economic growth and the perceived success. Equally the key performance indicator for major apps is particularly poor in Aberdeenshire and must be improved.
Establish a stand-alone Planning Enforcement Team	January 2014	Yes	By the end of March 2014 a team of 3 had been recruited.
Merge the existing 6 Area Teams into three teams under the management of Team Managers	October 2013	Yes	Teams are in place under new format. Area offices still remain – 3 teams across 5 areas.
Appoint additional staff	October 2013 - February 2014	Yes	Recruitment had been carried out in most teams with only a few vacancies by end of March 2014. New roles and additional staff.
Create a Single Address Point and E Planning Unit for all planning application, enquiries and submissions with a promotion of online submission	January 2014	Yes	Team in place prior to new Uniform system being fully implemented.
Provision of Streamlined processes to support planning functions within the new Structure	October 2013 onwards	Yes	New roles and additional staff allow lower average caseloads per officer. Greater focus on the frontloading of quality pre-application advice. This should allow for swifter determination and allows planners to focus on solutions for delivering growth. To aid this delivery it is anticipated that this area of work should increase to 25% of Planner time on average. Implementation of Uniform largely post PPF period, but demonstrating streamlined processes and electronic work flows.

The new Development Management staffing structure was implemented in October 2013.

Whilst relatively premature to evidence immediate improvement within this PPF period the following can be confirmed as implementation of new ways of working and more streamlined processes:

AMALGAMATION OF TEAMS

Three area planning teams have been formed. Although teams are still based within five of the six administrative areas, their structure and amalgamated approach has commenced in terms of flexibility in cross area working, alternative working patterns (flexible working for staff), work load distribution and Committee reporting.

Team Managers – Four new positions created to enable greater scope on managing the staff resource and a greater strategic overview on team performance in line with meeting the aims of the Improving Performance Strategy (IPS).

Senior Planners - Increased to nine posts with dedicated Seniors in each team to allow more support and flexibility for Team Managers whilst focusing on the daily professional operational workload and Committee reporting.

Planning Officers – Increase from 24.2 posts to 32 posts to enable more scope and flexibility to manage smaller average caseloads but improve average times for dealing with all applications.

Strategic Development Delivery Team (SDDT) – a team of four overseen by a Team Manager dedicated to deal with the more strategic and major development matters – focusing on a tailored service to allow developers to engage and interact at all stages on the planning process: Masterplans, major pre-application and major application processing – to ensure pre and post application work on major and significant sites within strategic areas are co-ordinated and prioritised.

Enforcement Team
The process to recruit a newly formed Enforcement Team began in 2013. A Senior Officer and 2 Enforcement Officers have been appointed. Two vacant posts are about to go through the selection process. The Team are located centrally in one area to maximise resources and to enable more efficient and streamlined working practises. The Enforcement Charter is due to be reviewed in 2015. A dedicated enf@ email address has been set up as part of the streamlining of the system and to better enable customers to interact with this part of the service. A dedicated administration resource has also been allocated.

Benefits already apparent: (October to March) also impact of Improving Performance Strategy (IPS)

› Level of applications per Officer has dropped from an average of 150 to an average of 30-35 applications per officer at any one time.

› Changes to internal case-handling procedures through greater focus on pre-application process, and new work flow both pre and post Uniform.

› More opportunity for cross team working and cover for staff absences.

› Reduction in Pending Applications and Legacy cases.

› There is now more scope for staff to engage in higher levels and better quality of engagement with applicants/developers and provide quality pre-application advice for both major and non-major applications.

NEW HOUSING - BANCHORY

PRE-APPLICATION SERVICE

Major Applications/Masterplans – Pre-application

The Aberdeenshire Major Application pre-application service approaches its 8th year of operation.

Several reviews of the process have taken place and further amendments to the process have been applied since the Development Management Review and the set-up of the SDDT, who have responsibility for the major pre-application process and masterplan pre-application process.

The remit and presence of the SDDT has been rolled out to Developers (through Forums and mail shots). The benefit of one point of contact to take a proposal through from Masterplan to application determination and beyond has already been demonstrated.

Overall Masterplan

Site Plan

Blackdog Development
Master Plan was agreed by the area committee on 12/02/2013.

Application valid on 20/01/2014 (Processing Agreement signed on 24/01/2014), was discussed at area committee on 29/04/2014. Application required going to Infrastructure Services Committee (ISC). Application was reported to ISC on 03/07/2014 where Members resolved to delegate grant. Heads of Terms were agreed prior to ISC.

The timescale as agreed in the processing agreement for conclusion of S75 was August 2014. This application is on target.

LOCAL APPLICATIONS PRE-APPLICATION

A formal process for non- major pre-application is now available. This extends the focus on ensuring that requests for information are reasonable and proportionate in terms of the future submission of applications. Written confirmation of a pre-application proposal will follow a meeting (if necessary) with all material issues identified, including policy compliance or otherwise and the likelihood of support. By way of a checklist of likely requirements greater certainty in terms of proportionate request for accompanying information is given. This process has been rolled out to agents through regular email shots and at the Spring bi annual Agent/Developer Forum.

Number of pre-applications enquiries received for 2013/14 = 2033

The Uniform system can hold a pre-application reference against a planning application so in future we should be able to provide figures relating to number of applications which had pre-app advice and how many of those were approved.

CUSTOMER PROVISION/SERVICES/ENGAGEMENT

In June 2013 and March 2014 further Customer surveys were carried out.

The resulting Team Action Plans continue to be used to address specific customer concerns to highlight and improve customer engagement standards and to focus training and best practice in engagement policy.

Examples of Action Plan input :

Issue	Solution/Action
Improve explanation of why application is being refused.	Promote standard practice of highlighting reasons/promoting pre-application process.
Applicants/Agents are not being kept up to date during determination process.	Standard practice all applicant/agents are contacted by planning officer at start of process and regularly throughout. Discuss with Planners on a regular basis at 1-2-1s and team meetings and monitor files if required.
Planners not returning calls within agreed timescales.	When diverting phones Planners to confirm with admin when callers can expect to be called back. All return calls on same day (am/pm) unless specified otherwise.
Dissatisfaction with communication.	Make regular contact with applicant/agent throughout process. Respond to written communication within 5 working days. Promote use of email/telephone rather that hard copy letters.
Communicate with applicants that this information has not been requested but if the application is to be supported will be required.	Seniors to "traffic light" new applications (Red = highly unlikely to be approved – don't seek further details. Amber = may be supported – ask for further information).

NEW BUSINESS SYSTEM – UNIFORM

Although only implemented in March/April 2014, promotion of the new system, the use of the public access register and the use of E Planning for submission has been carried out at Agent/Developer Forums. Part of this was a real time demonstration on how to use the Scottish Government Portal. Mail shots to agents/developers promoting the use of e planning have also been done as has web site promotion. The offer of training has been given with agents/applicants/Community Councils alike on use of the e planning portal and the **Public Access Register.**

E PLANNING PROMOTION

PLANNING WEBSITE

E-planning Changes

As of the 3rd March 2014, we are changing the way Planning Application submissions are handled. This will affect the way you send us applications and the way information relating to applications is managed. Please view **more details** or **contact us** for more information.

›   View ePlanning Poster (pdf 1.17mb)

In 2012-2013 Aberdeenshire Council had an 18% use of online submissions through the Scottish Government Portal. Early signs are this has improved since March into April 2014 (Single Point of submission/ E Planning Team).

Online payment and telephone payments are now encouraged.

Online Applications Uptake	
2012/13	18%
2013/14:	23%

2. HIGH QUALITY DEVELOPMENT ON THE GROUND

"To promote sustainable mixed communities with the highest standards of design. We need to achieve excellence in design across all developments in Aberdeenshire with a design process that makes sure planning takes place early and over the long term. We must consider the balance of mix of uses, type of house, affordability and the types of tenancy." ALDP 2012

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The current development plan remains consistent with the newly approved Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan and that document's vision for high quality design.

The development plan promotes a twin track approach to issues of layout siting and design with context for major sites provided by the requirement for a range of design statements (including development frameworks and masterplans) and a specific policy designed to encourage an approach to design based on addressing issues rather than following a pattern [9]. This latter approach has introduced scope for flexibility in good design but has been challenging for development management staff insofar that not every part of the development industry follows the planning advice [10] prepared when preparing statements demonstrating how they have complied with the policy. All too often a minimal design statement is provided and further engagement with agents is proposed to resolve this issue.

PRE-APPLICATION SERVICE

Pre-application discussion and advice has always been encouraged at Aberdeenshire. A more formal **pre-application service** for non-major applications has been promoted and is seen as being beneficial to increasing high quality design for local developments of all scales and improving the speed of determination when an application is received.

EVIDENCE – CASE STUDY :

Pre-application where pre app resulted in added high quality value.

› Existing cottage on infill site within small rural settlement.

› Proposal to replace existing with contemporary and energy efficient dwellinghouse.

› First application received.

› 2 storey contemporary design.

› While supportive of general contemporary and energy efficient design approach, issues surrounding appropriateness in context of surroundings in terms of impact on neighbours, scale, trees and impacts on Listed Buildings.

› Representations received.

› Application withdrawn and further detailed pre-application discussions took place.

› Existing cottage on infill site within small rural settlement.

› Proposal to replace existing with contemporary and energy efficient dwellinghouse.

› Relevant information received at validation stage.

› Application approved within Local Development timescales – no representations received.

DESIGN PANEL

The Aberdeen City and Shire Design Panel continues as a joint venture in raising awareness of good design in the North East. The Panel is a consultee and provide comment on masterplans and contentious applications.

DESIGN TRAINING

Collaboration is on-going with Robert Gordon's University **(Scott Sutherland School of Architecture)** to set up Design Seminars for both Developers & Planners.

Aberdeenshire Design Awards Aberdeenshire Council recognises that good design is important to the public realm and in a wider context believes that development must be of benefit to the people. The aspirations of the Aberdeenshire Design Awards are to encourage the very best in environmental design, to stimulate and develop a deeper and broader interest in our traditional and recent architectural surroundings, and to improve the

built environment within Aberdeenshire, thus raising the profile and benefit of good architectural design within our communities.

› Raising profile of high-quality design and examples of best practice across all scales of development, from single homes to volume house-builders.

› Biennial awards to be held September 2014.

› Total number of entries 153 (an increase of over 40%), based on revised categories as described in PPF 2013.

HIGH QUALITY DESIGN ON THE GROUND

TRADITIONAL/CONTEMPORARY

Westwood Cottage, Insch, modern, design, contemporary, traditional design, awards, housing, property, client, architect, sustainable, craftsmanship, planning, environment, development, new build, home, front door, window, garden, front elevation, roof, tile, front door, timber, wood, wood cladding, cladding, timber clad, glass, glazing, timber cladding, rural, countryside, residential, exterior, interior, house, family home.

NEW/MODERN/CONTEMPORARY

The Colour Bothy, Hirn, Banchory, modern design, contemporary, awards, property, client, architect, planning, business, development, new build, studio, texture, colour, textile, artwork, fabric, weave, glass, elevation, cladding, decking, planting, interior, exterior, timber, rural, client, design.

CONSERVATION / RESTORATION / COMMUNITY

Banff Castle Kelpie Cafe, Conservation, coffee, tea, cake, biscuits, food, seats, table, music, space, gallery, beams, gardens, chickens, interior, exterior, development, planning, property, client, wood, wolf, flowers, stone, tiles, gates.

LISTED BUILDING / RESTORATION / REUSE / BUSINESS

The Apple House, Fasque, Craftsmanship/Conservation, Bath, Bathroom, copper, plug, taps, water, drain, relax, shower, honeymoon suite, estate, wedding, bedroom, tiles, deer, tartan, feet, silver.

PRE-APPLICATION COLLABORATION WITH ENVIRONMENT TEAM

› The Process has been revised for efficiency and integration with new e-planning software to enable a more streamline consultation process.

PLACEMAKING

› Regeneration work carried out by the Environment Team makes an ongoing contribution to placemaking across Aberdeenshire, through e.g.

1. Project work
2. CARS and THI
3. An ongoing programme of conservation area reviews
4. Provision of landscaping advice in support of planning applications.
5. Access work relating to UAR, core paths and long distance trails e.g. Deeside Way, Formartine and Buchan Way.

PARTNERSHIP WORK

› To deliver high quality development e.g. at Haddo House and Country Park. (See Open for Business)

› With NESPT, to promote recycling of materials and re-use of indigenous materials within new development and re-development e.g. at Stonehaven clock tower (See Open for Business).

CONSERVATION AREA REVIEWS

› The Council has a rolling programme of identifying, preserving and enhancing areas of outstanding built heritage and historic character across **Aberdeenshire**.

Portsoy & Tarves – Conservation Area reviews

BUILT HERITAGE – REGENERATION AND INVESTMENT

› Various strands of project work as described above (Kindrochit Castle, Stonehaven Clock Tower, Haddo), as well as THI/CARS, all contribute to high quality development, potentially attracting inward investment.

Stonehaven – Clock Tower

› Aberdeenshire Council's Environment Teams are committed to guide, promote, enhance and interpret the unique yet diverse resource of Aberdeenshire's built and cultural environment. As part of this commitment the team has developed a **Historic Environment Strategy** which can be viewed online.

3. CERTAINTY
SERVICE PLAN (HIGH LEVEL TARGETS)

On-going development of well-planned growing communities and businesses through implementation of the Local Development Plan and Strategic Development Plan.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The approval of the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development plan in March 2014 in a largely unchanged form from the Structure Plan of 2009 adds to the certainty provided by the **Local Development Plan 2016.**

We have adhered to the project plan [11] for the preparation of LDP 2016, with every target set during the period 2013-2014 being met. We hit dates set 18 months in advance for the publication of the **Main Issues Report.**

The content of this MIR has been informed by a *Monitoring Statement and a Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report.* Planning Officers have sought the views of community groups, industry stakeholders and other interested parties to help identify the "main issues". Notes of the meetings held, "position papers" providing an in-depth analysis of contentious issues,

the Monitoring Statement and SEA Environmental Report, and an analysis of existing LDP policy have all been published on the dedicated **website**.

A consistent history of effective plan management resulted in all stakeholders having confidence about when their input would be required. This is published annually in the **Development Plan Scheme** [12]. The publication of the 2014 Development Plan Scheme was delayed by 4 weeks to ensure that the full implications of the delay in publishing Scottish Planning Policy were addressed. We considered it was important for it to have an accurate programme of engagement than one that we could not have adhered to due to known externalities.

An open process was employed in the review of existing policies to give very early indication to stakeholders whether

there was likely to be change in the policy content of the emerging plan [13].

Main Issues Report Addendum 2014
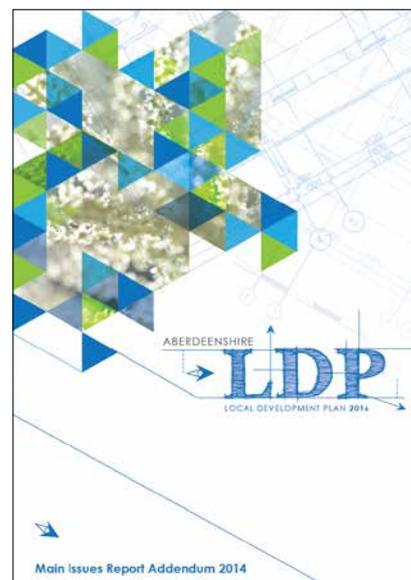
POLICY REVIEW

As part of the assessment for "Main Issues" for the Local Development Plan the Policy Team in liaison with the Development Management Team has undertaken a review of the policies and supplementary guidance within the current (2012) Local Development Plan. Within the review process it has been assumed that continuity of policy

between the current plan and the future plan is an important objective to deliver long term certainty for communities and developers alike.

The review has consisted of critically assessing the policies against two specific controls:

Whether there has been change in the national or regional context that warrants a change in the policy; Whether there has been a change in the wider environment in which the policy is designed to operate.

MAIN ISSUES REPORT - PROMOTION AND ENGAGEMENT

Engagement – Main Issues.......
Engagement – Main Issues.......
Engagement

MIR - Extract

7.   How Will We Take the Plan Forward

7.1   The publication of the Main Issues Report will mark the start of a series of public meetings to discuss the "main issues" and other planning related matters. 39 public meetings have been planned across Aberdeenshire. The purpose of these meetings is:

- To provide clarity on the issues
- To encourage engagement with the process
- To provide a platform for discussion of what the Local Development Plan needs to deliver

7.2   We have posed a series of 19 questions within this Main Issues Report, and would be very pleased to receive your views on the matters they raise. However responding to these questions is not obligatory, and while they should help you focus your response to us, we are pleased to receive your comments on any matter concerning the Local Development Plan 2016 the questions posed are:

NEW ROAD LAYOUT – PORTLETHEN – HOUSING/INDUSTRIAL

▌ DELIVERY

The Delivery Team have on-going engagement / liaison with Council Services to progress development:

› The Delivery Team have been liaising with Education and Property colleagues to ensure resolution for education constraints on allocated sites. As education is often a constraint to development, there is on-going work here to ensure strategies are put in place. The team are also assisting Education colleagues with providing responses to planning applications, and chasing up responses where needed.

› The team have on-going correspondence with **Development Management** colleagues whether it is to request progress on applications, or receive updates, or provide assistance where a site may have stalled.

› The team work closely with the **Strategic Development Delivery** Team and in many cases the Delivery Team ensures the project is kept to a programme / framework to meet deadlines. The Delivery Team can offer support to the SDDT, particularly in terms of liaising with other services and agencies and in being up to speed on infrastructure issues across the strategic allocations.

› The Delivery Team work closely with **Developer Obligations**, and share information so that the Developer Obligations Team have the most up to date information.

› The team work together with **Transportation and Roads Development** colleagues to overcome issues and chase progress where required.

Ongoing engagement / liaison with key agencies to progress development:

› Ongoing liaison with **Scottish Water**, particularly where there are capacity issues across a number of sites.

› Ad hoc discussion and meetings with **Transport Scotland**.

› The **FIRS group** ('Future Infrastructure Requirements for Services' Group) has an ongoing role in informing infrastructure provision and providing certainty to the development industry. The group includes a wide range of agencies, internal services, ensuring wide ranging partnership working.

The website promotes the Action Programme:

Delivering Development

The Action Programme sets out how we intend to deliver the plan.

EVIDENCE OF OUTCOMES:

A Variety of scale....delivery....needs.....development ....

One of the first projects the Delivery Team became involved in alongside Development Management was to ensure the delivery of Scotland's largest 'new town', Chapleton, to the south of Aberdeenshire.

Scotland's largest new town starts on site**.** Lord Southesk, Director of Elsick Development Company, said:

"This momentous day is the culmination of many years of planning. It will be really exciting to see the diggers start on site creating what will become a thriving new sustainable community with a busy high street, schools, healthcare facilities and lots of green space on 2,000 acres of farmland."

Work is now underway to create Scotland's largest new town, Chapelton, five-miles south of Aberdeen, following a founding ceremony today, Wednesday 2 October 2013.

The £8 million infrastructure work, required to service the development, is being carried out by local firm WM Donald. Developed by Elsick Development Company (EDC) Chapelton will be an 8,000 home, £2bn town with 40 per cent green space and a focus on sustainable community living.

Over 100 guests attended the ceremony to witness the unveiling of a cairn seat in the gardens of Elsick House, which will become a civic space at the centre of the town.

Source - **chapeltonofelsick.com/news**

Development has now started on site and the first Phase of housing has recently been sold out.

The Commercial area has also proven to be in demand:

The final commercial space has been reserved at Hume Square and it will be filled by a dental practice to serve the first homes and wider afield.

Chapelton Dental Care will be run in partnership with Portlethen Dental care and will be situated between Teacake and the Nursery School.

Source - **chapeltonofelsick.com/news**

**PORTLETHEN COMMUNITY WOODLAND PROJECT**

CASE STUDY 1 :

The Delivery Team are involved with allocated site H1 in Newtonhill and in trying to overcome constraints to delivering the site. Liaison with various Services including Roads, Estates and Landscape Services has been on-going, and the team maintain regular contact with the Development Team in order to progress this allocated site.
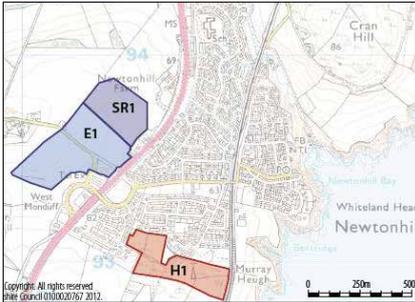
CASE STUDY 2 :

Through organising stakeholder meetings for allocated sites M1 and H1 at Balmedie, and bringing together the four landowners (including the Council), the delivery team have been integral to progressing the masterplan on this site. Since the first meeting in the beginning of the year a draft masterplan has been presented to a masterplan meeting and community engagement on the masterplan is planned for August. It is intended that the masterplan will be reported to Committee in October. Ongoing stakeholder meetings continue.
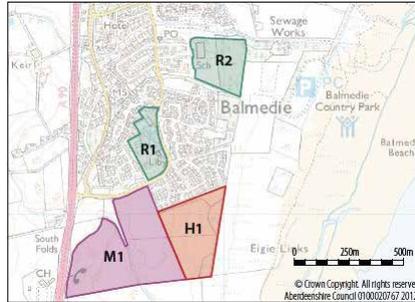
DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH

The Information and Research Team collect and provide data to inform the LDP. This ensures that accurate and up to date information is available for policy monitoring including data on housing and employment land supply.

SERVICE PLAN (HIGH LEVEL TARGETS):

Progress with the development of confident, self-sufficient communities through the delivery of the Council's framework for regeneration aimed to address issues of deprivation and inequalities of opportunity in the target towns of Banff, Macduff, Peterhead and Fraserburgh.

Securing Investment – Built Environment/Historical Environment

› Internal advice on built and natural heritage is standardised across the team by liaising through regular cross-team working groups. These provide a forum to review emerging legislation, protocols and key issues.
› Policy advice, as well as pre-application and application advice, is set within this context.
› Environment surgeries with Development Management take place weekly in the area offices.

Development Management Certainty

A priority highlighted through the PPF Feedback is the need to improve decision making timescales particularly with respect to major applications as well as local applications.

This also reflects the further priority to decrease legacy cases and by association address the ongoing difficulties regarding the timeous conclusion of legal agreements and developer contributions. The need to promote the use of Processing Agreements is also a priority focus. Efficient decision making instils certainty which in turn builds confidence in the Planning System from those users who expect and require good quality outcomes.

Overall in 2013-2014 the speed of decision making has improved. This continues a consistent upward trend of improvement from 2010/2011. Likewise average times have decreased from last year. At 69.4% the overall Aberdeenshire Target of 70% was almost achieved.

% of Applications Determined in 2 months
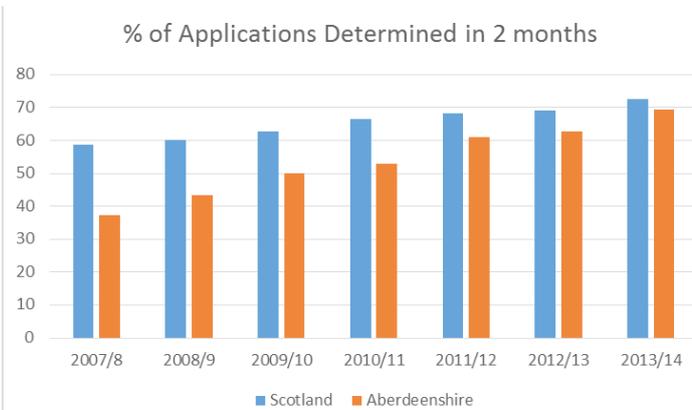
Left: The table evidences the trend of improvement.

Approval Rates have increased to 93% this year.
Delegated Rates have marginally improved to 89%
Departures Rates have reduced demonstrating the robustness of the Local Plan and decision making process:
2012/13   2% of approvals
2013/14   1% of approvals

Pre-application rates have increased in numbers (from 1929 to 2033). Unfortunately the transition to Uniform was after the PPF period of time and thus we have not been able to provide figures relating to number of applications which had pre-app advice and how many of those were approved. This will be available as part of next year's PPF through the use of the Uniform system.

YEAR	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Scotland	58.7	60.1	62.6	66.5	68.1	69.1	72.5
Aberdeenshire	37.3	43.4	50	53	61	62.7	69.4

ADDRESSING PERFORMANCE PRIORITIES TO ENSURE CERTAINTY

Overall performance has increased but further improvement remains the main focus. Part of this focus is addressing the serious concerns pertaining to the performance of:

› **Major application timescales** – The Strategic Development Delivery Team (SDDT) was formed specifically to address the poor performance of major applications. Part of the Key aims of the Review was *to ensure that Masterplanning and Major Applications are dealt with in a co-ordinated and time efficient fashion and that pre and post application work on major application site within strategic areas are prioritised.* The major application performance has improved in the last year but at 115.9 weeks to decision this obviously is not acceptable. Significant further improvement is required and work continues to achieve this. The SDDT resource along with the Delivery Team resource has to address this performance priority. Evidence of direct impact / improvement post SDDT is not as yet available.

› **Legal Agreement Timescales** – Another priority is to address the major issues in the delay in concluding Legal Agreements. The average time to conclude has risen to 151.4 weeks. It is recognised that this is both unacceptable and a real impediment to the timely delivery of decisions and thus development. A great deal of work has been carried out between the Planning and Legal Services to address this issue. A *Programme of Actions* has been rolled out through both a review of working practises by the Legal Conveyancing Team and in collaboration with the Planning Service.

Programme of Actions:
› Heads of terms must be agreed prior to application being reported to committee.
› If legal agreement not concluded within 6 months then requirement to report back to committee.
› New standardised Legal Agreement instruction forms.
› Dedicated Section75@ email address.
› Standard Section 75 templates with standardised clauses to streamline conclusion of agreements.
› Outsourcing Section 75s.

› **Legacy Applications – Highlighted as 'Red'** in the RAG Feedback. At the end of March 2014 (pre August) 2009 Legacy Cases have decreased from 83 to 34 due to the vigorous drive to reduce numbers. Applications of one year plus are also included as Legacy Cases and there is an equal drive to reduce these applications.

› In response, a review of the current work on the reduction of legacy applications was done. A Legacy Strategy has been implemented to (i) reduce and manage these legacy cases and (ii) avoid future legacy cases re occurring. For the purpose of the Strategy, Legacy cases also include all applications one year and more.

› The accompanying table shows the comparison with the "legacy cases" (pre August-2009 & between August 2009 & March 2014).

No. Pending	Total	Pre Aug 09	Aug 09 - Mar 10	Apr 10 - Mar 11	Apr 11 - Mar 12	Apr 12 - Mar 13	Apr 13 - Mar 14
31/03/2014	943	34	7	12	29	59	802
31/03/2013	1028	83	14	34	98	799	-

MEARNS ACADEMY COMMUNITY CAMPUS

GOURDON CONSERVATION AREA

› The Strategy has triggered implementation of referring applications back to Committee if no s75 is signed within 6 months of instruction. This element is the major delay in the process.

› The work to promote and insist on pre-application engagement and entering Processing Agreements is anticipated to further reduce the legacy cases.

› **Processing Agreements** - A Processing Agreement procedure is now in place. This has been rolled out to developers and is available on the website. Staff training has taken place to ensure all staff are engaged in the process. Further work is required to engage developers. A Developer Forum to specifically focus on the use of Processing Agreements / Legal Agreements and Pre-application engagement has been arranged for early autumn 2014.

› An Aberdeenshire Processing Agreement Template is available on the **website.**

› The template follows the Scottish government template but adjusted to take account of best practice liaison with Legal and Developer Obligations Service and requirements for improvement within the Improving

Performance Strategy (IPS), e.g. agreeing heads terms on developer contributions and Affordable Housing prior to Committee.

› There is a requirement to continue the promotion and actively encourage the use of Processing Agreements for all Major and National Planning Applications and also for substantial or more complex local applications.

› Staff are reminded that Processing Agreements are 'live' documents which should be kept under review and updated if necessary i.e. change of timescales for Committee.

› Once a Processing Agreement has been signed by the relevant parties these are saved in a data base overseen by the Strategic Development Delivery Team (SDDT) for monitoring and future reference.

› **Developer Obligations –** A rapid review of the working practices of the Developer Obligations service has been considered. It was been recognised that this was required to address the specific challenges of openness, proportionality and effective delivery of development within Aberdeenshire.

The trigger challenges were identified as being:

› Local Development Plans high growth
› Existing infrastructure pressures
› Financial implications of infrastructure –
   end picture vs how you get there
› Landowner aspirations
› Processes to delivery
› Funding for affordable housing, lack of certainty.

Key Changes have been implemented :

› Revised Format for Assessment Reports
› Further Information and Advice in Separate Sheets
› Removal of standard discounts
› Cheques no longer accepted a form of payment
› Electronic system to instruct and track Section 75 Legal Agreements.

To ensure clearer guidance and proportionality a series of **Advice Sheets** are now available:

› Payment Advice Sheet
› Method of Calculation
› Frequently Asked Questions
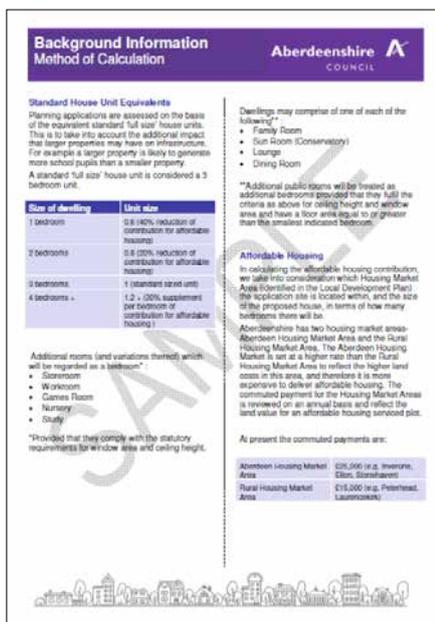
The formal roll out of both the Developer Obligations and Legal review of practices took place as part of the Planning Agents/Development Forum in early March. Staff resources associated with both these services is also currently being reviewed. A Development Management secondment to assist the Developer Obligations team will be implemented in autumn 2014. It is considered to be premature to be able to evidence the above programmes of actions being directly associated with the overall improved performance of 2013/2014.

PROTOCOLS / LIAISON GROUPS

We continue to ensure existing Protocols are kept relevant and up to date and all relevant key agencies and Council internal consultees are aware of the requirements and their obligations to both pre-application and application advice and timeous responses. All agencies/consultees are aware of the need to use Processing Agreements and a project management approach to processing of applications.

Liaison with **SEPA** continues to ensure updated legislation and processes are implemented and training events are scheduled into staff training. SEPA are piloting the Uniform consultee module.

A multi planning service meeting was held with **Historic Scotland** to discuss and agree on the input into the Joint Working Agreement and to ensure the JWA was tailored and personalised as to Aberdeenshire Council needs.

Environmental Health Liaison Group has continued to explore ways of improving performance of EH responses to wind turbine applications. This has had a significant impact on performance given the volume of applications received by Aberdeenshire Council. Recruitment difficulties compounded the response difficulties. The diversion of Development Management Fees has enabled the recruitment of a consultant to clear the backlog of responses. The work

of the Wind Turbine team enabled pending targets to be met. Although submission of wind turbine applications have decreased, the volume remains consistently high and delays in responses ultimately impacts on performance.

Wind Turbine Applications

	2012/13	2013/14
No. Pending (start)	293	166
No. Submitted	275	149
No. Determined	402	207
No. Pending (end)	162	108

Collaboration and liaison continues with the **Roads/ Transportation Service** to enhance close working relationships. This has continued to improve the commitment to the implementation of 'Designing Streets', with its widespread approach to both local as well as major developments and the use of SCOTS National Roads Development Guide.

OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF NEW STANDARDS

Home Zones:
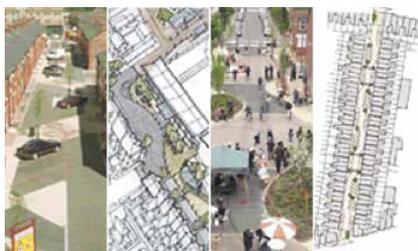
- › All with equal priority
- › Not Shared Surface Roads by another name
- › Designed at concept stage
- › Not be "bolted on" to an existing design.

- › Will normally have the following features:
  - » entrance/exit gateways
  - » appropriate signage and lighting
  - » traffic calming
  - » a shared surface
  - » indirect traffic routes – 400m to nearest conventional road
  - » areas of planting
  - » user friendly street furniture, i.e. seats or play equipment
- › Must have support of the local community to work effectively
- › Will require to be marketed as a concept when properties are sold.

Further examples of simple yet effective collaboration has produced a way forward to deal with the future change

to the domestic car parking standards and the required increase in garage sizes particularly dealing with subsequent changes to extant permissions.

Joint work between Development Management, Environment Team and SNH continues to create greater clarity, transparency and certainty regarding development and protected species (particularly bats) requirements. We have reviewed and updated the following advisory/operational documents:

- › SNH EPS Form (internal use)
- › EPS Form where no SNH intervention (internal use)
- › **Bat Survey Requirements**
- › **Bats and Development**

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT – NEW ENHANCED STAFFING STRUCTURE

The new structure is focused on providing not only better speed in decision making but also certainty through pre-application advice and consistency in process:

- › Increase in staff – less applications per officer.
- › More scope for pre-application work.
- › Each pre-application inquiry and follow up application has one point

of contact and where possible the same officer from beginning (pre-application) to end (decision and post decision).

- › Monitoring of pre-application. advice.

FORMARTINE & BUCHAN WAY SIGNAGE

NEW ELLON ACADEMY SITE

VALIDATION

Very early indications suggest that very quickly the impact on validation has been positive as evidenced from the changes to the Structure and the business system. In particular the setting up of the E Planning Team. Although premature to report on the aim of one day validation, given the implementation of the new business system (outwith this PPF period), evidence can rely on the work done by the Validation improvement group. The Validation Group has produced a standardised validation checklist now used throughout the 3 teams.

The promotion of validation and the importance of the submission of complete applications to agents/applicants have proven effective notwithstanding the advent of the E Planning Team. The twofold aim is to improve the quality of submissions and first time validation.

The use of new checklists for validation and the roll out to agents has improved instances of invalid applications by 3%.

Accurate validation figures have been unable to be produced given

the transition to the new Uniform System. Uniform will allow much better monitoring on how long applications take from receipt to invalid letter and/or acknowledgement letter being issued so we should be able to provide more detail on this for 2014/15. Very preliminary figures would suggest that since the advent of the E Planning Team and Uniform – 3 day validation is at a level of approximately 90%.

STANDARDISATION OF CONDITIONS

The Model Conditions Group has now completed their review of Planning Conditions and a set of conditions; including a set of renewables conditions are now being used. This gives greater consistency and certainty to all stakeholders.

BEST PRACTICE MANUAL

The production of this document has been delayed given the changes to structure and working practices in 2013/14. The Best Practice Group will complete this task during the latter part of 2014.

4. COMMUNICATIONS, ENGAGEMENT AND CUSTOMER SERVICE
KEY SERVICE OBJECTIVES

Work with other public bodies, private and voluntary sector partners to continually improve the quality, efficiency and level of services provided for all stakeholders in order to demonstrate Best Value and to help the Council achieve its aim of being the best council (Service Plan).

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

As befitting the stage in the preparation of the Development Plan that we were at in 2013-2014 it is perhaps unsurprising that there was little evidence of evidence gathering for the previous Planning Performance Framework. Considerable effort has been expended on engagement with stakeholders in the 8 month period leading to the Publication of the Main Issues Report, and for the first 6 weeks of the consultation thereafter.

We detailed all of this in the **Development Plan Scheme Participation Statement** [12]. Prior to the publication of the Main Issues Report meetings took place with Community Council Forums, Key agencies and special interest groups and with Elected Members to scope what the Main Issues might be [14]. This early collaboration with stakeholders proved to be of immense help in scoping the main issues published in the Autumn.

The Development Plan Scheme did not detail the internal consultations that have also taken place to inform the Main Issues Report. During the period from 12 March to the 7 May 2013 seminars took place with Area Committees to advise them of the findings of the initial stakeholder engagement and technical analysis that was undertaken, and to give opportunity for Members to assist in the identification of Issues [15]. These meetings were held in private to allow Members to express views and opinions that would not then fetter them in future decision making processes and reflect the position taken that the Main Issues Report was a technical "Officers" Report rather than a statement of intent or conclusion by Aberdeenshire Council.

In addition the FIRS group was used to explore potential cross service issues within Aberdeenshire, and the Local Development Plan Board (see below) was used to highlight the need for engagement with the development plan team within services.

Following publication of the **Main Issues Report** and its circulation to over 350 individual stakeholder interests 42 Public meetings were held [16]. This resulted in "face to face" engagement on the development plan with over 1200 individuals, including some in "hard to reach" locations. The development industry partnered us at many of these meetings presenting their vision for development within the villages. Dialogue of this nature enabled us to clarify the intention of the plan and assist stakeholders in submitting succinct and relevant representations.

Nevertheless this only represents 0.5% of the population of Aberdeenshire and as a "lesson learned" we have identified the need to review our traditional approach to consultation. Face to face contact may have avoided a submission being made at all and the value of this exercise is difficult to quantify or evidence.

The Standards for Community Engagement have been employed with all 1828 submissions to the Main Issues Report being acknowledged and with the expectation that replies telling them the outcome of their submission will be dispatched in June 2014.

Extensive use of Social media **@ShireLDP** was used to keep people informed of Local development Plan activity. Electronic delivery of material and receipt of responses to the MIR was encouraged. We used a standardised form to ensure all relevant data was captured from representees. This resulted in us not requiring any requests for further metadata to allow administration of the submissions made.

Consultation with stakeholders is an integral part of the Housing Land Audit process undertaken by the Information and Research team. Much of the site programming information contained in the audit is obtained directly from developers/agents and they are consulted on the draft audit which is published on the website.

Stakeholders are also given the opportunity to discuss responses to the consultation at an annual meeting so that an agreed position can be reached. Customer surveys carried out both directly and via the website help to ensure that the statistics and information provided by the team remain relevant and useful. Feedback from stakeholders on the consultation process has been very positive.

Probably the best indicator of the success of this engagement is that out of 15,450 units in the total effective supply in the **2014 Housing Land Audit**, only 150 units were disputed by housebuilders (1%). It is certain this figure would be much higher without the negotiation and discussion which forms part of the process.

We have also had informal feedback from Homes for Scotland that the way Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire conduct the HLA consultation (and particularly holding a meeting to allow all parties to express their views) *"This is better than any of the other Scottish authorities!"*

Individual developers and agents have also given us positive feedback - even though we don't agree on everything, they regard the consultation process as fair.

Comment from agent:
"I have been impressed by the way the meeting was conducted - despite the large number of comments received, each site was discussed and time allowed for consultees to have their say."

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT ENGAGEMENT

Customer Surveys continue to be carried out. 2013/2014 saw 2 surveys sent out.

Overall 80% & 79% customers were satisfied/fairly satisfied overall with the service they received, whilst 10% & 7% were fairly/very dissatisfied with the service they received. Feedback is given to all those who participated in terms of addressing concerns raised and how 'lessons are learnt' and form part of team Action Plans and in some cases emerged in to engagement policy.

Development Management Customer Survey July 2013

Q17 **Overall how satisfied were you with the service received from us in dealing with your application?**

Answered: 97   Skipped: 23
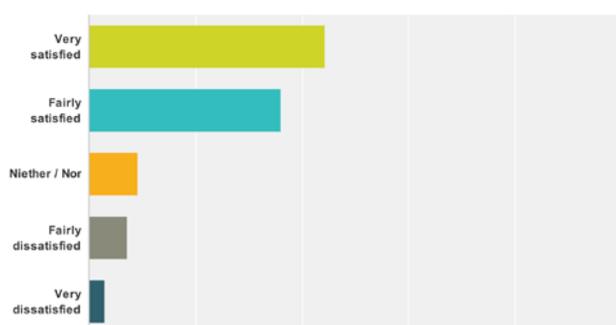
**2013   Satisfied / Fairly Satisfied - 80.4%
Fairly / Very Dissatisfied – 10.3%**

Development Management Customer Survey March 2014

Q17 **Overall how satisfied were you with the service received from us in dealing with your application?**

Answered: 127   Skipped: 1
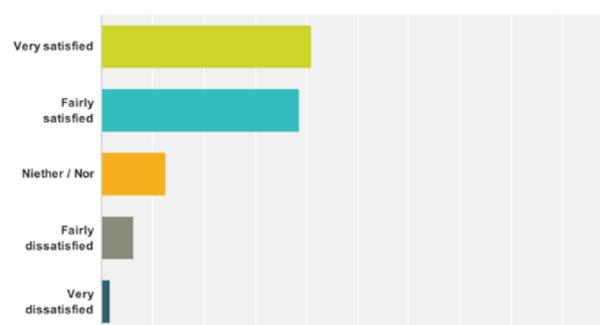
**2014   Satisfied / Fairly Satisfied – 79.5%
Fairly / Very Dissatisfied – 7.8%**

FEEDBACK / COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

Complaint / Service Requests April 2013 – April 2014

Completed Complaints	Completed Service Requests	Compliments	Within 20 Days	Outwith 20 Days
81*	306*	11	290	97

Front Line Complaints	Investigation	Not Upheld	Upheld	Partially Upheld
81	306	76	3	2

* Please note that there were 81 complaints logged and each complaint was logged once. This figure does not include responses issued as Level 2 Further Clarification responses.
* Note that Service Requests are not necessarily complaints but queries as to operational/application information.

Front line complaints have been reduced this year by 65. Similarly upheld complaints have reduced by 8. All upheld complaints are assessed and 'lessons learnt' are discussed with Team Managers and added to relevant Team Action plans and if concerning process/procedure will be added to the Best Practice Manual – currently in Draft format.

Email quote from customer:

Dear Jan,
As you know the Committee agreed with your recommendation and I have planning permission to build the new garage. I'm very much looking to getting on with the project.

For the record I wanted to write to you to thank you for your advice. You gave clear advice on the planning requirements but more importantly you gave me some insight and context into the representations. All this has reminded me of the importance of trying to be positive and considered when engaging with other people like neighbours in situations like this.

Many thanks, for responding so helpfully and positively and for giving me so much of your time this morning to explore our options.

Having your extra input certainly threw new light on our search for a solution and your suggestion of –

COMMUNITY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT

A package of Community Council Forums and Events has been organised with DM specific Elements. The dates are out with this PPF period and will be reported the next period. This is part of a renewed focus on Community Council engagement. Team Managers have been the made main contact for Community Councils. One to one meetings with CC's and Team Managers have taken place. Presentations to CC evening meetings have taken place. The new electronic planning system and the role of CC being two such topics of presentation. Mail shots of new procedures that impact on CC are carried out when necessary.

AGENT/DEVELOPER

Bi annual Agent/Developer Forums continue to take place (October 2013 & March 2014). Introducing the new Public Access Register and the promotion of E Planning was on the March agenda. An agent proficient in the use of the Scottish Government Online Portal was asked to carry out a real time demonstration to the audience. One to one demonstrations were offered to all agents/developers both in the use of the Scottish Government portal and the Public Access Register.

PLANNING FOCUS GROUP

The inaugural Planning Focus Group was held in October 2013. This set the modus operandi for the group made up from the development and business industry and academia. The main focus of the group is to better engage and strengthen relationships with those parties vital to the north east economy reliant on the effective delivery of development. Further meetings were held in March and June of 2014. One outcome has been agreement on the usefulness of Processing Agreements and the group are considering ways of best practice and commitment to the use of Processing Agreements. Further recognition has been given on the difficulties in recruiting planning staff to Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire given the competition from the oil industry and the high cost of living in the north east.

ALL ENERGY CONFERENCE

CONTACT CENTRE FRASERBURGH

ELECTED MEMBERS

Elected Member Training was given to Members through a combined Legal/DM presentation on the determination of applications and in particular how to formulate valid reasons.

BENCHMARKING – BUILT & NATURAL HERITAGE

› Benchmarking underway in relation to key areas of built and natural heritage: the Design Awards, Doors Open Day, the process for the maintenance of footpaths, the process for the maintenance of historic assets and the organisation of the Local Outdoor Access Forum.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

› **Conservation area reviews:** public engagement carried out as per agreed process.

› Local community engagement in connection with the Land Use Strategy regional pilot (a project being carried out on behalf of Scottish Government, Natural Resources Division).

› Community workshops e.g. in connection with Kindrochit Castle and Stonehaven clock tower projects.

Fraserburgh Conservation Area Community Engagement Display

TRAINING ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

› Topic based workshops for staff and regular updates provided to Development Management team meetings.
› Topic based workshops delivered for Elected Members e.g. INNS (Invasive Species), and the Historic Environment (with HS).

5. EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Strict project planning allows dates for Committees to consider Local Development Plan issues to be set up to six months in advance of their need.

Delays to the Development Plan programme were avoided by the short term co-option or employment of temporary staff into the Policy Team as required. Early identification of working deadlines ensured that appropriate effort can be applied to the most urgent issues. Even with significant staff turnover in the year 2013-2014 there was no delay due to efficient staff replacement procedures, the discrete nature of the work packages used in the identification of Main Issues, and the reporting on submissions made.

Early engagement with key stakeholders and the Scottish Government to assist in identifying Main Issues for the Local Development Plan proved to be effective in sharing a common understanding. This engagement has continued with specific meetings to discuss the proposed response to submissions made to the Main Issues Report in March and April of this year.

ENVIRONMENT

Review of processes

› Review of TPOs: working with colleagues in Legal Services in accordance with an agreed programme to review a total of 120 TPOs.

› Conservation Area Reviews: as described.

› Historic Asset Management Programme: review of Council owned historic assets, totalling approximately 1100, as described.

› Silver 'Kaizen for Daily Improvement' (KDI): Council's management of paths has undergoing continuous improvement exercise, due to report by end of financial year.

Taken together, all of the above are designed to lend credibility and robustness to decision making in Development Management. Each individual project is critical in this respect, but each is ambitious, requiring considerable staff input. In addition to strengthening the context of DM, the reviews will contribute to the transparent targeting of budgets in the context of longer term rationalisation.

LAND USE STRATEGY REGIONAL PILOT

› Aberdeenshire Council is one of two Local Authorities in Scotland (together with the Borders) to undertake a pilot for the Land Use Strategy. Emerging thinking around reducing the conflict between different land uses may impact on SDP and LDP approaches, such that the decisions around land use becomes more effective, in taking fuller account of natural benefits, ('ecosystem services').

COASTAL PATH

CORE PATHS PLAN

In March 2013 ISC formally approved and adopted Aberdeenshire Core Paths Plan subject to necessary amendments. The main aims of the Core Paths Plan are to:

› Provide the basic framework of paths to meet communities' needs.

› Minimise any potential conflict with land management.

› Ensure paths are well sign posted, well maintained and welcoming.

› Ensure there is at least one path for settlements of over 100 people.

CAPACITY MANAGEMENT

Development Management continue to have a more active role in Environment matters to increase their capacity to deal with natural/built heritage matters. In house training from the Environment Team is carried out. Topics this year :

› Bats

› Buffer Zones

› Invasive Species Legislation and implementation.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Service Priorities For 2013 - 2014

Continue to review and improve the performance of the Planning and Development service to ensure that all planning applications are processed in an efficient and effective manner without sacrificing service quality.

IMPROVING PERFORMANCE STRATEGY (IPS)

Specific to improved decision making the Improving Performance Strategy (IPS) has continued to be the mainstay to improving performance within Aberdeenshire Council. During 2013-14 the IPS main focus was on the review of the Development Management structure and the installation and implementation of the new business system – Uniform. Other elements of the Strategy continue and with a focus on the continuation of performance improvement. An extract is attached at **Appendix 2.**

STONEHAVEN

COUNCIL CHAMBER

COMMITTEE PROCESSES/STRUCTURES

The six administrative areas continue to have 3 weekly committee cycles. These committees deal with all business including planning application determinations.

Five of the areas carry out a Pre Committee Chair's Brief which informs the Chair/Vice Chair of likely issues that may arise and allows clarification of any elements within reports. Senior Planners attend these briefings.

The Infrastructure Services Committee (ISC) sits 7 times in a year. Certain significant applications will be referred to this committee for decision. Full Council similarly sits 7 times in a year. Only rarely do planning applications require referral.

Member Engagement is considered important to efficient and effective decision making.

› A Member Officer Working Group (MOWG) allows reports on specific issues to be discussed with Members on a more informal basis – thus helping gauge Member's views for future proposals e.g. – changes to Scheme of Delegation.

› The Area Managers/Chairs Meeting – is an opportunity to bring forward any initiatives, performance progress of the Service to the 6 Area Managers and the 6 Chairs of the Area Committees, again to seek their views and comments.

› Ward Pages – the Ward Pages is an electronic communication tool whereby Members are kept updated and informed. The Planning Service uses it for notification of applications and dissemination of important information, changes and initiatives within the Planning function.

SCHEME OF DELEGATION: MORE EFFICIENT DECISION MAKING

Delegated Application Rate – 2012-13 & 2013-14

	2013 - 2014	2012 - 2013	2011 - 2012	2010 - 2011
% Approval Rate	92.8	90.5	91.6	92.8
% Delegated Rate	88.9	87.7	90.2	89.4

The overall rate of approvals has risen following a drop the previous year. It still however remains below the national figure of approval rates. Similarly although the overall rate of delegation has risen it remains among the lower rates nationally. The rise in the rates as above can be attributed to the focus on improving performance and ensuring decisions are issued within time, particularly those that are of the straightforward variety. The % of delegation still causes concern for the Service and as such work has commenced on amending the Scheme of Delegation. Initially a corporate review of the Scheme of Delegation was to be carried and this was to include planning. The timescales of this having been adjusted has now resulted in the Planning Service going forward independently. A timetable already devised will enable a report to ultimately reach Full Council before autumn 2014.

DEALING WITH DELAYS

A Legacy Strategy to reduce legacy cases is in progress. The combination of this Strategy, changes to both Conveyancing and Developer Obligation working practices, the promotion and statutory use of Processing Agreements and a dedicated team for dealing with major applications is envisaged to address the major issues of delay in delivery. Results have been positive following the implementation of the Strategy.
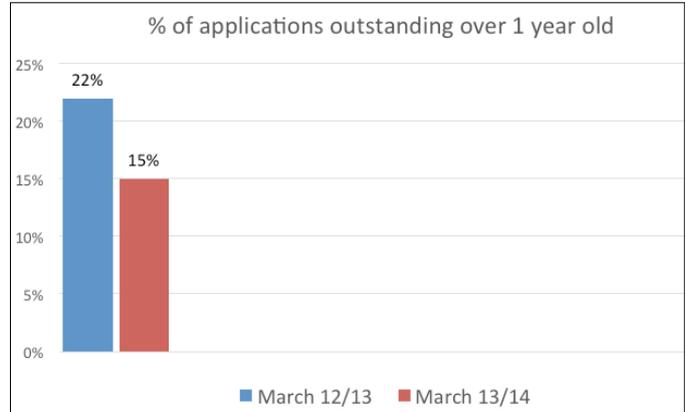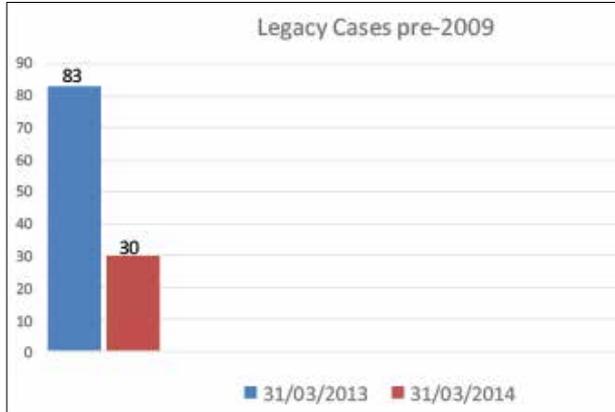

LOCAL REVIEW BODY

The Review of Local reviews is on-going. The project mapped the process and identified unnecessary activity and sources of delay. Identified sources of delay included time taken to: carry out consultations and prepare documents for meetings; arrange site visits; draft the decision notice following the meeting and authorise the decision notice. The following changes have been made to address these and related issues:

› Use of generic email address for all LRB correspondence;

› Use of shared Drives for sharing documents to reduce photocopying requirements, increase speed of communication and agenda preparation;

› Pre-scheduled site visit dates 3 weeks after scheduled meetings (since Jan 2014);

› Use of model planning conditions;

› Dedicated LRB Planning Adviser with provision of additional hours to manage caseload;

› Revised process for approval of decision notices and conditions;

› Signing of decision notices delegated to officers by Head of Legal & Governance Service.

Data is now being collected throughout the process to enable monitoring and analysis of performance.

The following graph shows the number of days taken to deal with a Local Review case in the period 1 May 2013 to 17 March 2014, that is, since the Review commenced and changes started to be implemented. This indicates that there has been some improvement in performance however further analysis showed that those cases that were dealt within the target 122 days had no site visits and were not wind turbines applications. Further improvement work is required for wind turbine and site visit cases.
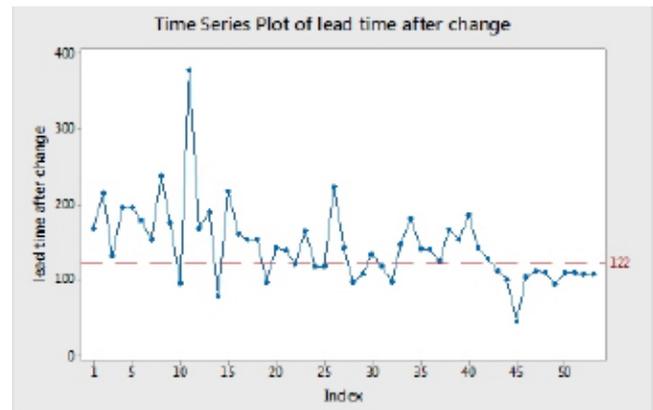
The average number of days to arrange a site visit prior to the pre-scheduling of site visits was 51.5 days. The following graph shows the number of days to taken to arrange a site visit from 1 January to June 2014. The target period is 21 days. As there were only six site visits during this period we will need to collect further data to before concluding an improvement has taken place.
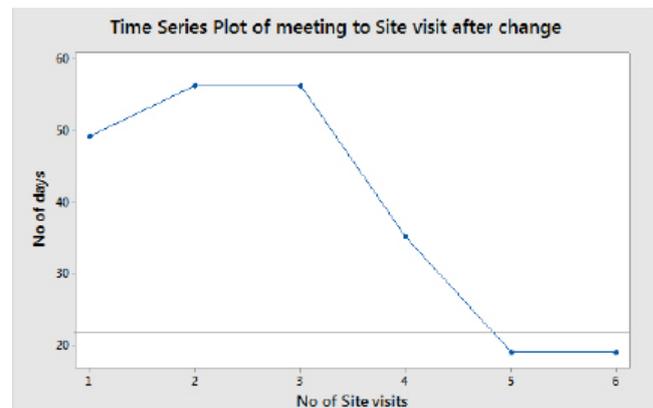
The Review process is ongoing. Further data is required to confirm the longer term impact of changes to-date and to identify areas for further improvement. This work will continue.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT REVIEW

At this time a measure of the impact of the new structure on performance is premature. This will be able to be better and more meaningfully and accurately evidenced in the next PPF period – 2014/2015. What can be evidenced is the outcome of the costing and evidence based approach that was carried out to inform the review in respect of staffing levels and case load levels.

The new DM structure commenced in October/November 2013. This however did not operate to its fully staffed extent until towards the end of the PPF time period in March 2014. The significant focus on the review and the work entailed in its implementation did reflect in the final two quarters of the year with a slightly reduced level of performance. Overall however the performance of 2013/14 was an improvement on that of 2012/13.

The Environment side of Planning have now been able to better streamline their processes by embracing online applications in respect of applications for Tree Works:

Trees and Development

"Applications for works to protected trees received after 1 March 2014 can now be viewed using the **Public Access Register***"*

Mature trees are a valuable asset in our landscape and enhance our quality of life. Often used as a selling point, these trees help integrate new development into its setting. However, trees on a development site can easily be lost or damaged through lack of consideration. This leaflet has been designed to give guidance about trees and development.

Guidance on Trees and Development is continually being monitored and updated.

LIAISON & PROTOCOL

We continue to collaborate and work closely with a variation of internal services, consultees, public bodies and other authorities. Liaison and protocol arrangements are equally important in ensuring certainty in the planning process as well as effective decision making. As such reference to this is split across the elements of Certainty, Effective Decision Making and Effective Management Structures.

In collaborating to deliver business objectives close working with our Economic Development Service has taken place to deliver national projects for Broadband delivery and Mobile Infrastructure throughout Aberdeenshire.

CNPA

Close working continues with the Cairngorms National Park given the shared responsibilities with decision making. The CNPA/Council Protocol remains relevant and shared work regarding enforcement occurs when required.

SNH

In direct response to great concerns expressed by many developers and agents in Aberdeenshire regarding the requirements and subsequent delays caused by Bat legislation, the Planning Service arranged and facilitated a Bat Forum in conjunction with SNH. Over 50 attendees ranged from Agents/Developers, Bat Surveyors, Environment Consultants, the Bat Council, Scottish Government, Elected Members and staff from Development Management and Natural Heritage. Outcomes included review of elements of SNH approach, commitment of Scottish Government to recognise issues raised and consider solutions, review and greater flexibility on bat survey requirements by Council.

LIAISON RE LDP GROUPS (TEAM MANAGERS)

Close work between the Policy Team and the DM Team Managers has taken place in the review of policies in advance of the next LDP.

SUPPORT SERVICES

A new Manager/Admin liaison group has been set up to consider re allocation of duties following implementation of the new DM Structure and Uniform. This has resulted in a better mutual understanding of admin input and requirements to the decision making process and subsequent streamlining of admin processes to improve the validation of applications and issuing of decisions.

Legal Liaison has expanded to include a second liaison group. A Liaison group covering governance issues e.g. Scheme of Delegation, review of appeal procedures, meets on a regular basis as does the liaison group on Decision Making, taking forward measures to speed up Section 75 agreements, reducing legacy cases and ensuring proportionality and speed in response times from the Developer Obligations team.

6. EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Using a PRINCE 2 structure a board has been established of Directors within the Council. This Board agrees exceptions to the programme when required and approves the final documentation for submission to Members for approval.

It is supported by a Steering Group chaired by a senior Manager in the section and with representation from information and research, delivery and development management functions. A working group of experienced development management staff is also employed. The introduction of the working group has specifically addressed issues of ownership of the Development Plan by Development Management staff.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
CURRENT STRUCTURE (APPENDIX 1 - STAFF STRUCTURE ORGANOGRAM)

Prior to the Review a change on manager focus was implemented in readiness for the reviewed DM structure. A manager is now responsible for the whole of DM whereas before this was covered by two managers to take forward the IPS and focus on performance. One manager now oversees Policy in addition to the newly formed Strategic Development Delivery Team (SDDT). This is very specific to addressing the issue of performance pertaining to major applications. This also has the aim of re-focusing the necessary close links between the Development Plan team and the newly formed SDDT team and the Delivery Team. As such all are based in the Council HQ in an attempt to highlight the importance of strategic delivery of major sites and enable more meaningful and constructive liaison and certainty for developers to engage and take major projects forward in a more streamlined and comprehensive manner.

The Development Management function remains area based across five area offices within Aberdeenshire. The Review was driven by the need to improve all elements of performance, speed, efficiency and the streamlining of processes.

Due to the change in staff roles, teams and personnel it has taken some time to fully establish the levels of staffing envisaged by the review. These changes have had some impact on performance over the last six months (Sept-April). With the exception of Planning Enforcement most review elements have now been completed. We will review the effectiveness of these changes at the end of this year (2014). This will be fully reported on in next year's PPF however the single address point and E Planning Team are already showing benefits in the channel shift to digital and the promotion of E Planning.
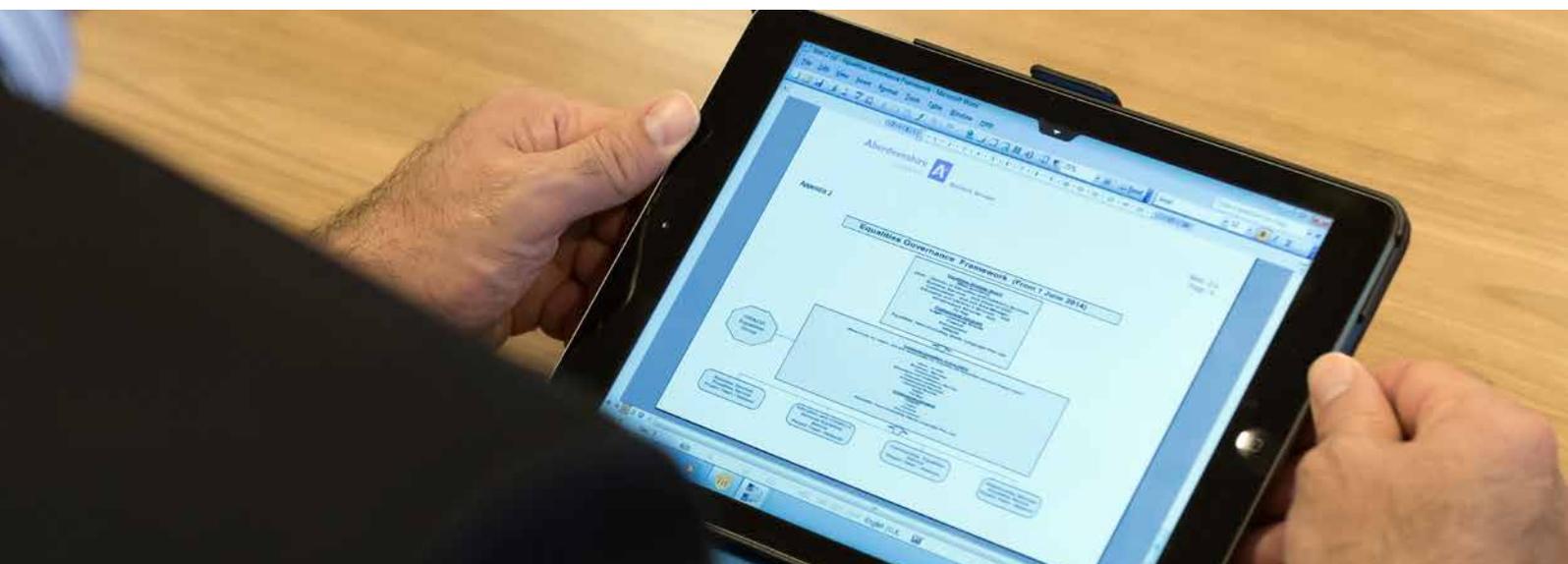
Structure – more proportionate – better balance, more performance focused...

TEAM STRUCTURE - DELIVERY

One of the key objectives of the Development Management Review was to:

›   Deliver a robust service which is structured around its core businesses and staffed at appropriate levels.

Structure Pre October 2013 - Issue	Solution	Outcomes Structure Post October 2013
Team structure fundamentally based around the area structure of the Council which may not reflect the most efficient and effective business practice.	Amalgamate teams from 6 to 3.	Three teams created (although in more than 3 areas).
The six area teams have significantly different volumes of work.	Amalgamate teams according to workload volume. Allow flexibility across teams.	Three teams based on workload. New posts, additional Seniors and Uniform to enable lower and more consistently allocated case loads and flexibility of work.
Poor performance in determining major applications.	Dedicated team focusing on pre-application, masterplans and major applications.	Strategic Development Delivery Team (SDDT) formed – close proximity to Policy and Delivery teams and clear point of contact for developers.
The number of Planners varies according to workload but management, technical and administrative support is generally the same for all offices.	Ensure proportionality and flexibility in technical and administrative support. Create Team Manager post and increase Senior support. Ensure right skill set and balance.	Four Team Managers and 9 Seniors in post. Support staff proportionate to team size. More flexible and fluid work across teams.
Some offices show a lack of critical mass required for the continuation of core processes during staff absence or vacancies and the physical location of staff can make management difficult.	Amalgamate teams from 6 to 3 – consider staff locations and numbers.	Balance of team numbers more proportionate to work loads and average case loads. Uniform allows more flexible and remote cover.
Senior Planners are currently split between two teams giving rise to conflicting workloads.	Increase number of Senior planners from 3 to 9.	Nine Seniors in post. Three dedicated to each team. Two 'committee' seniors and one 'delegated' 'senior per team.
Needs to be greater flexibility for Planners to be assigned workloads for different areas when differing pressures arise across areas.	Full implementation and maximise use of Uniform re electronic workload flow.	Full implementation of Uniform.
Core software systems currently used by the Development Management Service are unlikely to be developed in the future and do not allow for electronic file workflows without major redesign.	As above implementation of Uniform	As above implementation of Uniform.

Team sizes have been considered on the basis of area differences with a view to sustainable workloads for each team.

This new team structure has been planned to create a more proportionate and better balanced mix of staff based on directing skills and experience to the areas of performance where a need was identified i.e. – areas where performance was consistently low, areas where workload was high and/ or disproportionate to staff numbers and skill/experience. Also importantly where staff were less able to work flexibly and react to provide cover, extra assistance. Worksmart practices, remote working, home working and flexible hours are well established and have assisted in creating a skills and locational balance throughout the teams.

▌ TEAM MANAGERS (4)

The Team Managers help undertake allocation in co-ordination with the Senior Planners, manage workloads and provide the decision making powers on key planning and operational issues. The Team Manager role is seen as being twofold: hands-on to ensure performance is maximised within each team and to take on a more strategic and wider role in terms of performance. Daily monitoring of performance and output (soon to be enhanced through the implementation of the Enterprise function.), regular one to ones with Senior planners, regular Team Meetings and regular attendance at Management Team Meetings every third week with the Planning Manager.

▌ SENIORS (9 – 3 PER TEAM)

Senior Planners focus on support and final approval of applications (service delivery) rather than carrying a large personal caseload. Thus main duties being :

› Committee work

› Delegation work

› Mentoring

Planning Officer numbers have increased from 24.2 to 32 reflecting a focused need on sustainable workloads, area demands, flexibility and mix of appropriate skills.

▌ BUSINESS SYSTEM

The new teams have meant changes to the working practises which have been evolving over the past six months and were heavily influenced by our new Business System, Idox Uniform. Like the review this was implemented late in the PPF year in March and April 2014 and therefore the results of the implementation will be reported in next year's PPF. In brief the Business System has been set up to allow electronic workflow for most planning processes with electronic tasks being used to workflow between officers, technical and administrative staff. This ultimately saves time and allows more flexible working. The 'Enterprise' task based workflow and performance monitoring tool will be further developed over 2014 to provide improved functionality and process improvement which we aim to report on fully in 2015.

▌ STAFF DEVELOPMENT/TRAINING

In light of the new structure and new posts, training focus has been based on:

I. the development of management skills – Team Managers

II. the development of supervisory skills/committee skills – Senior Planners

III. training for new graduate planners and less experienced planners

IV. Enforcement Training

VARIOUS BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED :

During 2013/2014 managers received improvement training in the form of a 2 day workshop in Lean Six Sigma improvement methodology to the yellow belt level of accreditation. The purpose of the session was to enable the attendees to:

Lean & Sigma Six

› Understand Lean and Six Sigma in the context of the business/organisation

› Focus on the Voice of the Customer as the measure of success of improvement activity

› Understand the key concept of Lean and Six Sigma process improvement through waste

› Elimination and variation of reduction and the projects framework to achieve these

› Understand the meaning of "sigma levels" as a measure of process capability

› Understand how improvement projects are generated and managed

› Overview the steps in each of the (R)DMAIC(T) phases and appreciate the rigorous methodology that is applied through the phases

› Explore the infrastructural requirements to launch and maintain an improvement programme in their part of the organisation

› Appreciate the role and the responsibilities of being a project sponsor

› Understand the requirements to develop the process improvement skills in the organisation

› Begin the process of improvement project ownership (the sponsor's role) and of project 'hopper' management

› Appreciate the aspects of communicating and supporting an improvement programme in the organisation – its purpose, rollout and progress.

The workshop enabled managers to fulfil their role as champions of process improvement in their service area and to improve (internal and external) customer satisfaction and process performance through waste removal and variation reduction and to understand how to support Continuous Improvement Officers leading improvement projects.

One of the key messages of the course was the importance of the management team as a key ingredient in a successful improvement programme. The management team in each area plays a very important role in ensuring that the culture of continuous improvement is embedded in the culture of the Planning Service in Aberdeenshire.

We have also recognised that we need to develop our skills and ability to effectively benchmark our performance and are embarking on a one day workshop in how to conduct a benchmarking exercise, in order to improve internal practices, which in turn will improve service performance.

Using the pre-work to select a project area, the workshop will represent the launch of a Benchmarking study, which will be executed following the workshop.

The Employee (EARS) Reviews has enabled comprehensive individual and service training plans in order that the relevant skills and requirements can be met, nurtured and enhanced to meet the existing and future needs of the service. Team Managers are respopnsible for carrying out staff EARS, this ensures consistency and progression of training needs.
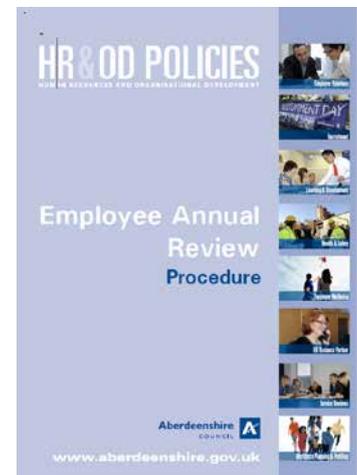
SHARED BEST PRACTICE

Benchmarking with local authorities – Aberdeenshire are part of the Large Rural Authority Family through HOPS. One such exercise is the delivery of a national validation checklist to assist not only in proportionality of requests and awareness of applicants, but this will assist in quicker validation, decision making and better quality submissions. As above Managers will be taking forward various benchmarking activities as part of continually improving performance.

SEPA: A single point of contact for SEPA liaison is available. Periodic SEPA joint working and training/awareness sessions take place. Currently liaison with SEPA is about to set SEPA up to pilot the Uniform consultation module. Further evidence of this and outcomes will be available in the next PPF period.

7. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Budgetary constraints limit the scope of research that can be undertaken, leading to an over-reliance on information provided by the development industry to support their case for inclusion in the plan.

PLANNING FEES

Planning fees rose fairly significantly between 2012-2013 to 2013-2014

2012-2013 Total Fee Income

2012/13	Actual (£)	Cumulative (£)	%
	2,048,146.76	2,048,146.76	102%

2013-2014 Total Fee Income

2013/14	Actual (£)	Cumulative (£)	%
Apr	290,159.74	290,159.74	15%
May	190,209.33	480,369.07	10%
Jun	231,795.34	712,164.41	12%
Jul	295,983.40	1,008,147.81	15%
Aug	272,838.93	1,280,986.74	14%
Sep	178,190.26	1,459,177.00	9%
Oct	250,507.78	1,709,684.78	13%
Nov	189,838.02	1,899,522.80	10%
Dec	181,588.99	2,081,111.79	9%
Jan	135,747.48	2,216,859.27	7%
Feb	188,610.07	2,405,469.34	10%
Mar	222,940.02	2,628,409.36	11%
	2,628,409.36	2,628,409.36	133%

The continuing increase in fees enabled the already earmarked re-investment to take place through the review whereby additional planning posts formed part of the new structure. Also enabled was the continuation of the Wind Turbine Team to the end of October 2013 and additional Planning consultant assistance to deal with renewable applications. To ensure the drive in performance remains constant, vacancy management and additional resources to cover specific pressures, illness and secondment have been enabled through the reinvestment of the increased planning fee income. E.g. – additional initial resources to ensure the E Planning Unit was up and running with immediate effect.

8. CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Continuous Improvement is obviously key in taking performance to a higher level and achieving successful outcomes attaining to a high performing Planning Service.

DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Aberdeenshire prides itself on having an up to date development plan framework and employs robust project planning and risk analysis to ensure that situation persists. While Aberdeenshire Council considers itself to be one of the leading authorities in delivering a modernised development planning system in Scotland the policy team are constantly benchmarking themselves with Development Plan activities in other authorities to learn best practice. Aberdeenshire Council is a driver of the East of Scotland Development Plans Forum, jointly hosting the last event with Aberdeen City to discuss such issues as Equalities Impacts Assessment for development plans.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

The Service Plan deals with the high level strategic improvements and these have been embodied within the text. It is the Improving Performance Strategy (IPS) that remains the key tool. Part of the last PPF highlighted a number of **Key Areas of activity** to be taken forward/ achieved in 2013/14 and those that were on going at that time with a view to implementation/completion in the following PPF period.

*Key Focus 2013 - 2014	Actions	Outcomes	Measures	Improvement	Value
DM Review					
New Business System	Benchmarking Finance Project Team	Implementation Training	Outcomes Speed of decisions	Premature Early signs of improvements in validation, allocation of workload, speed	Improve average timescales
Set Up Implement Sddt	Review dependent, structure of team, accommodation, recruitment, roll out	Team in place	Outcomes Speed of decisions of major applications, use of Processing Agreements	Premature to measure – still significant improvement required re major applications.	Increase delivery of sites. Increase certainty. Improve decision making and average timescales of major apps
Reduce Pending Applications	Continuation to reduce all live applications. Focus on *Legacy Cases	Legacy Strategy implemented	Applications determined and issued Statistics Monitoring	Reduction since April 2013	Increase delivery of sites. Increase certainty. Improve decision making and average timescales
Set Up Single Address Point & E Planning Team	Review dependent, structure of team, accommodation, Recruitment, hardware, software	Team in place	Validation speed, customer comment & satisfaction	Validation speed increased (3 day = 90%+) Increase on electronic submissions	Increase delivery. Increase certainty. Improve decision making and average timescales

Limit Officer Caseloads	New structure Increase staff Merge Teams	Caseload average – 30/35	Monitor case load allocation. Monitor case load progress	Yes	Increase determination rate. More time per application. Improve decision making and average timescales
Determine Applications ASAP	New structure Increase staff Merge Teams New Uniform System	More streamlined process. More immediate action by officer as soon as allocated. Quicker site visits and applicant/agent contact	Monitor through case load, task allocation and output	Pre Uniform – yes Post Uniform – early signs of improvement	Better average timescales. Improved customer contact and satisfaction. More efficient decision making
Validation Group	Reduce steps in validation process	Validation speed improved over year	Compare validation speed over year	Yes	Improve overall performance rate
Scheme of Delegation	Review Scheme of Delegation	Elements of change to support improved performance	Compare	No	Improve overall performance rate
Report Templates	Standardise format and use and Review	Standardised templates	Quality control – content & governance Consistency check.	Yes	More streamlined report writing. More consistency across teams. Greater transparency. Legal governance compliance

*Key Focus 2013 - 2014 Ongoing	Actions	Outcomes	Measures	Improvement	Value
Customer Areas Of Concern	Team Action Plans/Lessons Learnt/Training	Continue to monitor areas of concern	Customer satisfaction	Yes – dissatisfaction reduced	Customer relationships/high quality service
Further Develop Applicant/Agent Forums	Continue forums, add additional	Good communication, ensure certainty	Customer satisfaction, informed agents etc.	In general	Customer relationships/high quality service, developer 'buy in'
Consultee Work To Ensure More Effective & Efficient Responses	Liaison & protocol	Quicker/more relevant responses	Speed of decisions	Mixed – still work required	Increase average times for decisions & certainty for customer
Review Scheme Of Delegation	Work with Legal Service – latter part of 2014	Less committee referrals, speed up decision process	Committee work volumes/speed of decisions	Not to date	Overall better performance

The IPS continues as a 'live' document. Extract is attached at **Appendix 2**

STAFF TRAINING - CPD

Continuous improvement for staff is embodied within personal training plans through annual EARS reviews.

Training is both outsourced to courses and seminars and tailored through the Council's own Learning and Development Strategy which covers both Employee Development and Leadership and Management development.

Part of the Team Manager remit is to review work performance with staff and agree priorities and identify relevant learning required (see table below). Staff is encouraged to seek progression through the Council's Performance Development Scheme.

Strategy	Internal Training
LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2011 – 13	Corporate Induction
Provide comprehensive and consistent induction experiences	Leadership Challenge
Develop employees to enable delivery of the council's vision, values and outcomes	Leadership Masterclass
Enable elected members to comply with their Continuing Professional Development requirements	Managing Change
Develop leadership and management behaviours in line with the Competency Framework	Mentoring and Coaching Skills Workshop
	Presentation Masterclass
	Manager's Survival Kit
	Negotiation Skills
	Performance Management
	Plain English
	Project Leading for Plate Spinners
	Effective Presentations
	Project Management
	Speed Reading
	Recruitment and Selection

ENVIRONMENT PLANNING

› Two Silver Kaizen for Daily Improvement (KDI') projects ongoing – in respect of paths and Council owned assets.

› Emerging improved action plans for the Environment Team.

› Benchmarking in 5 key areas in respect of built and natural environment.
(See Communications, engagement and customer service)

Fraserburgh Harbour

PART 3
SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Part 2 of this report was compiled, drawing on evidence from the following sources:

In general we have sought to integrate references to supporting evidence within the body of the text by the use of hyperlinks to the relevant documents and websites. This refers in particular to Development Management and Environment Planning.

DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

1. The existing development plan allocations promoted in the 2013 Main Issues Report were supported by a continuously updated Action Programme compiled by three dedicated officers devoted to monitoring and promoting development of Local Development Plan sites. The Action Programme was formally published in May 2014.

2. Reference can be made to LDP Policies 1, 3, 4, 11, 13 and 14 and their associated supplementary guidance.

3. See LDP 2012 Schedule 2 *"New employment land allocations"* for evidence of the distribution and range of scales of new employment land allocations made to support business growth, particularly in Tables 4, 5 and 6.

4. See the LDP Main Issues Consultation response *"Issues Paper 006 Policy 1 - Business Development"*. Less than 0.1% of all respondents commented on business land issues. Also see LDP MIR Appendix Formartine, Appendix Garioch and Appendix Kincardine and Mearns. Employment land bids made for inclusion in the Local Development Plan are either entirely speculative (e.g. Edzell Airbase) or associated with major new housing land releases to provide the developer with the flexibility of a "mixed" development.

5. The Employment Land Audit 2013 demonstrates a very healthy established employment land supply, but that the rate of recruitment of this land to the marketable supply is low. This is out with the scope of the planning system to resolve.

6. See *"SG Bus 5 Development in the Energetica Framework Area"* and *"SG Enabling development 1 Enabling Development"*.

7. See *"Planning advice 1/2014 Strategic Landscape Capacity for windfarms"*.

8. This process is documented in full on the dedicated web pages at **http://www.Aberdeenshire.gov.uk/ldp**.

9. See Local Development Plan Policy 8 *"Layout siting and design of new developments"*, SG LSD 1 *"Master planning"* and SGLSD 2 *"Layout siting and design"*.

10. See *"Planning advice 6/2012 Design"*.

11. A PRINCE 2 management technique is used on the Local Development Plan preparation. Stage 2 "Development Bids" and Stage 3 "Main Issues Report" were completed within the year, to deadline and without "exception reports". We also completed substantial work on Stages 1 "Monitoring Report", Stage 10 "Strategic Environmental Assessment" and Stage 11 "Habitats Regulations Assessment"

12. See **http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans_policies/process.asp**.

13. Policy review Papers were prepared and published at **http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans_policies/MainIssuesRep/MIR2016PolicyReview.asp**. Position Papers were developed from these to support the Main Issues Report. These are published at **http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans_policies/MIRpreparation.asp**.

14. See **http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans_policies/IssuesforMainIssuesReport.asp**.

15. Meeting notes were taken at the following seminars:
    - Banff and Buchan Area Committee 12 March 2013
    - Formartine Area Committee 26 March 2013
    - Garioch Area Committee 23 April 2013
    - Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee 30 April 2013
    - Marr Area Committee 7 May 2013

16. See **http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/planning/plans_policies/MainIssuesReportConsultation2013.asp**.

17. Specifically meetings were held with:
    - Scottish Government 19 February 2014
    - Transport Scotland 10 March 2014
    - NESTRANS 10 March 2014
    - Historic Scotland 20 March 2014
    - Waste Management Authority 28 March 2014
    - Scottish Natural Heritage 4 April 2014
    - NHS Grampian 25 April 2014
    - SEPA 29 April 2014

Telephone contact was made with Forestry Commission (a member of the wider team was appointed to the planning liaison role during this period) and Scottish Water. At a meeting on 10 March 2014 Scottish Water agreed that no meeting would serve a useful purpose at that time).

Almost daily liaison occurs between the Strategic Development Planning Manager and the Development Plan Team as they are co-located. Contact and liaison with Aberdeen City is also informal but frequent.

PART 4
A: SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS 2014-15

COUNCIL PLAN
SERVICE PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND ACTIONS

The following describe the high level strategic actions and supporting key performance measures for each service objective. Each measure and action has been aligned to the appropriate strategic priority in the Council Plan.

SERVICE OBJECTIVE 5

Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations through the development of a framework of access strategies, land-use plans, master plans, policies and guidelines and by managing development through the planning system in accordance with the objectives of the Local Plan.

ICT COMMITMENTS

iDox for planning applications which includes a bureau service for scanning documents and images and a hosted website which makes the images available to members of the public via links from the Aberdeenshire Website. A recent report to P&R approved the procurement of a new system from iDox.

SERVICE PLAN PRIORITIES FOR 2013-2014

Continue to review and improve the performance of the Planning and Development service to ensure that all planning applications are processed in an efficient and effective manner without sacrificing service quality.

The Infrastructure Services service plan sets out the key actions and targets for Infrastructure Services to deliver in support of the Council's strategic priorities over the period. The plan identifies anticipated challenges over the period, how we aim to meet them and what we intend to achieve based on the financial and other resources available to us. These are the **high level** priority improvements. The Improving Performance Strategy (IPS) is the key tool for improvement and the following commitments are embodied within this living document.

The Infrastructure Services Service Plan 2013-2014 sets out the key actions and targets for Infrastructure Services to deliver in support of the Council's strategic priorities over the period. The plan identifies anticipated challenges over the period, how we aim to meet them and what we intend to achieve based on the financial and other resources available to us. These are the high level improvements. The Improving Performance Strategy (IPS) is the key tool for improvement within Development Management and the following commitments are embodied within this living document.

IN THE COMING YEAR WE WILL:

Development Planning	Environment Planning
› Review Development Plan Consultation processes to ensure that effective and efficient consultation practices are employed that embrace innovative consultation methods.	› Complete the Two Silver Kaizen for Daily Improvement (KDI') projects– in respect of paths and Council owned assets and implement outcomes.
› Coordinate joint training with the private sector on consultation techniques to facilitate cost effective common understanding and provide a route for formal accreditation.	› Finalise and implement the emerging improved action plans for the Environment Team.
› Ensure regular and active involvement by Key Agencies in development plan preparation, including providing a draft of the proposed plan for consideration as early as possible in the process.	› Completer and implement the outcomes of the Benchmarking in 5 key areas in respect of built and natural environment.
› Engage with neighbouring authorities to further meetings of the East of Scotland Development Plans Forum.	› Complete Conservation Area Reviews.
	› Complete Reviews of TPO's.
	› Fully implement elements of Uniform for tree works and DM consultations.

Development Management

Open for Business

› Increase the use of Processing Agreements. Aim that all Major Applications and some local applications will be subject to a Processing Agreement. Agree a set of criteria for local applications requiring Processing Agreements. *

› Focus on significantly improving the performance of Major Applications. *

› Continue to work with Legal Services through implementation of their Programme of Actions significantly to improve Section 75 delivery timescales.

› Deliver a developer focused Major Applications/Processing Agreements and Major Pre-application 'buy in' .

› Further promote and increase use of online planning. *

› Implement programme of Community Council Focus and Training.

High Quality Development on the Ground

› Continue the implementation of the design policies of the LDP as the main focus of development- use liaison group with Policy Team to regularly review policy use.

› Work with Robert Gordon's University to set up design training and seminar for planners and developers.

› Encourage use of Design Awards as a marker for high quality development.

Certainty

› Improve overall performance in all types of applications *

› Implement Uniform provision to enable pre-application recording

› Implement Uniform provision to record Committee overturns & departure rates

› Meet with/continue liaison with Historic Scotland to finalise the Joint Working Agreement (JWA)

› Agree a revised consultation method with Environmental Health to speed up wind turbine responses.

› Feedback through Agent/Developer engagement outcomes and implement change where necessary in response to Bat Survey requirements

› Finalise and Publish: Best Practice Manual, Standard templates for: Non material variations, Condition Approvals, Enforcement Complaints

› Review Development Management Charter & Enforcement Charter.

Communications, engagement and customer service

› Carry out further Customer Surveys twice yearly

› Carry out a Community Council Survey

› Progress and publish outcomes from Planning Focus Group

› Set up a Planning contact protocol with the Corporate Contact Centre

› Work with iCE (Corporate Improving Customer Experience) to improve web pages.

› Utilise Team Action Plans to improve Customer Service and Satisfaction.

Efficient and Effective Decision-Making

› Review Scheme of Delegation outwith Corporate project by end of 2014

› Finalise minor change to Scheme of Delegation for Council applications by September 2014

› Reduce Legacy Cases further by implementing Legacy Strategy*

› Fully implement Development Management Enterprise module for monitoring by end of 2014

› Fully implement Uniform consultation module by November 2014

› Implement Stop the Clock facility by end of 2014

› Accurately record Validation Rates/Invalid Rates and evidence using Enterprise *

› Fully implement Enforcement module within Uniform/ accurately record breach of development.

Effective management structures

› Fully staff and implement Enforcement Team by October 2014

› Feed into Service Training Plan through staff EAR reviews by end of 2014

› Ensure Senior Planners have tailored supervisory and leadership training put in place.

Financial management and local governance	Culture of continuous improvement
› Participate and complete Phase 2 of Costing the Planning Service.	› Continue to use and update the IPS as a continuous improvement tool › Benchmark other authorities in use of Stop the Clock, Processing Agreements, Major Application processes/ Legal Agreements.
Planning Performance Targets	Planning Performance Targets

Average Timescales:
 	
› Major Applications – Achieve an average of 35 weeks
 	
› Local Applications - Achieve an average of 11 weeks
 	
› Household Applications - Achieve an average of 6 weeks
 	
› Other Applications – Achieve an average of 8 weeks
	% Within 2 Months:
	
	› All Planning Applications – Determine 70% within 2 months
	
	› Non Householder Applications - Determine 65% within 2 months
	
	› Householder Applications - Determine 95% within 2 months
	
	› Processing Agreements – 100% major applications subject to a Processing Agreement
	
	› **Legal Agreements – Achieve an average of 32 weeks
	
	› Legacy Applications
	
	   › Reduce pre 2009 to 0
	
	   › Reduce Overall (post 2009) by 50%.

*Subject to Target
**Based on Benchmarking Performance

The Boathouse

PART 4
B: DELIVERY OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

DELIVERY OF OUR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS COMMITTED FOR 2013-14:

Committed improvements and actions	Complete?	
Implement a new Development Management Structure	Yes	New structure was implemented in 2013. Three teams, increase in staff, Enforcement Team.
Implement a new way of working based on electronic files across development management	Yes	Uniform system installed February/March. Premature to evidence improvement - early signs of improved working practices and performance.
Increase use of Processing Agreements/set up a PA process. Aim that all Major Applications and some local applications will be subject to PA	Yes/No	A process has been set up along with an Aberdeenshire template. Further roll out and promotion and developer 'buy in' required. Still significant work to be done to improve on this requirement.
Continue to work with Legal Services to reduce average time to complete Section 75 Legal Agreements	Yes/No	Work has progressed and the Legal Service has rolled out a Programme of Actions. No evidence of improvement has been recorded as yet. The performance in respect of Legal Agreement completion has decreased and work continues as a matter of priority.
Level of Customer Engagement to continue and increase	Yes	Two further customer surveys were carried out and satisfaction remained consistent. Dissatisfaction was reduced. Engagement has continued through the Planning Focus Group and Agents/developers Forums in addition to regular mail shots and one to one training offered for new public access register. An enhanced focus on Community Council engagement has commenced.
Committed Target improvements and actions	**Complete?**	
Increase number of applications submitted online.	No	Premature due to implementation period but some evidence of improvement by 3/5%
Continue decrease average times in determining all major applications	No	Structure in place. Premature to evidence. There has been an improvement but significant improvement still required.
Continue to improve performance in determining all other applications within statutory timescales by 5%. Improve weeks for local and household developments	Yes	Performance increased by 6.7%. Average times improved by 3.6 and 0.7 respectively. The average times for local development still require significant improvement. Targets required to be set for 2014/15.

PART 5
OFFICIAL STATISTICS

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK
A: DECISION-MAKING TIMESCALES

Category	Total Number Of Decisions 2013-2014	Average Timescale (Weeks)	
		2013-2014	2012-2013
Major developments	31	115.9	132.9
Local developments (non-householder)			
› Local: less than 2 months	951 (55%)	7.3	7.1
› Local: more than 2 months	786 (45%)	32.9	36.1
Householder developments			
› Local: less than 2 months	1085 (91%)	6.6	6.7
› Local: more than 2 months	112 (9%)	15.0	17.4
Housing developments	19	139.6	60.0
Major			
Local housing developments			
› Local: less than 2 months	377 (46%)	7.5	7.4
› Local: more than 2 months	435 (54%)	31.9	36.9
Business and industry	5	52.7	244.2
Major			
Local business and industry			
› Local: less than 2 months	147 (66%)	7.1	7.1
› Local: more than 2 months	76 (46%)	34.1	40.8
EIA developments	30	74.1	64.2
Other consents	395	8.9	11.3
Planning/legal agreements	33	151.4	135.5
Local reviews	47	26.1	26.9

B: DECISION-MAKING: LOCAL REVIEWS AND APPEALS

Type	Total Number Of Decisions	Original Decision Upheld			
		2013-2014 No.	%	2012-2013 No.	%
Local reviews	47	37	79%	35	71%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	63	26	41%	36	65%

C: ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

	2013-2014	2012-2013
Cases taken up	405	586
Breaches identified	N/A – Uniform dependent	304
Cases resolved	250	280
Notices served	15	17
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

D: CONTEXT

Performance, the reasons, factors and influences for increase/decrease is embodied and is identified throughout the PPF.

PART 6
WORKFORCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4
Head of Planning Service	1	1	1	2

Note: Tier 1 = Chief Executive, Tier 2 = Directors, Tier 3 = Heads of Service, Tier 4 = Managers.

		DM	DP	Enforcement	Other
Managers	No. Posts	3	1		
	Vacant				
Main Grade Posts	No. Posts	34	9	3	
	Vacant	1	1	2	
Technician	No. Posts	13	1		
	Vacant				
Office Support/Clerical	No. Posts	21	3	1	
	Vacant	1	1		
TOTAL		73	16	6	

Staff Age Profile	Number
Under 30	27
30-39	28
40-49	37
50 and over	22

Committee & Site Visits*	Number Per Year
Full council meetings	7
Infrastructure Services Committee	7*
Area Committees (where relevant)	14 x 6**
Committee Site Visits	74
LRB***	12
LRB Site Visits	16

	Costs			
	Total Budget	Direct	Indirect	Income
Development Management	2,914	2,033	881	2,628
Development Planning	638	445	193	
Enforcement	240	167	73	
Other				
TOTAL	3,792	2,645	1,147	2,628

** Aberdeenshire Council have 6 Area Committees. These deal with area business including planning matters.

* Aberdeenshire Council have an Infrastructure Service Committee which deals with matters of policy. Some planning applications (significant departures from policy) are considered at that committee.

*** This relates to the number of meetings of the LRB. The numbers of applications going to LRB are reported elsewhere.

APPENDIX 1
PLANNING & BUILDING STANDARDS

ORGANOGRAM

Planning & Building Standards Organogram
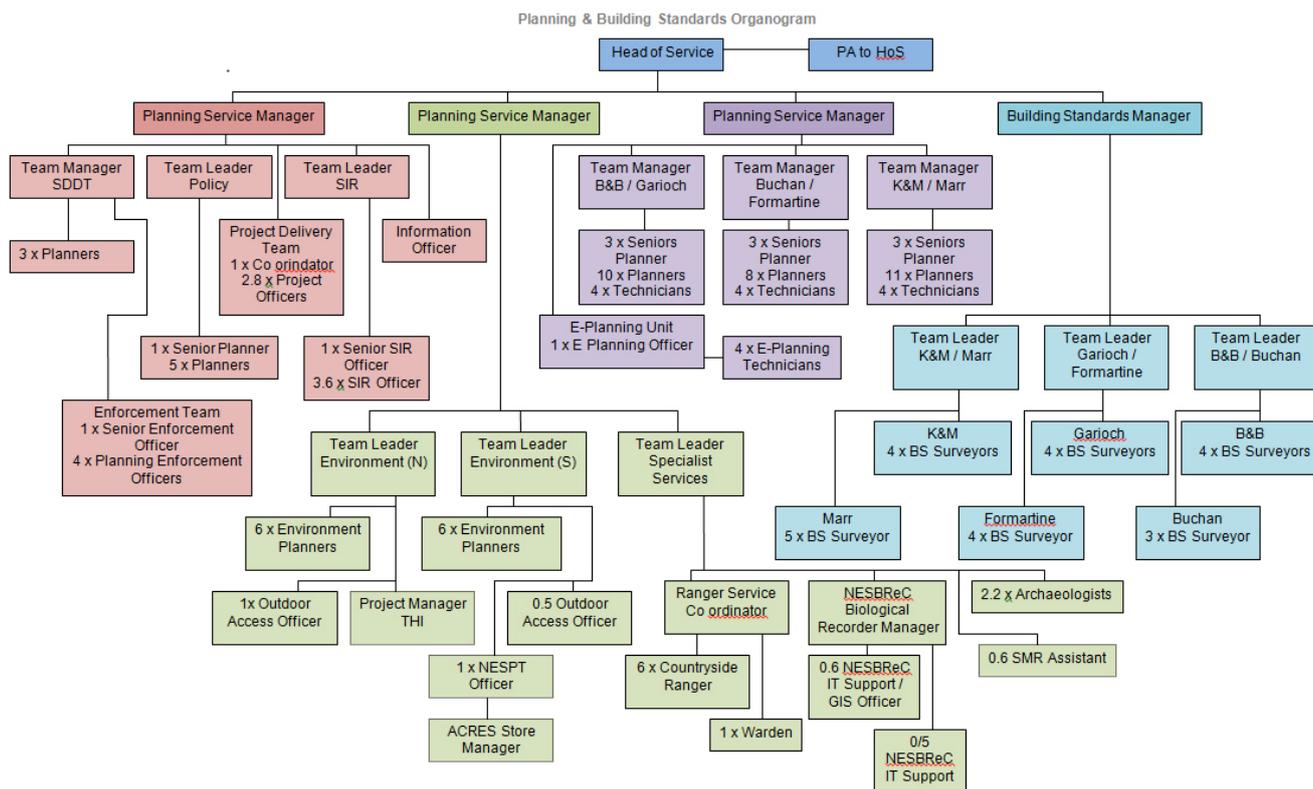
APPENDIX 2
IMPROVING PERFORMANCE STRATEGY

(EXTRACT)

OPENPROJ — File Edit View Insert Tools Project Help

Completed tasks | No Sorting | No Group

			Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Predecessors	Resource Nar
1			⊟Development Management Review	280.875 days?	10/12/12 09:00	06/01/14 1...		
3		✔	Review Team	39.875 days	07/01/13 09:00	01/03/13 17:00		
4		✔	Steering Group Consideration	19.875 days	04/03/13 09:00	29/03/13 17:00		
5		✔	Policy and Resources Planning Fee Approval	1 day	16/04/13 08:00	16/04/13 17:00		
6		✔	Formal Approval for Consultation	1 day	25/04/13 08:00	25/04/13 17:00		
7		✔	Political and Stakeholder updates/feedback	14 days	01/05/13 08:00	20/05/13 17:00		
8		✔	Staff Consultation and Analysis	51 days	27/05/13 08:00	05/08/13 17:00		
18			⊟Implementation Plan	74 days?	20/08/13 08:00	29/11/13 1...		
20		✔	Ensure documentation updated	19.875 days?	04/11/13 09:00	29/11/13 17:00		
24			⊟E PLanning and Single Address Point	101.125 days?	17/09/13 08:00	05/02/14 0...	9	
25	✔		Action Plan	1 day?	17/09/13 08:00	17/09/13 17:00		
31		✔	Accomodation	20.875 days?	22/11/13 09:00	20/12/13 17:00		
38			⊟Development Management Guidance and Support	101 days?	05/08/13 08:00	23/12/13 1...		
43		✔	Processing agreement template	1 day?	05/08/13 08:00	05/08/13 17:00		
49			⊟Idox Uniform Business System Project	321.875 days?	07/01/13 09:00	01/04/14 1...		
50		✔	System scoping and tenders	81.875 days?	07/01/13 09:00	30/04/13 17:00		
51		✔	Contract awarded	22 days?	01/05/13 08:00	30/05/13 17:00		
55			⊟Improving Customer Experience	305 days?	01/07/13 08:00	29/08/14 1...		
57		✔	Pre Application Form (ediable PDF)	71 days?	01/07/13 08:00	07/10/13 17:00		