

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILPLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE20 April 2022Report by Director of EnvironmentPLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK**INTRODUCTION**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee about the Council's Planning Performance Framework and the Scottish Government Feedback report.

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that the Committee notes the Planning Performance Framework and the Scottish Government's feedback on it.

BACKGROUND

3. In 2012, the Scottish Government introduced a requirement for Councils to annually submit performance reports on their Planning Services to the Scottish Ministers for their consideration. The performance reports are submitted through the Planning Performance Framework (PPF) which was developed by Heads of Planning Scotland in conjunction with Scottish Government. The Framework includes a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures to provide a toolkit of indicators for a balanced measurement of the overall quality of the Planning Service whilst contributing towards driving a culture of continuous improvement.

4. Scottish Government provides feedback on the PPF reports and this is focussed around 15 Performance Markers with red, amber, and green ratings based on the evidence provided within the PPF report.

REPORT

5. East Renfrewshire Council's PPF (dated July 2021 and covering the 2020/21 period) is available online at www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/planning-performance. The report contains all of the required information conveying key performance statistics, areas of improvement and outcomes for the coming year. It includes a number of case studies of work and developments that took place through the year, including the Service's response to Covid, the Lavern Water Restoration Project, Community Benefits, and Council House Building.

6. The Scottish Government's feedback is set out in Appendix 2 (Tables 1, 2, 3, 4) of this report. There are 15 markers, and for each marker the Council's performance is rated as green, amber or red, based on the evidence provided within the PPF.

7. Of the 15 indicators to be reported against, only 13 were applicable to the Council at the time of writing (Tables 1 & 2) and of these, 7 have been given a green rating. Some key highlights are that:

4

- processing agreements are available for all major planning applications and this service is advertised on the Council's website;
- a pre-application advice service is in place with clear response targets identified;
- the enforcement charter is up to date;
- 75% of the Service's improvement commitments have been completed/partially completed;
- clear timescales exist for adopting Local Development Plan 2;
- the Local Development Plan is supported by supplementary guidance documents which will be reviewed for Local Development Plan 2;
- there is evidence of cross service and collaborative working; and
- there is a clear protocol and proportionate expectations for developer contributions.

8. 3 indicators have been marked as red and 3 as amber in response to:

- the decision making timescales for major, local (non-householder) and householder planning applications which are all slower than 2019/20 and higher than the Scottish average;
- the time taken to conclude an application with a legal agreement, which is slower than the Scottish average;
- the Local Development Plan being more than 5 years old (although recognition is given to it having been examined and due for adoption at the time of reporting);
- the presence of a small number of stalled sites/legacy cases where decisions have been delayed (although it is acknowledged that these are largely due to legal agreement or consultation response delays).

9. The Committee will note that the 2020/21 performance dipped in certain areas compared to previous years (Tables 1, 3 & 4) and whilst fluctuation is to be expected in annual reporting, it is important to acknowledge issues which do emerge and seek to address these moving forward.

10. An obvious impact on delivery was the introduction of the Covid-19 restrictions in March 2020, shortly before the start of the 2020/21 performance year. Whilst there had been a move to more agile working, this had not been implemented by the start of the pandemic and IT equipment had not been fully rolled out to staff meaning that it was not possible to provide a fully functioning frontline service from 1st April 2020.

11. In particular the lockdown restrictions had a significant impact on the development management function for whom the lack of IT hardware severely restricted access to the document management system and planning application files, there was also no access to office based hardware and for periods of time neighbour notifications could not be issued meaning that planning applications could not be registered and site notices could not be posted.

12. In addition to this, the Service experienced a significant turnover in staff during 2020/21, and there was a period of time when there was no Principal Development Management Planner in post and there was a vacant Planning Officer post which put significant pressure on other staff.

13. Whilst a steady receipt of planning applications, resulted in a slowing in determination times, it should be noted that a high work rate was achieved in 2020/21 with 702 planning applications handled compared to 708 in 2019/20 and 792 housing units approved during the year (more than any of the previous 5 years). This shows that Service delivery continued and a high volume of decisions were issued, which supported employment and the economy.

14. The Planning and Building Standards Service is now fully agile, vacant posts have been filled and external consultancy support is assisting with the processing of the backlog of planning applications, which is assisting with determination times and will lead to investment in other proactive areas of work including pre application engagement and establishment of the developer forum.

15. As the Committee will be aware Local Development Plan 2 was submitted to Ministers for Examination in August 2020. A longer than expected Examination period delayed issue of the Examination Report to August 2021 and adoption to March 2022. This delay was out with the Council's hands; however, the significant progress now made will be reported in next year's PPF alongside the preparation of refreshed and new supplementary guidance.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY

16. None

CONSULTATION

17. None

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

18. This report has no partnership working implications.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS

19. There are no direct implications relating to the content of this report

CONCLUSIONS

20. The Planning Performance Framework (PPF) is a significant document which shows the wide range of customer service that the Council is delivering. The Scottish Government continues to promote *continuous improvement* and *modernisation* and it is considered that the PPF clearly demonstrates the Council's commitment to, and achievement of these aims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

21. It is recommended that the Committee notes the Planning Performance Framework and the Scottish Government's feedback on it.

Director of Environment

Report Author: Julie Nicol, Planning and Building Standards Manager
07918 499678 e.mail: julie.nicol@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

April 2022

BLANK PAGE

Table 2

No.	Performance Marker	Performance Marker	
		RAG	Comments rating
1	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Red	<p>Major Applications Your timescales of 56.6 weeks are slower than the previous year and the Scottish average of 41.3 weeks. RAG = Red</p> <p>Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your timescales of 19.7 weeks are slower than the previous year the Scottish average of 12.4 weeks. RAG = Red</p> <p>Householder Applications Your timescales of 11.9 weeks are slower than the previous year and the Scottish average of 8.1 weeks. RAG = Red</p> <p>Overall RAG = Red</p>
2	<p>Processing agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and availability publicised on website 	Green	<p>You offer processing agreements for all major developments with consideration given to significant local developments. RAG = Green</p> <p>Processing agreement information, including template and policy, is available through your website. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
3	<p>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information 	Green	<p>You provide a range of approaches to providing pre-application advice as set out in your PPF report. You encourage applicants to discuss their applications prior to submission and for formal approaches this can include an indication of acceptability of a proposal within council policies. RAG = Green</p> <p>You have a 10 day response target for dealing with pre-application enquiries and ensure adequate time is dedicated to this important function. The need for planning obligations is also discussed at this stage. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>

4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Red	The timescale for determining the one application with a legal agreements is slower than last year and the Scottish average.
5	Enforcement charter updated / republished within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was 12 months old at the end of the reporting year.
6	Continuous improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	Amber	<p>Although your enforcement charter is up-to-date, your LDP is more than five years old although LDP2 is due to be adopted later this year. Decision making timescales are slower this year for all application types and the number of legacy cases has increased slightly. RAG = Red</p> <p>You have completed or partially completed 3 out of 4 of your improvement commitments. You identified 4 commitments for the coming year which should improve your service delivery. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
7	Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption	Red	Your LDP was more than 5 years old at the end of the reporting period.
8	Development plan scheme – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and • project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	Amber	<p>Your next LDP is not on track for adoption within the five year cycle. However, it is noted that it is currently at examination and will be adopted in 2021. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Your Plan has been examined and is due for adoption later in 2021. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>	N/A	
10	Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i> <i>*including industry, agencies and Scottish Government</i>	N/A	
11	Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on information required to support applications.	Green	Sixteen supplementary guidance documents support your LDP on a number of topics. These will be reviewed alongside LDP2, with a particular focus on placemaking and design, green networks and Infrastructure, developer contributions, affordable housing and low and zero carbon delivery.
12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact	Green	Your case studies provide a number of good examples of cross-service working within the council, including in respect of council housing and the Glasgow City Region Deal.

10

	arrangements; joint pre-application advice).		
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Green	You undertake benchmarking in partnership with East Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde, North Ayrshire, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire Councils on a variety of topics. The Glasgow and Clyde Valley LDP Forum meets every six months and provides another means of sharing knowledge and exchanging good practice. Officers also participate in HOPS and the online knowledge hub.
14	Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Amber	You have cleared 7 cases during the reporting year, with 8 cases still awaiting conclusion – a slight increase since last year. You have provided an explanation for why these cases have not yet been determined and that officers keep these under review.
15	Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions 	Green	Your planning obligations protocol sets out expectations for developer contributions. RAG = Green Your pre-application discussions involve addressing applicant expectations for developer contributions. RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green

Table 3

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

	Red	Amber	Green
2013-14	0	3	10
2014-15	0	1	12
2015-16	0	1	12
2016-17	0	1	14
2017-18	0	2	11
2018-19	1	3	9
2019-20	2	3	8
2020-21	3	3	7

Table 4

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	2020-21 Scottish Average
Major Development	16.7	19.6	17.5	45.0	32.6	-	34.7	56.6	41.3
Local (Non-Householder) Development	9.2	9.0	10.9	10.1	10.5	12.4	14.3	19.7	12.4
Householder Development	6.6	6.4	6.2	6.5	7.5	9.3	8.0	11.9	8.1