

Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community  
Wealth  
Tom Arthur MSP



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

T: 0300 244 4000  
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Jim Savege  
Aberdeenshire Council

29 November 2021

Dear Jim Savege

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's tenth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, for the period April 2020 to March 2021.

This is the first time I have written to you individually in my capacity as Planning Minister since my appointment earlier this year. I am very grateful for the support and welcome I have received and look forward to working with you.

This year has continued to present challenges for people working within planning, in the development sector and across Scotland's communities. We know people are doing the best they can to engage and operate, sometimes in ways and circumstances that may not be ideal, and with many still predominantly working from home. I appreciate that many of you will have had to make difficult choices in what work is prioritised, in much the same way the Government and Planning and Architecture Division has had to. However, we should all be very proud of how planning has responded to the coronavirus pandemic, adjusting as necessary to keep going and supporting recovery. I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for all the work that has been done during the pandemic and to support our ongoing recovery.

When my predecessor wrote to you last year he indicated that the pandemic had required a rethink about the timing and prioritisation of our planning work programme. A number of our workstreams were paused or delayed as a result, including the review of the planning performance and fee regimes, which had been the subject of a detailed consultation that concluded in early 2020. However, in October 2021 we published a revised planning implementation programme (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/transforming-planning-practice-updated-planning->

[reform-implementation-programme/](#)). You will note that we have now recommenced our planning performance and fees review, which reflects the importance Scottish Government attaches to this work. We are currently finalising proposals and intend to lay regulations before the end of the year to introduce increased fees, providing a boost to planning authorities' resources. We also intend to commence the recruitment of the National Planning Improvement Coordinator early in 2022.

Turning to the 2020-21 PPF reporting year, although, as expected, there have been some small changes overall in the markings awarded, the figures indicate that performance has remained relatively stable. This is a testament to the hard work and flexibility of authorities during these very difficult times and I believe that overall good progress continues to be made by Scotland's planning authorities.

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

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Arthur', written in a cursive style.

**Tom Arthur**

Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth

**CC: Paul Macari**

## PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2020-21

Name of planning authority: **Aberdeenshire Council**

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

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

No.	Performance Marker	RAG rating	Comments
1	<b>Decision-making:</b> continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Green	<p><b>Major Applications</b> Your timescales of 10.9 weeks are faster than the previous year and are faster than the Scottish average of 41.3 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Local (Non-Householder) Applications</b> Your timescales of 10 weeks are slower than the previous year but are faster than the Scottish average of 12.4 weeks. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p> <p><b>Householder Applications</b> Your timescales of 7.8 weeks are slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 8.1 weeks and the statutory timescales. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
2	<p><b>Processing agreements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and</li> <li>availability publicised on website</li> </ul>	Green	<p>Processing agreements are offered as a matter of course, including 100% of major applications <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>Processing agreements are advertised on your website. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
3	<p><b>Early collaboration</b> with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and</li> <li>clear and proportionate requests for supporting information</li> </ul>	Green	<p>You provide a pre-application advice service to all prospective applicants. Used in 353 instances. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>You are continuing your improvement work to review pre-application process, which is outlined in Case Study 12. Customer journey mapping has informed changes to pre-application process. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
4	<b>Legal agreements:</b> conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Green	Your average timescales for determining applications with legal agreements are slower than last year but faster than the Scottish average. A further 65 applications were determined using processing agreements with over 96% of those being determined within agreed timescales.

5	<b>Enforcement charter</b> updated / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Your charter was reviewed in June 2021.
6	<b>Continuous improvement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and</li> <li>• progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report</li> </ul>	Green	Your LDP and enforcement charter are up-to-date with clear timescales for the replacement of the next LDP. While you still have a reasonably high number of legacy cases, decision making timescales for all application types are faster than the national average. <b>RAG = Green</b>  Part 3 of the PPF report sets how previous commitments have been delivered and identifies service improvement actions for the year ahead, with these broken down by LDP, DM, Enforcement and Environment/Specialist teams. <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Green</b>
7	<b>Local development plan</b> less than 5 years since adoption	Green	LDP is less than five years old
8	<b>Development plan scheme</b> – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and</li> <li>• project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale</li> </ul>	Green	LDP remains on track despite challenging context of pandemic <b>RAG = Green</b>  Case study outlines how emerging LDP has been kept on track during the pandemic through the use of digital engagement tools <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Green</b>
9	<b>Elected members engaged early</b> (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>		N/A
10	<b>Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early</b> (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	<b>Regular and proportionate policy advice</b> produced on information required to support applications.	Green	Cases studies provide good examples of your approach to providing policy to applicants, as well as how this has been reviewed and improved.

12	<b>Corporate working across services</b> to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)	Green	The report identifies clear examples of cross-service working, including redeployment of information and research staff to the Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub (GCAH)
13	<b>Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge</b> between authorities	Green	Evidence of sharing good practice, skills and knowledge is set out in the PPF report, for example through the case study covering training offered to members on built heritage
14	<b>Stalled sites / legacy cases:</b> conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Amber	You have cleared 58 cases during the reporting year; 42 remain which is a slight increase since last year. Report acknowledges that progress on reducing legacy cases has been affected by the pandemic.
15	<b>Developer contributions:</b> clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and</li> <li>• in pre-application discussions</li> </ul>	Green	LDP sets out the requirements for contributions to necessary infrastructure and supplementary guidance provides the method of calculation. <b>RAG = Green</b>  Case study indicates developer contributions part of the review of pre-application processes.  <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Green</b>

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

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

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

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

**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	115.9	107.8	86.3	77.8	29.5	35.3	23.1	10.9	41.3
Local (Non-Householder) Development	18.9	15.8	14.1	9.9	9.1	9.2	9.3	10.0	12.4
Householder Development	7.4	7.3	6.8	6.7	6.8	7.1	7.3	7.8	8.1