

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23





Spectra Light Festival - Union Terrace Gardens

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Part 1: Qualitative narrative and case studies	7
1.1 Quality of Outcomes	8
1.2 Quality of Service and Engagement	15
1.3 Governance	23
1.4 Culture of Continuous improvement	33
Part 2: Supporting Evidence	40
Part 3: Service Improvements	41
3.1 Report on Service Improvements for 2022-2023	41
3.2 Service Improvement Actions for 2023-2024	44
Part 4: National Headline indicators (NHIs)	45
Part 5: Official Statistics	48
Part 6: Workforce information	50
Part 7: Planning committee information	50
Appendix 1: Scottish Government Performance Summary	52
Appendix 2: Performance Marker Checklist	55
Appendix 3: Staff Training – CPD	57



FOREWORD

Welcome to Aberdeen City Council’s Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report for 2022-2023.

It’s been another exciting year for the planning service with its officers at the heart of delivering a number of major projects across the city. Work continues on the City Centre Masterplan, as well as development of a new Beach Development Framework to transform Aberdeen’s Beachfront and improving pedestrian and cycling links to the City Centre.

As part of the continuing work on the City Centre Masterplan, planning officers have also been engaged in work on the Scottish Government’s Bus Partnership Fund which is helping to reshape the transport network in Aberdeen with a greater emphasis on public transport and active travel as well as transforming the urban realm. This ties into ongoing work on the city’s successful Levelling Up Bid for the redevelopment of the former Market building, which the planning service has worked closely on.

Planning officers have also led on a successful bid to the initial phase of the Heritage and Place programme. This new programme has been launched by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland and will continue the great work of the Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme, which is coming to an end in 2023 after five incredibly successful years.

The adoption of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) earlier this year presents both opportunities and challenges. As the planning service leads on Net Zero Aberdeen and Aberdeen Adapts, the city’s climate adaptation and mitigation plans, as well as the Council’s own Net Zero Plan, NPF4 provides many new tools to help deliver on the objectives of these plans. Nevertheless, these additional tools, and many of the additional duties within NPF4, will continue to stretch the planning service at a time when both resources and recruitment remain a challenge.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Cllr Henrickson, the previous Convenor of the Planning Development Management Committee, for all his hard work and dedication to the role. His collaborative style and support for the officers working within the planning service was greatly appreciated and I hope to continue in that vein.

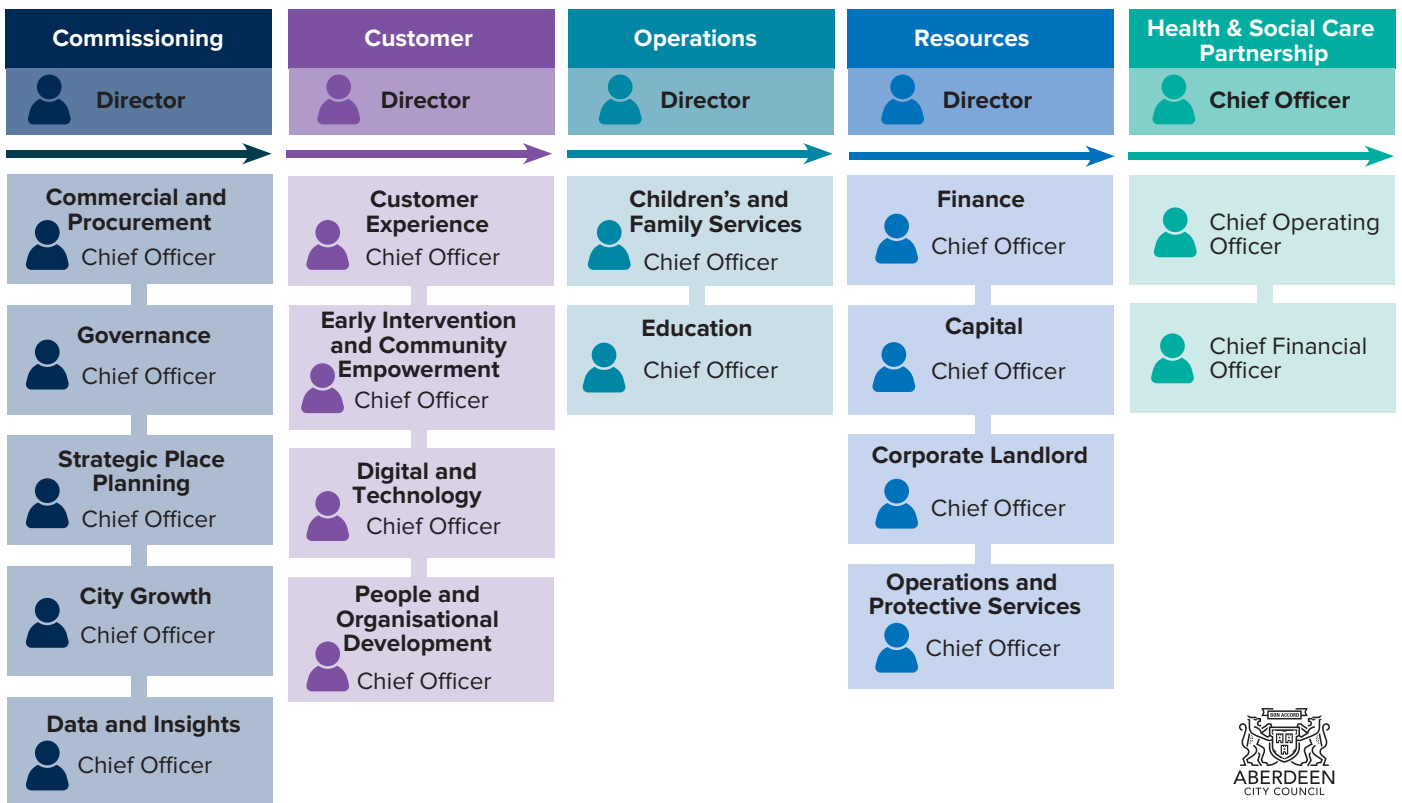
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. McRae'.

Ciarán McRae

Convenor, Planning Development Management Committee

Aberdeen City Council

Chief Executive



Introduction

This is Aberdeen City Council's twelfth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) report in which we record, highlight and celebrate achievements for the reporting year, from 01 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

Compilation of the PPF is led by senior managers, encouraging all officers across the Planning Service to bring forward their achievements and exemplar case-studies; enabling everyone to have ownership and pride in the content of this annual report.

Our Planning Service

Aberdeen City Council's Strategic Place Planning service includes the physical, social and economic activities used to maintain, regenerate

and strengthen the place of Aberdeen. Our focus is to enable, facilitate and deliver effective placemaking across the City.

The service comprises of interrelated teams with great aspirations for positive change. It is led by a Chief Officer who is supported by a Senior Management Team made up of Service Managers representing Policy & Strategy, Development Management, Building Standards and Climate and Environment Policy. The Service Managers are responsible for a number of different teams, each of which is led by an experienced team leader who is a subject specialist in their individual area.

Team membership is a melting pot of different backgrounds, including public sector, private sector, home grown talent, secondees, modern apprentices and subject specific specialists. They adapt working practice, ensuring no customer is excluded or disadvantaged. The team is diverse in its make-up, reflecting the City it serves.



Officers within the service reflect a virtuous circle of competence, where the focus is on sharing best practice, joint problem solving and providing opportunities to continuously improve.

Reflection is continuous, and customer feedback, complaints and compliments are considered by a working group with representatives from across the whole service. Peer review is carried out within the service, across the Council and also with external local authorities and partners.

Context

Although one of the most frequently used tools to assess the planning process is the speed of decision making for planning applications, this report goes further to examine other factors that influence the quality of place-based decision making across Aberdeen – for example added value, workload, resources, organisation, improvements, and outcomes.

Unless otherwise stated, all activities/service actions detailed in last year's PPF are still being undertaken. Where actions or initiatives in this report align with the key performance markers (see Appendix 2) they are cross referenced in the text (e.g., **PM1**).

We have a number of achievements to highlight in our PPF this year, despite further challenging circumstances, and we look forward to sharing these with you throughout the report.

Service Highlights / Development on the Ground

Examples of highlights from this reporting year include:

- **Publication of the Development Plan Scheme 2022 (PM8)**
- **Responses to various Further Information Requests and completion of a hearing session on housing land supply during the examination of the Proposed Local Development Plan 2023 (PM7)**
- **Receipt of the Report of Examination on the Proposed Local Development Plan 2023, approval of a Modified Proposed Plan at Full Council, and subsequent publication of the intention to adopt the Modified Proposed Local Development Plan (PM7)**
- **Publication of a suite of Draft Supplementary Guidance and Aberdeen Planning Guidance for public consultation (PM9 & PM11)**
- **Reconfiguration of the operation of the Local Review Body**



Planning Authority of the Year: RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence

Awards

As in previous years, the Planning Service or its employees were successful winning a number of awards, or for being involved in shaping developments that won awards, and some of these are listed below:

Net-Zero Energy Transition Awards 2022

Winner – Best Practice Award – Council Climate Change Plan Scottish Renewables

Aberdeen City Council STAR Awards:

Winner – Trainee of Year: Guy Bergman, Trainee Environmental Planner, Climate and Environment Policy Service
Finalist – Collaboration: Climate and Environment Policy Service

Aberdeen Society of Architects (ASA) Design Awards 2023

Award – Project of the Year 2023: Interior & Public / Commercial Building: The Terrace at His Majesty’s Theatre

Award – Small Project: Crown Cottage

Award – Education: Milltimber Primary School

Award – Residential Building: Aspen House, Camphill

Shortlisted for the Scottish Design Awards 2023:

Arbor House in Cults, the Concourse Pavilion Redevelopment at Aberdeen Station, Milltimber School Union Terrace Gardens and Greyhope Bay Dolphin Watching Centre

RTPI Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence

Winner – Best Plan (incorporating submissions in the Excellence in Plan making category): Net Zero Aberdeen Route Map
Shortlisted: Aberdeen City Centre and Beach masterplan

Planning Authority of the Year: Aberdeen City Council Strategic Planning Service

The RTPI award programme is designed to showcase and reward outstanding achievements in planning, to celebrate the contribution made by the profession and to raise wider awareness and understanding of planning.

PART 1: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

The Case Studies in this report demonstrate how the Service has managed to deliver significant and successful outcomes against key key performance markers (Appendix 2). They also highlight the continued engagement with customers and communities, collaboration and focus on delivering the best outcomes for the place of Aberdeen.

The headings for the qualitative narrative section are:

- **Quality of Outcomes**
- **Quality of Service and Engagement**
- **Governance**
- **Culture of Continuous Improvement**



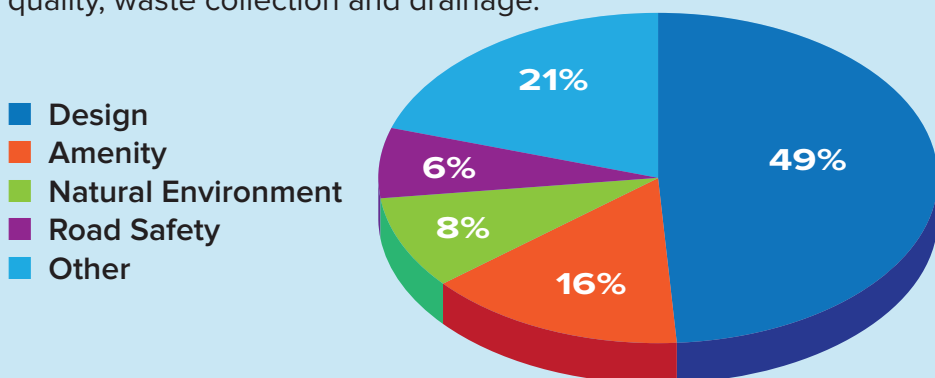
1.1 Quality of Outcomes

Added Value

Planning application case officers have continued to record added value to provide a balanced qualitative counterpoint to standard quantitative performance measures such as speed of decision making. The data shows that in 2022-23 the planning service was instrumental in positive improvements to 59% of development proposals at the pre-application or application stage – an increase from the 51% achieved in 2021-22. The spread of types on enhancement achieved and their relative proportions were almost identical to 2021-22. Most relate to design (49% of all applications with improvements) – achieved via negotiated modifications to the layout, elevational treatment, materials or scale or massing of proposals. Other notable areas where value was added were to:

- **Amenity (additional open space, increased garden ground or daylight and sunlight levels) – 16% of all amended applications**
- **Natural environment (enhanced landscaping, wildlife protection and tree protection) – 8%**
- **Road safety – 6%**

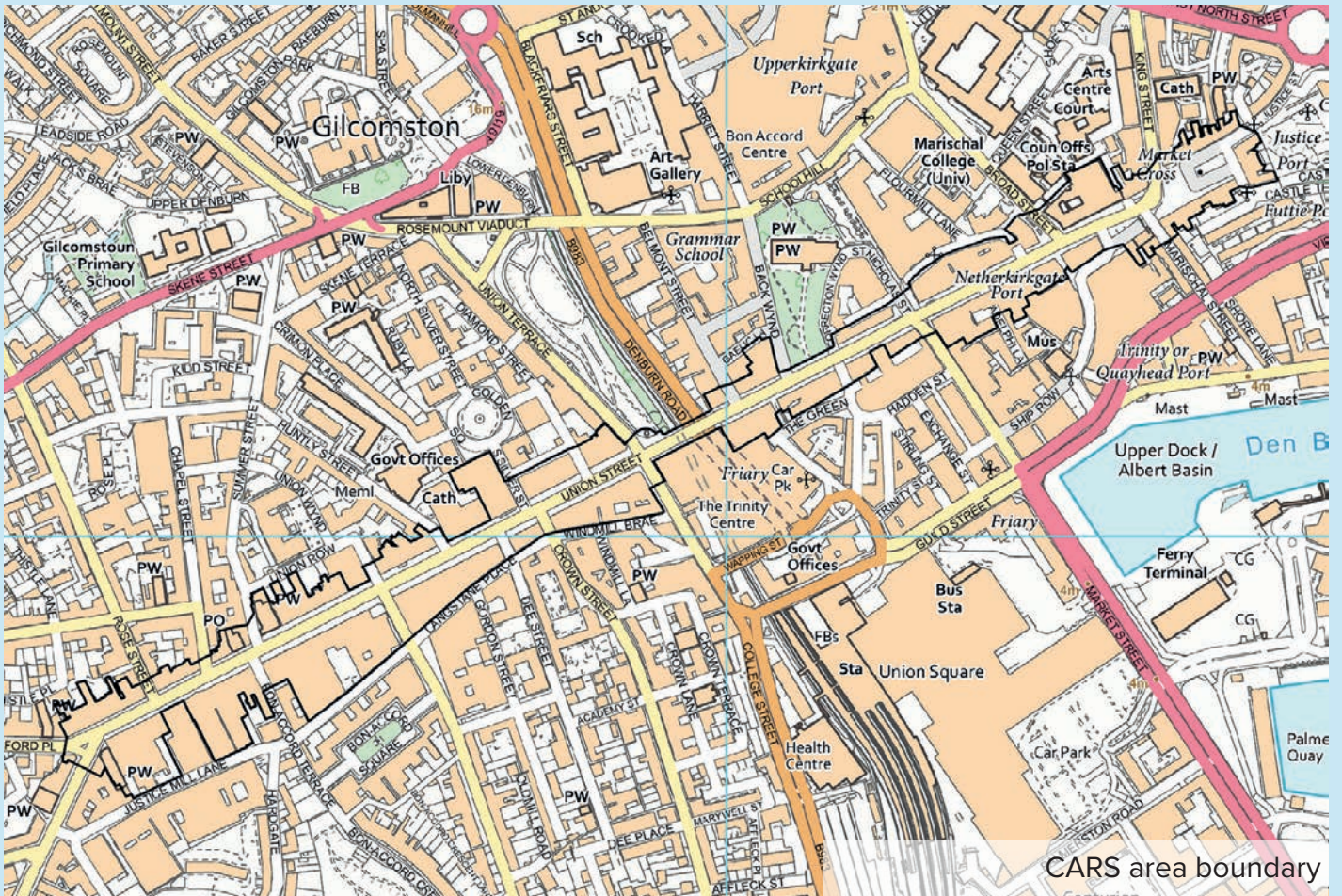
Other positive changes were secured to improve, amongst other things, active travel, noise, air quality, waste collection and drainage.



What cannot be accurately measured is the undoubted role played by the planning policy framework and application process as a deterrent to the progression of unacceptable proposals and as a guide in shaping applicants' proposals before active engagement with the planning service. The role of the Local Development Plan, planning guidance, masterplans and planning briefs is an unquantifiable, but nevertheless significant, positive influence on development form, design and layout that is considered by applicants at that formative stage.

Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)

CARS is due to conclude in 2023. Final grant funding committed in building repair and shopfront grants under the scheme is expected to be just over £2.8M. Together with owner contributions of just under £1M, the total investment in the historic fabric of Union Street will have been some £3.8M. Alongside this, there has been investment in traditional skills training, education, and awareness. Funding of £86,350 has been awarded to the first phase of CARS' successor – the Silver City Heritage and Place Programme Development – which will be matched by Aberdeen City Council. The 12-month development phase will produce comprehensive project plans, a skills audit (identifying traditional skills shortages in Aberdeen) and a detailed training and activities plans for the full 5-year scheme. Survey work will be carried out to gain a better understanding of restoration costs for priority buildings. Plans for green space enhancement, minor public realm works, and engagement activities will also be developed further. The initial phase also includes a programme of pilot activities, which will help to inform the development of Community Heritage Activities, working with schools and young people.



Aberdeen City Heritage Trust

During 2022-23, Aberdeen City Council continued to collaborate with [Aberdeen City Heritage Trust](#), providing a contribution towards salary costs and in-kind support. The Trust delivered a suite of activity, including:

1. Grants for the repair of traditionally constructed buildings in areas adjoining Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (of which the Trust is a Board member) that are important for reinforcing CARS improvements,
2. Aberdeen Heritage Lectures – a series of 6 virtual lectures packed with CPD content,
3. A guided maintenance walk in Aberdeen City Centre,
4. Community Heritage Grants for building interpretation, and
5. Raised awareness of the city’s heritage through regular social media posts.

Core Path Network Survey

In 2022 a Core Path Network Survey was completed by an external consultant to provide up-to-date baseline information on the quality of the 100 Core Paths and 10 Aspirational Core Paths within the Local Authority Area. This will assist with planning and developer obligation consultation responses, project planning and provide baseline data to inform a future Core Paths Plan Review.

LNCS review

[Local Nature Conservation Sites](#) (LNCSs) identify locally important natural heritage that could be damaged by development. Using a working group of internal and external experts on ecology and geology, the Council are currently undertaking a review of our LNCSs to ensure that the current ones are fit for purpose and that we identify new areas which may need to be designated. This process is expected to finish in 2024.

Habitat data

The Council use habitat data to inform planning decisions and this data was updated in 2022. In the coming years we are now looking to use this data along with our Open Space data and other sources to inform the handling of Nature Networks within planning considerations.

Tree protection

Over the PPF reporting year the Natural Environment Policy Team, under its statutory duties, processed 86 Tree Preservation Order (TPO) tree work applications and 102 applications for tree works within Conservation Areas. 4 new TPO's, protecting 5 hectares of woodland and 12 individual trees, were served. The team also processed 2 High Hedge Applications. This work helps to protect the city's vitally important tree cover.

Local Development Plan progress

Work has been ongoing on the adoption of the next development plan, the [Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023 \(PM7\)](#). The Examination in Public of the proposed Local Development Plan continued during spring and summer 2022. Officers responded to several further information requests during the period April – June 2022 and also attended a hearing session on housing land supply in May 2022.

The Report of the Examination was received in September 2022, and a modified version of the Proposed Local Development Plan 2023 (which took into account all of the recommendations of the examination Reporter) was approved by Full Council on 14 December 2022. The Council's intention to adopt the modified Proposed Local Development Plan was published on 15 December 2022. Scottish Ministers subsequently extended their normal 28-day period for considering the modified Proposed Local Development Plan, and the Council was awaiting a final response from Scottish Ministers at the end of this PPF reporting period in April 2023.

The [Development Plan Scheme 2022](#) was updated to reflect the move from stage 4 (examination) to stage 5 (adoption) of producing the new Local Development Plan (**PM8**). It shows the Council's anticipated timescales for adopting the new Local Development Plan. Although the anticipated adoption date falls beyond the normal 5-year review period, this is due to a combination of factors largely outwith the Council's direct control. These included: having to carry out consultation on the Proposed Plan during the initial Covid lockdown period; the significant volume of representations received to the Proposed Plan; and Scottish Ministers extending the normal 28-day period for considering the modified version of the Proposed Plan by several months. In the interim, the Local Development Plan 2017 remains the adopted development plan for Aberdeen City Council.

Draft Supplementary Guidance and Aberdeen Planning Guidance

In addition to progress on the next development plan, a suite of [draft Supplementary Guidance](#) and Aberdeen Planning Guidance was approved by Full Council in December 2022. This was subsequently published for public consultation in February 2023 (PM9). The consultation period ended in late April 2023 (just outside the period covered by this performance report) and the guidance documents will be finalised later in 2023. This suite of documents will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and will support the new Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023 by providing up-to-date advice and guidance on how policies in the plan will be applied (**PM11**).

CASE STUDY 1: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES



Ebikes at Castlegate

Case Study 1:

Aberdeen Bike Hire Scheme

Location and Dates:

City-wide – Launched November 2022.

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes

Key Areas of Work

- Active Travel
- Climate change

Key Markers:

6

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Authority Other Staff
- Other:
 - Transport Strategy and Programmes
 - Traffic Management and Roads Safety
 - Employability and Skills
 - Environmental Health
 - Nestrans
 - Air Quality



It is a sustainable and active travel option and will increase the current number of people already choosing to travel actively by walking, wheeling and cycling.

It will contribute towards delivering the strategic objectives laid out in stretch outcomes 14 and 15 of the [LOIP](#) to:

- Address climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate,
- increase the number of people walking and cycling to 38% and 5% respectively as main mode of travel by 2026.

Outcomes:

This project is in its early stages and still developing but has so far demonstrated a high interest in usage of the ebikes by members of the public to make short trips. This trend is observed by the number of rides completed on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis since the launch, which is encouraging. In addition, there has been a noticeable increase in regular users suggesting that registrants are using the ebikes more often and further demonstrates the public's willingness to embrace this type of sustainable travel. Users continually suggest additional locations for parking zones which will enable the provider to expand the parking zones to popular places. It is safe to say with the success recorded so far, as the scheme further expands, usage will equally increase. There are currently over 200 ebikes deployed in the scheme with a target to have these brought up to 450 ebikes and scope to further expand these as the scheme grows. Partners and other organisations are also in discussions to locate bikes at their locations including Aberdeen Royal Infirmary and the local universities.

Name of key officers

Ruth Milne – Technical Officer, Transport Strategy and Programmes

Overview:

This project provides the introduction of an [ebike share scheme](#) across the City.

The scheme consists of many geo-fenced parking zones, located at key origins and destinations in the city centre and across residential areas, and is operated solely by the use of a smart phone and mobile app.

A minimum of 450 ebikes are to be deployed throughout the streets and within our parks and green spaces and afford the flexibility to allow people to travel anywhere in the city with ease and at reasonable cost.

Goals:

This project will provide an alternative means of transport across the city.

CASE STUDY 2: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES



Case Study 2:

Seaton Park Don Street Entrance – creation of a new path

Location and Dates:

Seaton Park – January 2023 start date.

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes

Key Markers:

6

Key Areas of Work

- Greenspace
- Active Travel

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Authority Other Staff
- Other:
Friends of Seaton Park
Aberdeen Outdoor Access Forum
Sustrans/Nestrans



Overview:

This project aims to improve the main entrance into Seaton Park by creating a new path entrance and a safer environment for cyclists and pedestrians entering the park from Don Street. A new path has been provided to allow pedestrians a safe off-road path away from moving vehicles.

This improved entrance and path, including new piers to match into the existing wall, links Seaton Park with the surrounding core path network. The new piers have been constructed using recycled, local granite, thus saving carbon emissions compared to importing granite from abroad as well as embodying circular economy principles. This path will form part of a longer off-road pedestrian/ cycle route which is being developed along the River Don Corridor within Aberdeen from the beach all the way to Dyce and connecting into the Formartine and Buchan Way.

Goals:

This project will provide a safe and improved route and contribute towards delivering the strategic objectives laid out in stretch outcomes 14 and 15 of the [LOIP](#) to:

- Increase the number of people walking and cycling to 38% and 5% respectively as main mode of travel by 2026,
- Address climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.

Outcomes:

- Providing a safe off-road path helps to encourage people to walk and cycle to parks and greenspaces, reducing car use, encouraging healthy exercise and access to nature. This path will take park users past a newly created wildflower meadow and allow access to the wetland viewing area which are part of the Council's Aberdeen Flagship Parks for Pollinators project.
- The project was completed in June 2023, with the route already proving popular with pedestrians and cyclists alike.

Name of key officers

Karen van Eeden, Environmental Planner



Seaton Park

1.2 Quality of Service and Engagement:

Introduction of ability to make representations at Planning Committee

At the November 2022 [meeting](#) of the Planning Development Management Committee, it was agreed to introduce a [procedure](#) to allow interested parties to make verbal representations to planning applications at the relevant meeting – with 3- and 5-minutes speaking time allowed for local and major applications respectively. Interested parties include applicants and their agents, Ward Members for the application under consideration and those parties who have submitted a timely letter of representation. Participation can be either virtual or in person. The new procedure is considered to facilitate greater democratic accountability and brings the Council in line with about half of Scottish Councils who already have such a procedure in place.

Community Council Concordat

A service action from last year's PPF was to review and refresh the out-of-date Planning Protocol between Aberdeen City Council and the Community Councils dating from 2013. To this end a working sub-group was established constituting Planning Liaison Officers from 4 representative Community Councils, together with the Council's Community Council Liaison Officer and Development Management Manager. Following consultation and dialogue an amended [Concordat](#) has been collaboratively produced and was formally agreed in the Spring of 2023 (**PM6**).

Short Term Let accommodation

Under a licensing scheme for Short Term Lets (STLs) established in by the Licensing of Short Term Lets Order 2022 existing STL operators must apply for a licence and planning permission (if required) by 1 October 2023. In advance of the recent [Circular](#) on STLs, the service was very

aware of the need for guidance as to when an STL would constitute a material change of use from a mainstream residential property outside a defined STL control area. Accordingly, the Council produced and published a [guidance note](#). This advises that requirement for planning permission will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration factors such as number of guests, whether the property shares a communal access or amenity space with mainstream residential properties and the cumulative impacts on residential amenity of multiple STLs in proximity. A simple mandatory checklist has been created for completion by prospective applicants to assist in confirming the need for planning permission. Where planning permission is required (typically where there is shared communal access with a mainstream residential flats) the Planning Service is supportive where it is satisfied that the STL use would not have any significant adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties. A standard 5-year time limit is imposed by condition in line with guidance contained in the Circular and will allow review of the local housing supply situation every 5 years, assessed in the context of the Council's Housing Need and Demand Assessments. The number of guests is limited via the specification of a maximum number in each application description to ensure an approach consistent with Licensing and minimise the potential risk to amenity arising from multiple guests and 'party flats'. Since September 2022, the planning authority has received over 100 STL enquiries.

This consistent and pragmatic approach, developed in close liaison with the Council's Licensing Team (**PM12**), is in line with Scottish Government guidance and ensures that STL operators have a degree of certainty as to whether permission is required and knowledge of the matters that will be considered in the assessment of their application. It ensures STLs are brought within planning control where necessary and will build up an evidence base to shape future planning policy.

Green Times

The Natural Environment Policy Team continues to edit the [Green Times](#) online magazine that shares environmental news from a wide range of Council and community contributors.



Photograph: Jaclyn Sparks

Red squirrel in Hazlehead Park



Marischal Square and Broad Street

Launch of a Climate and Nature Pledge

Collaboration is at the heart of the city approach to climate change. The [Aberdeen Climate and Nature](#) pledge scheme was launched in November 2022. The Pledge is a commitment by the organisations and people of the City of Aberdeen to act within their own organisations and lives to contribute towards the Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap and Aberdeen Adapts Climate Adaptation Framework approved in February 2022. The Aberdeen Climate Pledge is open to businesses, organisations and members of the public at the end of March 2023, there were 70 signatories to the pledge, including 20 organisations and 50 individual/household signatories. (PM6)

Progressing a place-based approach to addressing climate change

Supporting the move from strategy to implementation on city place-based climate action, a revised governance structure for collaborative working on net zero and adaptation in the city, was approved in February 2023. This included the establishment of a Net Zero and Adaptation Board to strengthen joint working arrangements for the delivery of the [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#), the 6 Net Zero enabling strategies [Buildings and Heat](#), [Energy Supply](#), [Mobility](#), [Circular Economy](#), [Natural Environment](#), [Empowerment](#); and [Aberdeen Adapts: Climate Adaptation Framework](#). The Board is to provide expertise, advice, and scrutiny to support the city transition to net zero and to increase climate resilience.



Draft Aberdeen Planning Guidance: Outdoor Seating

The COVID 19: Relaxing Planning Control guidance allowed for a fresh perspective on the use of external public pavements, public roads, pedestrian areas, private car parks and other open space within the city. During the pandemic a cross service group within Aberdeen City Council was set up to support and work with business in line with Scottish Government and Chief Planner guidance and to consider proposals for temporary outdoor areas (see previous PPF).

In August 2021, Committee agreed formal consents, including planning permission, for outdoor seating would be required from 25 January 2022. Officers identified a need for additional [guidance](#) on outdoor seating proposals which was beyond the scope of the existing statutory planning guidance. To capitalise on the success and the vitality and vibrancy brought to the city from the use of outdoor seating, a short-term working group was established, comprising of staff from development management and development plan teams, to draft non-statutory planning guidance. The guidance document provides up-to-date planning advice for outdoor seating proposals and also details the different consent processes required from different parts of the Council for proposals of such nature (**PM11 & PM12**). The working group completed the draft document over a week-long period, with the committee approval process and full engagement and public consultation being completed in a 2-month period. The guidance has subsequently been modified to take account of consultation comments (**PM9**), and a final version will be published as soon as possible after the adoption of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2023.

CASE STUDY 1: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT



Developing a Circular Economy approach

Case Study 1:

Developing a Circular Economy approach

Location and Dates:

March 2023

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers:

6

Key Areas of Work:

- Climate change
- Environment
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Key Agencies

Overview:

[Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#) and 6 enabling Net Zero strategies span the net zero priorities for the city, addressing mobility and buildings, developing a circular economy, protecting and enhancing our natural environment and boosting empowerment. Following approval of these documents in February 2022 there has been a need to build collaborative work programmes. An approach to this was piloted for the Circular Economy theme and a series of workshops were held in Aberdeen, bringing together a range of stakeholders to work together, share information and inform the development of a city approach around a circular economy.

13 organisations attended 3 facilitated online Net Zero Aberdeen Circular Economy Workshops, in March 2023. These were led by Zero Waste Scotland in collaboration with Aberdeen City Council. The aim was to build shared understanding of a circular economy and develop Project Programmes to deliver the Net Zero Aberdeen, Circular Economy Strategy by identifying circular economy initiatives in the city and opportunities for new circular economy projects. The workshops are summarised below:

- **Workshop 1 – Valuing our Resources for a Circular Future** covered material recovery, avoiding waste, recycling at end of life and maximising value from waste.
- **Workshop 2 – Business and Jobs for a Circular Future.** This session explored circular business and behaviour models, job creation and enhanced business resilience.
- **Workshop 3 – Maximising Product Life for a Circular Future** This session covered product/service design for a circular economy, reducing emissions from the whole life cycle of products, making things last and maximising use of assets.

The Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap was awarded Best Plan at the 2023 RTPi Scotland Awards for Planning Excellence and the development of these collaborative work programmes is fundamental to progressing the city net zero journey.

Goals:

Learning from this approach, will be assessed and applied to the development of work programmes for the other net zero and adaptation theme areas.

Outcomes:

This findings from these workshops were collated in a report. Building on these workshop outcomes, work is taking place in 2023/24 in collaboration with Zero Waste Scotland to prioritise Circular Economy projects for the area and develop strategic partnerships working around the Circular Economy.

Name of key officers:

Emma Young – Senior Climate Change Officer

CASE STUDY 2: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT



Duthie Park in winter

Case Study 2:

Aberdeen Climate and Nature Pledge

Location and Dates:

Launched in November 2022 at the Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group (AREG) Conference

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers:

6

Key Areas of Work:

- Climate change
- Environment
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Key Agencies

Overview:

Collaboration is at the heart of the city approach to climate change and supporting this is the Aberdeen Climate and Nature pledge scheme which was launched in November 2022. The [Pledge](#) is a commitment by the organisations and people of the City of Aberdeen to act within their own organisations and lives to contribute towards the [Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap](#) and [Aberdeen Adapts Climate Adaptation Framework](#) approved in February 2022.

The Aberdeen Climate Pledge is open to businesses, organisations, and members of the public.

Collaboration is at the heart of the city approach to climate change and supporting this is the Aberdeen Climate and Nature pledge scheme which was launched in November 2022. The Pledge is a commitment by the organisations and people of the City of Aberdeen to act within their own organisations and lives to contribute towards the Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap and Aberdeen Adapts Climate Adaptation Framework approved in February 2022.

The Aberdeen Climate Pledge is open to businesses, organisations, and members of the public.

Signatories have pledged to:

- **Join the collective journey towards net zero and climate resilience expressed in Net Zero Aberdeen and Aberdeen Adapts;**
- **Accelerate the reduction of our organisation's carbon emissions to contribute to the delivery of a Net Zero Aberdeen by 2045;**
- **Collaborate across the city and region to reduce emissions, build climate resilience and help enable a just transition; and**
- **Actively contribute to the protection and restoration of Aberdeen's natural environment.**

And commit as a minimum to:

- **Measure our carbon emissions and be transparent about our targets and performance;**
- **Identify and assess climate risks affecting our organisation and customers;**
- **Plan, implement and promote evidence-based actions to tackle climate change and nature restoration;**
- **Embed environmental considerations into investments and decision making;**
- **Engage with staff, stakeholders and customers about our climate and nature commitments, actions and progress at least annually; and**
- **Support a just transition, ensuring our actions do not disadvantage any groups.**

To encourage sign up to the pledge a range of engagement activities have taken place including through events, webinars and social media channels.

Goals:

The pledge enables the formation of a network for sharing good practice, skills and knowledge around the city net zero and adaptation journey. Inline with the policy intentions of NPF4 it helps to encourage, promote and facilitate development that addresses the global climate emergency and nature crisis net zero and adaptation theme areas.

Outcomes:

The total number of signatories that had already signed the pledges by 31 March 2023 was 70, including 20 organisations and 50 individual/household signatories.

The aim is to engage signatories in the work of Net Zero Aberdeen and Aberdeen Adapts as it progresses, through communications and engagement activities; as well as involvement in the development of relevant work programmes.

Name of key officers:

Emma Young – Senior Climate Change Officer

1.3 Governance

Charging for non-statutory services

To manage demand in the context of reduced staff numbers, and to generate an income stream, the planning service has, this reporting year, introduced charges for a range of for non-statutory services as allowed for by the new Fee Regulations. These charges apply to requests for non-material variation to planning permissions, confirmation of compliance with conditions and surcharges on applications for development carried out without permission. This supplements income already generated by pre-existing charges for pre-application advice (PM3).

Change to the constitution and operation of the Local Review Body

In accordance with an instruction from the January 2023 meeting of the Planning Development Management Committee (PDMC), the Development Management Manager, and the Legal Services (Planning and Environment) Team undertook and [reported](#) on a full review of the constitution and operation of the Council's Local Review Body (LRB) to the March meeting of the PDMC where it was agreed to make the following changes:

1. **Membership of the LRB to henceforth be drawn exclusively from PDMC Members on a rota basis, and members to have the dates set in their diaries.**
2. **LRB Membership at any specific meeting to be set at 5 members with a quorum at 3 Members.**
4. **Substitutes to be exclusively drawn from PDMC Members and to be notified to the Committee Clerk as far as possible in advance of the meeting so that there is time to ensure that this would not result in participation by a member for same the ward as an application on the LRB.**

Restricting LRB Membership to PDMC Members only means that it will be easier to ensure that all LRB Members are properly and regularly trained, and that Members will have recent experience of dealing with a wide range of planning applications which is particularly important in assessing the merits of applications “de novo” and in ensuring well considered decision-making. The introduction of a rota ensures that there will be sufficient Members at any meeting, reduces the bureaucratic burden on the clerk and shares the responsibility of attendance out across all PDMC Members.

Enforcement Prioritisation

Union Street is Aberdeen's principal street and is the spine of the City Centre Conservation Area. The prioritisation of enforcement activity along the Street was highlighted in last year's PPF and flagged in the most recent [Enforcement Charter](#) (July 2022) and in the public consultation exercise that was carried out as part of the revisioning of the City Centre Masterplan. Enforcement has also been critical in terms of other high-profile projects in the city centre including Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) and Aberdeen City Heritage Trust (ACHT) projects. Union Street remains a priority for the enforcement team and the Development Management Team continues to establish contact with property owners with buildings with urgent maintenance works and those with unauthorised alterations that detrimentally affect the character of the building and/or the conservation area. This ongoing work identifies and reviews 'quick wins' to improve their current condition. 5 quick wins and 7 medium-term enforcement investigations on Union Street are currently being investigated. Some cases remain unresolved due to a lack of budget to proceed with direct action following non-compliance with Enforcement Notices. Options to address this will be actively considered in 2023-24.

Climate and Environment Policy Service restructure

In late 2022 what was the Environmental Policy Team went through a restructure. Now known as the Climate and Environment Policy Service it contains two teams: the Natural Environment Policy Team and the Climate and Sustainability Policy Team. This restructure has raised the Service's profile within the organisation, given that it is now a Service Area in its own right. With this the Service now has a Manager, two Team Leaders and four Seniors, helping to improve the Service's resilience and progression opportunities with a more balanced structure in place.



City Centre and Beach Masterplan

The [Aberdeen City Centre & Beach Masterplan](#) has been prepared as a responsive, place-led, project focused, overview of two individual masterplanning exercises in the core area of Aberdeen – the City Centre Masterplan and the Beachfront Development Framework. Both documents provide site specific recommendations on future physical, social and economic change within their individual red line areas. What the internal project team identified as missing, however, was a cohesive, strategic framework which ensured that projects within these two masterplans were not considered in isolation, and that recognised the need for improved physical and tangible connections between the two areas.

In order to address this, in 2022 Officers in the Council's Strategic Place Planning service led preparation of a new City Centre & Beach Masterplan. The document sits as an overview of these two individual masterplanning exercises to ensure site-specific projects and priorities, some of which would otherwise be taken forward by the local authority in isolation through its permitted development powers, were analysed in the context of wider environmental and economic sustainability.

Neither the City Centre Masterplan or the Beach Development Framework have been superseded by this exercise, but rather the means has been created via a new type of masterplan – a “live”

strategic document, updated annually – to regularly examine priorities in the context of changing political, social and economic pressures and to monitor progress on key SMART objectives over time.

The decision to create the overarching Masterplan was formalised via a Council instruction to Strategic Place Planning Officers in February 2022, with the report itself presented back to Members in August 2022 for approval. This was an incredibly short timescale to work within, which was compounded by guidance in place due to Covid-19, with guidance on shielding, face coverings, physical distancing still having an impact. This affected on the resourcing available to contribute to the project and meant an innovative way to addressing resourcing pressures was required.

In order to address this challenge Hub North Scotland Limited (HubNS) was engaged by the Council to act as Project Management Office for the procurement and management of the design, consultancy and technical work for all three of the projects. HubNS is a partnership between public and private sector organisations aimed at building and delivering better public services together. HubNS brought on board a specialist multidisciplinary Masterplan team to work collaboratively



with Council officers in assessing their objectives and drawing up the final proposals. The team challenged the Council’s proposals to ensure they were achievable and aligned to Government policy objectives to deliver the desired outcomes for the citizens of Aberdeen in creating a world-class city centre and beachfront.

The Masterplan sets out a clear vision to help ensure that everyone is working towards a shared concept of success: “To create a world-class city centre and beach that respects and enhances Aberdeen’s unique qualities and characteristics and puts people at its heart”. This vision provides a sense of direction for decision making and inspires stakeholders across the projects to work towards a common goal. The Masterplan also includes a series of SMART (Specific Measurable Achievable Relevant Timely) Objectives with metrics and owners to help define what success

will look like. By providing a framework for action, the Masterplan will also help guide decision making and is a material consideration in planning development management decision making (PM14).

The Masterplan facilitates collaboration between the public and private sectors and will be reviewed on an annual basis to respond to any changes in circumstances if required. This annual review will help to build resilience by anticipating and preparing for challenges and opportunities as they develop.

The implementation of the Masterplan will be a dynamic process, and adjustments (for instance to timelines) made as necessary and as circumstances change. The annual review will allow for progress on implementation to be communicated, which will be critical to maintaining stakeholder support. This will be done through various channels, for example reports to Council, stakeholder meetings and via social media.

George Street Mini Masterplan

One of the project areas identified in the City Centre and Beach Masterplan is George Street. In 2022 a “[Mini Masterplan](#)” exercise was undertaken for this area, with the draft document approved for public consultation by Full Council in December 2022 (PM3).

The George Street Mini Masterplan project was added to the City Centre Masterplan refresh in 2022 in recognition of the need for revisioning and re-energising of an area with enormous potential close to the heart of the city centre. Initially a Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats online survey recorded the opinions of nearly 300 interested parties. The place-based findings recorded a strong neighbourhood but one that would benefit from planned environmental support, particularly in redressing vehicular movement. This provided the foundation for the Council to bring forward a ‘draft mini-masterplan’.

The draft masterplan, structured on the key city centre themes of ‘People, Economy & Place’, was approved in December 2022 for further engagement and consultation. In March 2023 ACC hosted a second online survey seeking interested party opinion on the draft masterplan resulting, eliciting 100 survey returns. In parallel, key stakeholder meetings and discussion groups were held to ensure that the ideas generated evolve from visions into endorsed and tangible projects for delivery with a ‘place’ emphasis (PM3). The next steps are to incorporate the survey findings, continue to lead on iterative project testing, taking into account the findings of a Strategic Environmental Assessment, and to offer further involvement and updates to key stakeholders with the achieving masterplan approval this year.

Beachfront Development Framework

In May 2021, the Council instructed a public survey on the future of the Beachfront to allow potential options to be brought forward. Following the significant public engagement exercise, the Council subsequently committed to preparing an Aberdeen Beachfront Development Framework to deliver on the public feedback. The vision for the Beachfront is to create a dynamic waterfront destination with a redesigned Beach Boulevard which focuses on pedestrian, cycle and public transport connection back into the City Centre. The aspirations are to activate the beachfront itself with dedicated play and events spaces, improved accessibility, new leisure facilities, a potential new stadium, high quality public realm, and as well as supporting facilities such as changing accommodation/satellite facilities and a potential landmark boardwalk structure, all connected by an enhanced green infrastructure network. Furthermore, the listed Beach Ballroom reimagination is key to the proposals with the desire to return this significant building to its formal glory as the ‘peoples ballroom.’



At the June 2022 Council meeting, a Draft Development Framework was approved for a 6-week public [consultation](#) (PM3). There was extensive stakeholder engagement with the MDC team and the wider planning service. Members of staff were allocated to deal with the process and Development Framework discussions and there have been regular bi-weekly update meetings. Detailed discussions and input have also been sought on developing the more detailed phases and design evolution. In August 2022 an instruction was given by Council to consider the remainder of the Beachfront between the River Don and River Dee and a consultation has been developed to gauge early thoughts and ideas on how people use this area at the moment, and what it would benefit from in the future. This consultation is due to take place early in the next PPF year. The document was approved as a Council Strategy in May 2023, just outside the PPF year.

Collaboration, corporate working, and shared services

A range of intra and inter-service collaboration has continued throughout the reporting year (PM12). Regular departmental meetings take place between Local Development Plan and colleagues in Transport Strategy, Development Management and Masterplanning, Design and Conservation to ensure collaborative working and that each team is kept up to date with projects, teams and timescales of work. There have also been regular scheduled meetings of working groups between the Development Management and the Climate and Environmental Policy and Local Development Plan Teams. There have also been regular scheduled and between DM and the Council's Housing Delivery, City Growth and Legal Services (Planning and Environment) Teams.

The Council continues its shared service arrangement with Aberdeenshire Council for the provision of specialist archaeological advice and its scheduled weekly drop-in sessions for DM case officers with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency planning team (PM12).

Legacy Review Meetings

Regular scheduled internal Legacy Review Meetings with Senior Managers have continued during the reporting period (PM14). These have helped to expedite and resolve problematic or longstanding cases (PM4). A total of 23 legacy cases were cleared during the reporting period leaving 21 outstanding legacy cases on April 1st, 2023, 5 more than at the same point last year.

North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership (NESBiP)

The Council is a key partner of [NESBiP](#), and we believe that this partnership approach to tackling threats to biodiversity and facilitating conservation action for local biodiversity is essential to achieve our outcomes under the Biodiversity Duty and also our new responsibilities under NPF4. One of the big benefits coming out of the partnership has been the new website with its “[Developer’s Hub](#)”, which is a resource primarily aimed at developers, and which also provides lots of useful information for the region’s local authority planners. The Hub has been developed by NESBiP and its partners to support planning decisions within the three local authority areas covered by the partnership and in doing so, facilitate protection and enhancement of biodiversity through the planning process (PM12).

North East Scotland Biological Records Centre (NESBReC)

The Council is a partner with [NESBReC](#) who collects, stores, manages and disseminates biological data for various organisations including local authorities. Through a Service Level Agreement (SLA), NESBReC provide information that assists the Council in making decisions in a nature conservation and land-use planning context. During the reporting period, NESBReC led a project to update habitat data of the City to ensure accurate data is available for making decisions (PM12).



Buff-tailed bumblebee at Duthie Park

Processing Agreements

An offer of entering into a processing agreement is made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and at the pre-application stage and the availability of this service publicised on the Council’s [website](#) (PM2).

Developer Obligations

Processes and procedures have been refined to ensure that the Developer Obligations (DO) process has continued to run efficiently following adaptations that were made during the Covid-19 pandemic (PM15). This has meant continued use of online communication and virtual meeting technology to ensure the continuation of high-quality service delivery following the end of the pandemic. The DO Officer has responded to 81 requests for comments on planning applications, pre-application enquiries and follow up queries as well as ongoing discussions and negotiations during the PPF year. This represents a reduction on the previous year’s figure of 94 and is lower than pre-pandemic levels. This reflects fewer consultations and therefore a smaller number of follow up queries relating to applications and pre-applications meeting the threshold for developer obligations consultation.



Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route at Aberdeen International Airport

New Terms of Reference for the Developer Obligations Working Group were prepared and agreed during 2022 to formally reflect the changes made in response to working practices during the Pandemic but also changes to the Council's committee structure and approvals processes. The group is updated on all DO Assessment Reports issued in respect of live planning applications to ensure corporate awareness of the contributions being sought from new developments and agrees allocation of funds to projects for draw down or refers to the Capital Board and/or committee for approval depending on the scale and nature of the funding request.

The Developer Obligations Team leader has undertaken training with elected members who sit on the Planning Development Management Committee (PDMC) to provide an overview and understanding of the regulatory framework around developer obligations as well as the purpose and limitations of funds collected to mitigate the impact of new development on the City's infrastructure. In turn, this has allowed planning applications to progress to determination and has also ensured that funds are efficiently and effectively allocated to projects, allowing relevant Council services and external delivery partners to continue to draw down and utilise DO funding to deliver enhanced infrastructure capacity and improved services to local residents.

Over 2022, the Developer Obligations Team has worked with the Local Development Plan Team and other internal and external infrastructure providers to prepare and inform new [Supplementary Guidance](#) relating to planning obligations, affordable housing and specialist accommodation to support the new Aberdeen Local Development Plan and update the evidence base for securing contributions for community infrastructure impacted by new development. (PM15)

Engagement with NHS Grampian

As part of the process of preparing the new suite of Draft Supplementary Guidance and Aberdeen Planning Guidance, a senior officer from the Development Plan Team has been engaging with NHS Grampian to ensure that the potential wider health implications of each of the documents are considered. This collaborative process is helping to ensure that, wherever appropriate, the suite of documents encourage new developments to contribute towards the delivery of healthy environments, reduced environmental stresses, facilitation of physical activity, and promotion of physical and mental wellbeing.

CASE STUDY 1: GOVERNANCE



Case Study 1:

Union Terrace Gardens

Location and Dates:

Union Terrace Gardens – Tender process, Summer 2016. DPP and LBC applications May 2017-May 2020. Cleaning application Jan-May 2021. Construction 2020-2022.

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement
- Governance
- Culture of continuous improvement

Performance Markers:

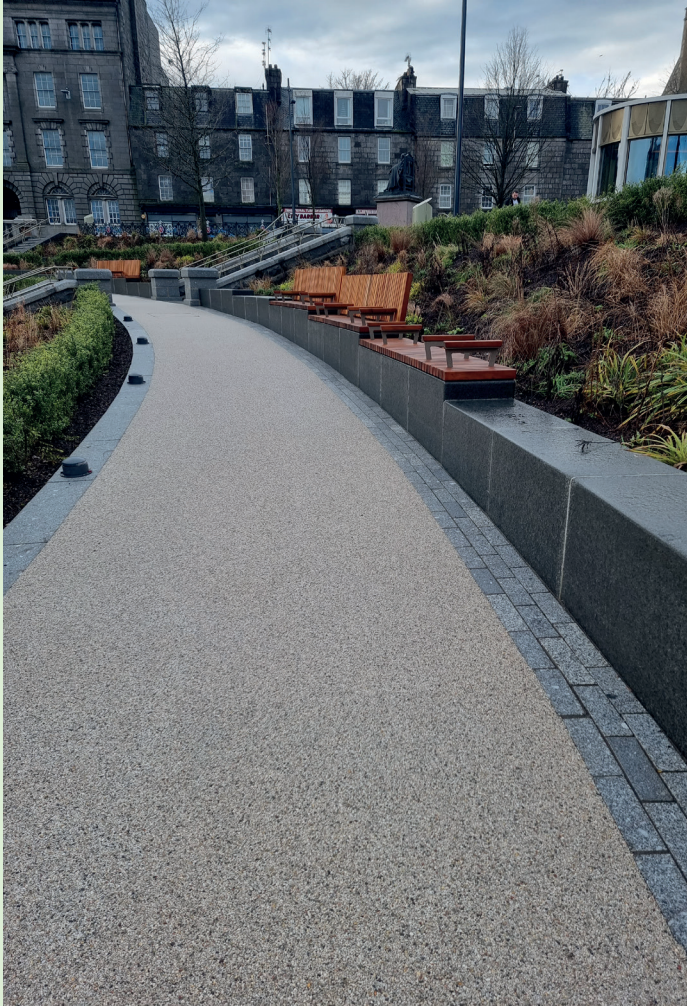
2, 3, 12

Key Areas of Work:

- Design
- Conservation
- Greenspace
- Collaborative Working
- Project Management

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Local Developers



Overview:

Over the decades a number of schemes were proposed for Union Terrace Gardens. These related to varying degrees of redevelopment, intervention and design development. The gardens were dark, underused and in recent years had a number of crime related issues. In 2015 the City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) was agreed unanimously by Aberdeen City Council. In 2016 the tender process began to appoint a design team to develop a scheme for the redevelopment of Union Terrace Gardens. The brief took extracts from the CCMP to set the context. The Council wanted to provide:

“Enhanced connections to Union Terrace Gardens, restoration of historic features and sensitive contemporary interventions will create a more accessible, enticing and vibrant city centre destination. The enhanced urban green space will provide multi- functional benefits; strengthening urban wildlife corridors, encouraging sustainable transport choices through this enhanced green corridor and equipping Aberdeen to be more resilient to climate change effects”.

The main objectives were identified as retaining and enhancing the ‘much loved gem’ feeling of UTG, creating a new, contemporary place to be a new cherished space, enhanced access into and through the Historic, Listed Gardens and enhanced activity and events.

Extensive engagement was carried out between the case officer and the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation (MDC) officer throughout the process. Ultimately the MDC officer took over as case officer to ensure consistency in approach and a single point of contact. The design process was extensive and involved significant redesign of the new buildings after input and discussions with the planning authority. Listed Building Consent (170496/LBC) was granted on 28.05.20 with 29 Conditions attached and Detailed Planning Permission (170497/DPP) was granted on 29.03.2018 with 22 Conditions attached. Once consent had been granted a process was carried out to appoint a developer who would carry out the design and build contract.

Further applications were submitted to vary condition 2 (191864/S42) as well as 210027/ LBC and 210028/DPP relating to cleaning of the stonework, both the cleaning applications had conditions added.

Throughout the process the case officer had to deal with a number of queries, purification of conditions, and other issues arising as a result of further studies, investigations and supply chain issues. The case officer worked closely with other council services, the design team and the developer to ensure timeous responses and no delays.

The redevelopment of Union Terrace Gardens was completed in this case study year. The resulting gardens enhance access and provide a space to enjoy and relax. The scheme also included the successful retention, refurbishment and reuse of the listed structures and buildings. The granite was cleaned, and the result is significantly brighter and an improved appearance. This scheme has ensured their retention and survival for future generations to use and enjoy. The walkway amphitheatre provides an attractive accessible route into the gardens while doubling as seating for events. To

the south, the new space at street level helps to bring the gardens up to the road and provides areas of space to relax around a new water feature. Finally, the removal of the small link road to the north and the bringing the gardens up to street level at Rosemount Viaduct has improved the visual appearance and accessibility of this area and the approach to the City Centre from the Northwest.

Already it is apparent that people are using the gardens more than previously and it promises to become a new and valued focal point for the City.

Goals:

Through early engagement, ongoing discussion with internal and external stakeholders, along with involvement and extensive input from the case officer, the planning service sought to achieve a high-quality design approach. This has resulted in a safe, pleasant, well used City Centre Green Space that protects its history and historic buildings for future generations.

Outcomes:

The photos show the high quality finish of the materials, the new interventions, the cleaned granite and the general access and visual improvements of the area.

The outcome is that a successful collaborative process was carried out that resulted in the reopening of a restored garden that respected the existing site, heritage and surrounding context that encourages people back into the city centre.

Some final elements need to be added including the turf laying but the gardens are opened and reinvigorated and back in use for the summer for enjoyment by people of all physical abilities, ages and interests.

Name of key officer

Laura Robertson, Senior Planner MDC



Burns Pavilion in Union Terrace Gardens

1.4 Culture of Continuous Improvement

The Strategic Place Planning service commits to developing its staff by offering a variety of different opportunities throughout each year. As funding has been reduced, more learning and development has had to be delivered in-house, but a strong commitment to continued professional development remains. The following provides some examples:

Supporting the Institute

The Planning Service is a strong supporter of the local RTPI Grampian Chapter, with different Officers from across the service having acted as Convenor and/or Vice Convenor over the last 10 years. Currently more than a third of RTPI Grampian Committee Members are officers from within Aberdeen City Council, including the current Convenor. The Planning Service is also a strong supporter of the Institute at a national level, with both the current Chair of the Scottish Young Planners Network (Sepi Hajisoltani) and the Junior Vice Convenor of RTPI Scotland (Laura Robertson) officers within our Development Management Team. The service was also keen to support the recent RTPI Scotland Annual Conference which was held in Aberdeen in September 2022. As well as ensuring the event was supported via local ticket sales, Officers from across the Planning Service spoke at the event and arranged and led walking tours for participants. The Service also took part in the RTPI's pilot mentoring programme NURTURE.



Marine Operations Centre at Aberdeen Harbour

Internal Training

Organised from within the Service, lunchtime training sessions are held throughout the year and are an opportunity for officers from across the service to network with colleagues whilst also gaining valuable training. Webinars have also been run to provide information to the wider Council on the progress of the City Centre and Beach Masterplan and NPF4.

Surgeries

With the Service, both the Natural Environment Team and the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team also arrange and run weekly drop-in 'Surgery' sessions for colleagues (**PM12**). These sessions are an efficient use of Officer time and demonstrate an innovative way to address working priorities. The surgeries provide an opportunity for Case Officers to discuss and evaluate technical matters with subject specialists in an informal setting. The discussions are relevant for all types of development proposals and aim to achieve higher quality service engagement and to put quality placemaking at the core of our service. Surgeries also help to up-skill Officers and aid them with future application assessment.

Elected Member Training

Following Council elections in May 2022, and prior to the first planning committee and local review body meetings of the new administration, a training event was held for all members in the planning process and a separate event was held for local review body processes. The LRB event was also followed by a training workshop on design and placemaking led by the Senior Planner (Urban Design). These actions fully meet the requirements of this service action for 2022-23.

Net Zero and Aberdeen Adapts training

Climate Sustainability Officers delivered 14 presentations and webinars on Net Zero Aberdeen and Aberdeen Adapts to a range of local, national, and international stakeholders and delegations (**PM13**).

Local Development Plan Team GIS Training

The Local Development Plan Team identified the need for GIS training. This was a specific priority to help deliver one of the identified service improvements for 2022-23 to 'investigate and develop ways to streamline / digitise the process of data capture'. An opportunity was identified for two officers to undertake a GIS study module through the University of Aberdeen and both officers have now completed this study. Using the new skills acquired, the team are now well placed to identify and implement new ways of presenting planning data in digital / GIS form (**PM6**). This will be a particular benefit as work commences on the next Local Development Plan for 2028.

Sharing Good Practice

Members of the Development Management and Local Development Plan Teams continue to engage in sharing good practice, skills and knowledge with other planning authorities through regular attendance and representation at groups such as the HoPS Development Plan and Development Management Sub-Committee, RTPI conferences, and the Scottish Young Planners Network (**PM13**). In November 2022, and for the 7th successive year, the Service co-ordinated a collaborative peer review exercise with 2022-23's PPF twinning authority West Dunbartonshire Council (see Appendix 3 below for details).

External Training

Officers from across the Planning Service has also been invited by external partners and organisations to provide training or support events and initiatives. Some examples are included in Appendix 3: Staff training – CPD.

Co-Design Process

Members of the Natural Environment Policy Team have attended workshops run by NatureScot with the purpose of co-designing the frameworks for 30x30 and Nature Networks. These areas of work will be key both from an environmental and a planning perspective. Therefore, it was important for the team to attend to learn more about 30x30 and Nature Networks as they evolved, as well as to provide practical input to help shape their design.

NPF4 Training

In preparation for the formal adoption of [National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4) on 13 February 2023, senior planners from the Local Development Plan team held an interactive training event for Elected Members (**PM9**). The training was identified as a particular priority for members of the Planning Development Management Committee and those who sit on the Local Review Body but was also offered to all 43 Elected Members of the Council.

The training event highlighted the changes in the planning system brought about through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and the adoption of NPF4. The training offered to national spatial strategy, national developments, and the overarching themes, identified key changes from the previous national guidance documents and explained NPF4's enhanced status as part of the 'development plan.'

In addition to the Elected Member training, a council-wide webinar was organised to explain the implications for the Council as a whole. The audience included colleagues representing the Council in its role as a landowner and developer, who will also be directly impacted by NPF4 policies.



CASE STUDY 1: CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



Silver Fin office development from Union Street

Case Study 1:

Monitoring Major and Significant Developments

Location and Dates:

City-wide. From March 2023 onwards

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement
- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers:

6, 12

Key Areas of Work:

- Planning Applications
- Collaborative Working

Stakeholders Involved:

- Developers
- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:

Following the implementation of Section 44(2) of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 on monitoring of compliance with planning permissions which have been granted in respect of major developments, the planning authority now make publicly available a [quarterly written report](#) on the monitoring activities undertaken and their findings in respect of those major developments throughout the city.

Monitoring of such major developments was begun in March 2023 and allows the planning authority to proactively track all ongoing major developments in terms of planning approvals, conditions attached to relevant planning permissions, clauses within legal agreements and the overall progress of each site.

Such a proactive approach allows the planning authority to work closely with developers and stakeholders to ensure compliance of planning permissions, increase the efficiency of site visits and communication with the planning authority and a reduction in unnecessary and time-consuming enforcement action.

Goals:

Through continuous engagement with developers and other external stakeholders, the planning authority seeks to promote collaborative working to ensure compliance of developments with planning permissions, increase the efficiency of site visits and communication with the planning authority and a reduction in unnecessary enforcement cases. This hands-on approach allows for first-hand experience of the quality of the places being created, in terms of the development and environments being delivered.

The development of the report that is published within the public forum allows a new way to engage with individual stakeholders and provide them an informative update of the works going on throughout the city in respect of each major development site. This approach should also reduce the number of enquiries from third parties regarding developments on site.

Outcomes:

The work involved on monitoring and reporting of major developments is continuous. Attending sites by the planning authority demonstrates a commitment to be actively engaged in all parts of the planning process through to completion. Producing the report document provides an active record of each site, the stage of development and helps supports compliance with conditions and legal agreement clauses. This will result in enhanced engagement with stakeholders and provide regularly updated, publicly available information.

Name of key officers

Stuart Morrice (Planning Inspector), Scott Leitch (Team Leader), Development Management

CASE STUDY 2: CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



Case Study 2

Providing a net-zero pathway for retrofit

Location and Dates:

September 2023

Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:

- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers:

6

Key Areas of Work:

- Climate change
- Environment
- Collaborative Working
- Community Engagement

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Authority Other Staff

Overview:

As a Council we have set out ambitious goals illustrated in the Council Climate Change Plan 2021-2025 which aims to show early leadership in transitioning to net zero through our own assets and operations and improving our climate resilience.

Aberdeen City Council's Council housing stock varies in range of age, build, size and condition. The majority are currently fuelled by gas and electricity, which means a need to transition, improve energy efficiency and understand the implications of whole house retrofit for future action and strategic planning.

Project DORIC stands for, Domestic Optimised Retrofit Innovation Concept, and is bringing together a range of low-carbon generation and energy efficiency innovations that aim to demonstrate decarbonisation potential for the UK's social housing stock, whilst improving comfort and lowering energy costs for residents. The project demonstrates a consortium-based approach to tackling social housing decarbonisation established under the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Demonstrator programme.

The Project DORIC demonstrator aims to help find a pathway to Net Zero for Social Housing and affordable warmth for homes, whilst investing in building fabric improvements to PAS2035 standards. It is delivering fabric retrofit measures alongside the deployment of solar PV and battery storage to 50 houses in Aberdeen, with well-proven fabric improvement opportunities implemented in the participating homes, following a data-rich whole house assessment method supported by the cloud-based DREam platform. The project will showcase the use of smart modelling software and infrared survey techniques to rapidly identify the optimum paths for the decarbonisation of homes.

The project benefitted from the inclusion of Retrofit Coordinator from the start of project which meant that there is guidance for the Project Team on the PAS2035 standard and its implications.

Goals:

The approach to the Council Climate Change Plan and to the city place-based climate change plans is phased and iterative. This is to allow learning from current initiatives to be incorporated into future plans, as well as enable relevant adjustments to the changing pace of legislation and technology.

The objective of Project DORIC is to install fabric improvement measures and zero emissions technology on a number of dwellings to demonstrate practical design application, as an evidence base to scale up within Aberdeen City Council housing stock, private owners in Aberdeen, throughout the UK and beyond.

Outcomes:

As well as taking a whole-house approach to energy retrofit, Project DORIC is about delivering quality outcomes whilst learning lessons that will improve the pace and reduce the cost of future decarbonisation retrofits. Project deliverables will include:

- **Energy demand reduction in dwellings by applying a whole house retrofit approach compliant with PAS 2035.**
- **Cost reduction including energy cost reduction and future proofing existing social housing stock.**
- **Supporting green jobs and utilising local supply chains.**
- **Demonstrating replicability, providing lessons learnt to build skills, knowledge and experience in house to deliver future retrofit projects.**
- **Monitoring of post-occupancy comfort.**

Name of key officers

**Council Climate Change Plan –
Jenny Jindra, Climate Change Officer
Project DORIC – Mai Muhammad,
Energy Manager**

Part 2: Supporting Evidence

Wherever possible supporting evidence is contained throughout the report in the form of hyperlinks to websites. There are no additional documents to support the evidence in the report this year.

Checklist for Part 2: Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies

The table below relates to issues covered by the Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies in Part 1. This supports the promotion of collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst planning authorities.

Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study (page number)	Case Study Topics	Issue covered by case study (page number)
Design	30	Interdisciplinary Working	25, 29
Climate Change	17, 19, 21, 38	Collaborative Working	25, 27
Conservation	8, 9, 30	Community Engagement	15, 25, 30
Biodiversity	9, 10, 16, 17, 21, 28	Placemaking	17, 30
Regeneration	9, 30	Design Workshops/ Charrettes	
Environment	9	Place Standard	30
Greenspace	13, 16, 30	Performance Monitoring	36
Town Centres	18, 30	Process Improvement	15, 28
Masterplanning	24-26	Project Management	30
Local Development Plan & Supplementary Guidance	10, 18	Skills Sharing	34
Housing Supply		Staff Training	34, 57-58
Affordable Housing		Online Systems	
Economic Development		Data and Information	8, 28
Enforcement	23	Digital Practice	
Development Management Processes	23, 28, 36	Transport	11
Planning Applications		Active Travel	9, 11, 13
Other (Please Note)	30, 33		

Part 3: Service Improvements

3.1 Report on our Service Improvement Actions in 2022-2023

This section summarises our progress in the last year in delivering the Service Improvement Actions committed to in PPF11: Delivery of our service improvement actions this year.

Committed improvements and actions	Complete
Service-Wide	
<p>Conclude the test and trial phase and introduce new more flexible ways of working across the service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The test and trial phase has concluded and the service is effectively operating hybrid working with most officers in the office two days or more every week. 	Yes
<p>Maintain the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Accreditation Service-wide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The service successfully retained its CSE accreditation following audit in October 2022 with an increase from 12 to 14 areas of good practice and an addition of one compliance plus grade making 17 in total. There was only one area of partial compliance. 	Yes
Local Development Plan Team	
<p>Adopt the Local Development Plan 2022, and associated Aberdeen Planning Guidance.</p> <p>The Report of the Examination of the Proposed Local Development Plan was received in September 2022 and a modified version of the Proposed Local Development Plan was approved by Full Council on 14 December 2022. The Council's intention to adopt the modified Proposed Local Development Plan was published on 15 December 2022. Scottish Ministers subsequently extended the 28-day period for considering the modified Proposed Local Development Plan and the Council was awaiting a final response from Scottish Ministers at the end of this PPF reporting period in April 2023. A suite of draft Supplementary Guidance and Aberdeen Planning Guidance was also approved by Full Council in December 2022 and published for public consultation in February 2023. The consultation period ended in late April 2023 (just outside the period covered by this PPF report) and the guidance documents will be finalised later in 2023.</p>	Ongoing
<p>Digest, and begin forward planning the next local development plan in light of the publication of National Planning Framework 4.</p> <p>Forward planning for the next Local Development Plan is underway. Officers from the Local Development Plan team have begun to digest the content of NPF4, as well as the initial supporting guidance published after its adoption. A Development Plan Scheme for the next Local Development Plan was under preparation at the end of this PPF reporting period in April 2023 and will be published later in 2023.</p>	Yes and ongoing

<p>In preparation of the gate check of evidence for the next local development plan investigate and develop ways to streamline /digitise the process of data capture for audits.</p> <p>Forward planning for the gate check process for the next Local Development Plan is underway. As part of investigating ways to streamline / digitise data, the need for GIS training was identified. An opportunity was subsequently identified for two officers to undertake a GIS study module through the University of Aberdeen and both officers have now completed this study. Using the new skills acquired, the Local Development Plan Team are now well placed to implement new ways of presenting planning data in digital / GIS form. This will be a particular benefit as work commences on the next Local Development Plan for 2028.</p>	Yes and ongoing
<p>Investigate how to and produce a Child Friendly Version of the Local Development Plan 2022.</p> <p>Officers have engaged consultants to advise on the most appropriate way to provide a child friendly version of the Proposed Local Development Plan 2023. Following a series of exploratory meetings it has been decided to produce a child friendly overview of the Local Development Plan as well as the Council's Net Zero Route Map, and the City Centre and Beach Masterplan. This is likely to be presented in a comic strip format. Consultants will undertake the work to produce this child friendly overview later in 2023.</p>	Yes and ongoing
Environmental Policy Team	
<p>Raise awareness throughout the wider Council of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) process i.e., why HRA may be required, how to complete a HRA and where assistance can be sought.</p> <p>After successfully trialling our new process and template for Habitat Regulations Appraisals (HRA) within the planning service, we will be further rolling out our HRA process in 2023, concentrating on sections of the council that may not be very familiar with the requirement for HRA.</p>	Yes
<p>Update Aberdeen's Habitat Mapping so that up-to-date habitat/ biodiversity data is available to best inform the planning decision making process.</p> <p>Our habitat data was refreshed during 2022 to provide us with up-to-date information as well as baseline data for many areas.</p>	Yes
Development Management Applications Teams	
<p>Review and reconfigure as necessary the development management related planning pages of the Councils website to improve customer access.</p> <p>The webpages have been regularly updated in line with service changes (e.g. Guidance on Short Term Lets (see page 15) and to reflect new legislation (eg. Fee Regulations). This is an ongoing service action for the coming year.</p>	Yes
<p>Review and refresh the protocol on planning between Aberdeen City Council and the Community Councils .</p> <p>The service has finalised and agreed a new Community Council Concordat and this is reported in page 15 of this PPF report .</p>	Yes
<p>Set up a formal monitoring process and procedure for major and significant developments in line with the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act.</p> <p>A formal monitoring process has been set up and this is reported on as a Case Study in the PPF report (see page 36).</p>	Yes

Masterplan Design and Conservation Team	
<p>Seek Corporate Management Team approval for the adoption of the Urban Realm Manual.</p> <p>The Urban Realm Manual has been adopted as guidance for new roads and public realm projects.</p>	Yes
<p>Update the Conservation Areas Management Plan (2013).</p> <p>The City Centre Conservation Area Management Plan will be completed as part of the Silver City Heritage and Place Programme Development Phase (see page 8). £5,000 has been allocated from the Phase budget to appoint an external consultant to complete this piece of work.</p>	Ongoing
<p>Finalise and start to implement the Union Street Enforcement Strategy.</p> <p>Progress has been made toward finalising a prioritised enforcement strategy for Union Street and this is reported on page 23 of this PPF.</p>	Ongoing

3.2 Service Improvements for 2023-2024

In the coming year we will:

Planned improvements

Local Development Plan Team

- Adopt Local Development Plan 2023, and associated Aberdeen Planning Guidance
- Prepare for gate check of evidence for next Local Development Plan and implement ways to streamline / digitise the process of data capture for audits.

Environmental Policy Team

- Finalise the Local Nature Conservation Review.

Development Management Applications Teams

- Review and reconfigure as necessary the development management related planning pages of the Councils website to improve customer access service and usability.
- Reconfigure report of handling template and guidance.

Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team

- Complete the Silver City Heritage and Place Programme Development Phase and submit the final applications to Historic Environment Scotland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- Complete the City Centre Conservation Area Management Plan including formal adoption by Planning and Development Management Committee.

Part 4: National Headline Indicators

The National Headline Indicators (NHI) provide a detailed list of work programme information and allow for ongoing measurement of performance as can be found in the tables below.

A: NHI Key outcomes – Development Planning:

Development Planning	2022-2023	2021-2022
Age of local development plan at end of reporting period Requirement: less than 5 years	6 years and 3 months	5 years and 3 months
Will the local development plan be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	No	No
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	No	No
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	Yes	Yes

Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs ¹	2022-2023	2021-2022
Housing approvals	283 units	948 units
Housing completions over the last 5 years	5,425 units	4,362 units
Marketable employment land supply	206 ha	206 ha
Employment land take-up during reporting year	4.5 ha	4.5 ha

¹Audit Year

Commentary

An update of the Employment Land Audit has not been published during the 2022/2023 PPF reporting period. The employment land figures quoted above are therefore the same as the previous reporting year as this remains the data for the most recent 12-month period available.

B: NHI Key outcomes – Development Management:

Development Management:	2022-2023	2021-2022
Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice*	63 (10.9%)	124 (12.8%)
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	1 (20%)	5 (41.6%)
Decision Making		
Application approval rate	92%	91.1%
Delegation rate	96.7%	95.2%
Validation	47%	50.1%
Decision-making Timescales		
Major Developments	87.3 weeks	27.6 weeks
Local developments (non-householder)	10.0 weeks	14.9 weeks
Householder developments	8.1 weeks	8.8 weeks
Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	23	31
Number remaining	23	16

Commentary

A commentary on the decision making timescales is given on page 49 below.

*The figures in the table above for the number and percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice relate only to those applications that were preceded by formal pre-application requests that were logged in the casework system. Significantly more applications have received informal pre-application advice by phone or email. However, this number is not currently recorded in a way that can be linked to subsequent planning applications.

C: Enforcement Activity

	2022-2023	2021-2022
Time since <u>enforcement charter</u> published / reviewed	8 months	13 months
Complaints lodged and investigated	226	261
Breaches identified – no further action taken	138	116
Cases closed	28	193
Notices served	14	10
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

Commentary

There was a slight decrease in the number of new cases investigated in the reporting period. Most enforcement cases continue to be resolved through negotiation and discussion without recourse to the use of formal action. It is a continuing trend that a sizeable proportion of complaints are minor in nature; mostly householder cases (domestic properties) and breaches have usually occurred due to a lack of awareness of the requirement to obtain planning permission.

A significant issue in this reporting period has been the inability to proceed with direct action following the issue formal notices and lack of compliance by the offender. There are financial implications associated with direct action which would involve the expense of commissioning of a contractor or other Council services to rectify breaches of planning control identified through investigation. A small number of enforcement cases therefore remain paused in perpetuity due to the inability to take direct action. These include unauthorised shopfronts and signs on Union Street as well as other unauthorised works throughout the city. Ways of helping to address this problem are being investigated.

61% of enforcement cases have been resolved without recourse to formal action. 16 historic cases are still under investigation. 14 enforcement notices were served, in circumstances where negotiation was not possible, or where unauthorised developments required to be removed rather than regularised through a grant of planning permission.

The adopted Enforcement Charter was amended and updated in July 2022 (PM5).

Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics

Scottish Government Official Statistics are drawn from quarterly returns by planning authorities. They are collated into an annual set of figures that is published on the Scottish Government website.

A: Decision-making timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Timescales	2022-2023 Number or %	2022-2023 Average Weeks	2021-2022 Average Weeks
Overall			
Major developments	5	87.3	27.6
Local developments (non-householder)	232	10.0	14.9
Local: less than 2 months	74.1%		
Local: more than 2 months	25.9%		
Householder developments	246	8.1	8.8
Local: less than 2 months	87.0%		
Local: more than 2 months	13.0%		
Housing Developments			
Major	N/A	N/A	28.1
Local housing developments	28	14.2	30.6
Local: less than 2 months	60.7%		
Local: more than 2 months	39.3%		
Business and Industry			
Major	0	N/A	N/A
Local business and industry developments	0	N/A	N/A
Local: less than 2 months	N/A	N/A	N/A
Local: more than 2 months	N/A	N/A	N/A
EIA Developments	0	N/A	N/A
Other Consents	202	7.6	10.3
Planning/legal agreements			
Major: average time	2	144.1	34.6
Local: average time	8	31.0	63.1

B: Decision-Making: Local Reviews and Appeals

Type	Total number of decisions	Original decision upheld			
		2022-2023		2021-2022	
		No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	27	16	59.3%	25	20.0%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	12	4	33.4%	14	42.9%

C: Decision Making Context

Decision Making timescales

In the reporting year planning performance in terms of decision-making timescales improved for all application types with the sole exception of Major Developments. This included householder, non-householder, housing and local developments and also local development subject to a legal agreement. All these performance figures were better than the Scottish Local Authority average for the reporting year (see Decision Making Timescales table below for a comparison of the national headline indicators). The one exception was for Major Developments where the average determination time increased from 27.6 weeks to 87.3 weeks (the Scottish average was 39.5 weeks). It should be noted, however, that this figure was skewed very significantly by two particularly problematic major applications that took more than a year to determine. These were:

[191904/PPP](#) for the erection of residential led, mixed use development at Silverburn House. As a major development, contrary to the site's development plan zoning, without a pre-established masterplan, this application required preparation of a masterplan. Thereafter, there was a requirement for a statutory pre-determination hearing before determination of the application. All these factors contributed to an extended determination time.

[181224/PPP](#): A major application for Planning Permission in Principle for a link road and residential and commercial development at Inchgarth in the Green Belt that also required EIA. During the pre-determination period there were delays following requests from the planning authority for additional information from the applicant, including on landscape visual impact assessment, natural heritage and the transport assessment. There were complex issues to consider including steep site contours, impact on trees and land take as well as approximate alignment for the proposed road. The application was approved by committee contrary to recommendation and so work was required on conditions and the terms of the legal agreement, whilst Heads of Terms had not been agreed beforehand. The legal agreement covered a range of non-standard matters and there were very many landowners of the application site, resulting in this element taking significantly longer than usual.

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)						Scottish average
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2022-23
Major Developments	19.9	28.1	31.4	27.6	87.3	39.5
Local Non-Householder Developments	8.1	8.6	10.6	14.9	10.0	14.4
Householder Developments	6.8	6.9	8.3	8.8	8.1	8.9

Local Reviews and Appeals

It would be erroneous to try and deduce longer term trends from one year's figures. However, in 2022-23 there was a significant and welcome increase in the percentage of local review cases where the original officer decision was upheld – from 20% in 2021-22 to 59.3% in 2022-23; similar to the Scottish average for the reporting period of 64%. It is hoped that the increase in LRB membership from 3 to 5 and restriction of membership to Planning Development Management Committee Members that was introduced in May 2023 will improve this figure further. On the other hand the planning authority's decision was upheld in 33.4% of appeals the Scottish Ministers – a decline from the figure of 42.9% for 2021-22.

Part 6: Workforce Information

Workforce information is a snapshot of the authorities planning staff in position on the 31 March 2023.

	Tier 1 Chief Executive	Tier 2 Director	Tier 3 Head of Service	Tier 4 Manager
Head of Planning Service	–	–	1	

Staff Age Profile	Headcount	RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount
Under 30	4	RTI Chartered Staff	21
30 - 39	18	IHBC Qualified Staff	3
40 - 49	13		
50 and over	14		

RTPI – Royal Town Planning Institute

IHBC - Institute of Historic Building Conservation

Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committee & Site Visits	Number per year
Full Council meetings	12
Planning Committees	11
Planning Committee site visits	0
Local Review Body	13
Local Review Body site visits	1



Appendix 1: Scottish Government Performance Summary

Performance Markers Report 2021-2022

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	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Amber	Major Applications Your timescales of 27.6 weeks are faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 44.6 weeks. RAG = Green Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your timescales of 14.9 weeks is slower than the previous year and slower than the Scottish average of 13.5 weeks. RAG = Red Householder Applications Your timescales of 8.8 weeks are slower than the previous year, and slightly slower than the Scottish average of 8.7 weeks. RAG = Red Overall RAG = Amber
2	Processing agreements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and availability publicised on website 	Green	You promote the use of processing agreements to prospective applicants for all major applications. RAG = Green You state that processing agreements are available on your website. RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green
3	Early collaboration with applicants and consultees <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	You have maintained the same level of pre-applications as previous year. You also note that you have provides informal pre-application advice by phone or email which is not recorded in the statistics. Pre-application service was reviewed in October 2022 and no major changes were required. RAG = Green Ensuring proportionality forms part of pre-app review, as illustrated by Case Study: Aberdeen Market Redevelopment. RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green
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)	Amber	Your average timescales for applications with legal agreements is 60.0 weeks which is slower than last year and slower than the Scottish average of 33.2 weeks. You note in your PPF the delays in legal agreements were due to difficulties in obtaining S75 signatories due to complex major applications.

<p>5 Enforcement charter updated / re-published within last 2 years</p>	<p>Red</p>	<p>At the end of the reporting period, your enforcement charter was over 2 years old. I note that you adopted the charter in June 2022 which was after the end of the reporting period.</p>
<p>6 Continuous improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	<p>Green</p>	<p>You have completed 12 out of 14 service improvements identified last year with one relating to the LDP carried over as the post-examination period has yet to commence.</p> <p>You have outlined a good range of commitments , 14 in total, for the coming year with some ongoing from the previous year.</p>
<p>7 Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption</p>	<p>Red</p>	<p>Your LDP is more than five years old and next LDP is currently at examination. The delay is due to the volume of representations received.</p>
<p>8 Development plan scheme – next LDP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	<p>Green</p>	<p>It is clear from your report that the adoption of new LDP is slightly delayed however the progress to replace the LDP is ongoing.</p>
<p>9 & 10 LDP Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government are engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation. 	<p>Green</p>	<p>Evidence of elected member engagement throughout development plan process and evidence of engagement across a range of sector stakeholders. As noted above, LDP is awaiting adoption and therefore there has been no new additional stakeholder engagement over the reporting year..</p>
<p>11 Policy Advice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of relevant and up-to date policy advice 	<p>Green</p>	<p>Your associated supplementary guidance remains up to date. Various pieces of planning and technical guidance have been reviewed, updated and/or subject to consultation, including the Open Space Public Consultation held in February 2022.</p>
<p>12 Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Your PPF report provides a number of good examples of cross-service working to inform and improve planning services. You continue to run a cross-service group for Environmental Policy with Development Management and Local Development Plan. You also participate in the Aberdeen Sustainable Growth Agreement which collaborates with SEPA, Scottish Water and Local Development Plan Team to help manage rainwater and wastewater drainage, utilise resources from wastewater and help make sound decision making to support sustainable investment decisions.</p>
<p>13 Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Your PPF report provides several example of how the Council has engaged in sharing good practice, skills and knowledge. Active participation in HoPS, including support for various subgroups. A team member sits on the RTPi Scottish Executive Committee and contribute to Scottish Young Planners network and RTPi Grampian Chapter. PPF report provides evidence of in-house CPD events and opportunities available to staff.</p>

<p>14 Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>You have cleared 33 cases during the reporting year – 11 more than last year. 16 cases remain to be determined which is a decrease on last year.</p>
<p>15 Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions 	<p>Green</p>	<p>Processes are in place to ensure that procedures for securing developer obligations are efficient; these have been adapted to ensure these can continue to operate during pandemic. You have a Developer Obligations Officer who has responded to 125 requests for comments on planning applications, pre-application enquiries and follow up queries. A developer obligations working group meets monthly, to provide monitoring and ensure corporate awareness.</p> <p>LDP and supplementary guidance set out expectations for developer contributions. RAG = Green</p> <p>Expectations for developer contributions are clarified through pre-application discussions by the Developer Obligations Officer. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>

Appendix 2: Performance Marker Checklist

Performance Marker	Measure	Policy Background to Marker	Part of PPF report best suited to evidence this marker
DRIVING IMPROVED PERFORMANCE			
1	Decision making: authorities demonstrating continuous evidence of reducing average timescales for all development types	–	Official Statistics and PPF reports NHI Scottish Government Official Statistics
2	Project management: offer of processing agreements (or other agreed project plan) made to prospective applicants in advance of all major applications and availability publicised on planning authority website	Y/N	Modernising the Planning System (Audit Scotland); SG website / template NHI Quality of Service and Engagement;
3	Early collaboration with applicants and consultees on planning applications: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications • – clear and proportionate requests for supporting information 	Y/N Examples	White Paper; Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps NHI Quality of Service and Engagement
4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications within 6 months of 'resolving to grant' ³	Reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from same time last year)	Official statistics; PPF reports; evidence of delays to major developments Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
5	Enforcement charter updated / re-published	Within 2 years	Planning Act (s158A) NHI
6	Continuous improvements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	Progress on all commitments	Delivering Planning Reform; PPF Report Culture of Continuous Improvement Service Improvement Plan

PROMOTING THE PLAN-LED SYSTEM				
7	LDP (or LP) less than 5 years since adoption	Y/N	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy	NHI Quality of Outcomes Quality of service and engagement
8	Development plan scheme demonstrates next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> on course for adoption within 5-year cycle project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	Y/N Y/N	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy	NHI Quality of Outcomes Quality of service and engagement
9	Stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government are engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation	Evidence of activity	–	Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
10	No longer applicable – gap kept for data continuity	–	–	–
11	Production of relevant and up to date policy advice	Evidence of activity		Quality of Service and Engagement
SIMPLIFYING AND STREAMLINING				
12	Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (e.g. protocols; joined-up services; single contact; joint pre-application advice)	Examples from the year		Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Evidence of activity to pass on and adopt good practice	Delivering Planning Reform; Planning Reform Next Steps	Culture of continuous improvement
DELIVERING DEVELOPMENT				
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases: conclusion/ withdrawal of planning applications more than one-year-old	Reducing number of applications more than one-year-old (from same time last year)	–	Governance
15	Developer contributions: clear expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and in pre-application discussions 	Y/N Examples	–	Quality of service and engagement

Appendix 3: Staff Training and Continued Professional Development

April 2022	IPGRC 2022 – Resilience in Research and Practice – Presenter/ Virtual
May 2022	Scottish Young Planner Conference – Perth
	Our Climate, Energy and Just Transition Commitments session
June 2022	IHBC Annual School – Aberdeen
August 2022	Design Value Workshop- Aberdeen – In house workshop
September 2022	Meeting our Climate Duties online module
October 2022	RTPI Scotland Annual Conference – Aberdeen
November 2022	Children's Rights in Practice: An Introduction
	Climate and environment presentation for Elected Members
Throughout 2022	Carbon Literacy for Senior Managers training – 17 completed sessions during the year
March 2023	Heads of Planning Annual Conference
	Planning Enforcement Nuts & Bolts workshop delivered by IVY Legal
Various dates	Park Managers Forum (run by Greenspace Scotland) – sessions regarding open space and play sufficiency
Ongoing	HNC – Wildlife & Conservation Management – SRUC
	Green Walls and Roofs – Academy for Distance Learning

External training provided or co-ordinated by Council officers;

Community Council Training
Guest lecture slot at Scotland Rural College on environmental planning
Aberdeen University lecture for GIS MSc students
King's College Lecture on Net Zero Aberdeen Vision and Aberdeen Adapts
Judge for the Aberdeen Society of Architects Design Awards
Hosting students from the University of South Florida as part of the Collaborative Urban Path (the Aberdeen CUP)
RTPI local Chapter events
Officer gave a tour of the Refurbished Union Terrace Gardens Victorian Toilets
Tour of the Point from Dandara
Joint event between chapter and Scottish Young Planners Network on the listing of the Multis in Aberdeen from HES.
Bon Accord Baths site visit and tour.
A to Zed of sustainable volume housebuilding – Barratt Zed house project.

PPF Twinning Partnership

Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge with other planning authorities is important to gain fresh perspectives and ideas from benchmarking service developments and improvement (PM13). With that in mind on November 8th, 2022, and for the 7th successive year, the Service co-ordinated a collaborative peer review exercise with 2022-23's PPF twinning authority West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC). The day involved over 20 participants and the findings were documented to capture learning and to inform future service development. The topics discussed were wide ranging and included:

Morning session	Development Management
	Implementation of New Fee Regulations,
	Charging for pre-application advice – pros and cons
	Measuring value added in the planning application process (see earlier in the report)
	Use of processing agreements and stop the clock
	LRB and Planning Committee procedures
	Legal agreement processes and procedures – use of a legal agreement template
Lunchtime session	Development planning

The second part of the Twinning meeting opened with a comprehensive discussion of each local authorities Local Development Plan approach and progress. WDC shared a presentation on how they used their spatial mapping tool for 20-minute neighbourhood pilot projects

Afternoon session	Development on the ground. Both local authorities presented detailed information on several key developments, including discussion on challenges, engagement methods, hard to reach groups, murals, awards, educational aspects, accessible transport, and promotion.
	WDC presented on:
	Carless development
	City Deal site at Exxon oil terminal
	Antonine Wall
	ACC presented on:
	City Centre Masterplan
	Aberdeen Market Redevelopment
	George Street Mini Masterplan
	Union Terrace Gardens
Discussion followed on the use of design codes for the buildings, landscape and green space.	



BON ACCORD

ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

