

3rd November 2022

Agenda Item No. 9

Enterprise and Environment Directorate: Planning Services Performance Reporting

Report by: Ken Gourlay, Executive Director – Enterprise and Environment

Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To present the 2021/22 performance scorecard for Enterprise and Environment Directorate, Planning Services.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

1. Note the arrangements set out in Section 1.0 to fulfil the Council's obligation to comply with Audit Scotland's 2021 SPI Direction; and,
2. Consider the Enterprise and Environment Directorate, Planning Service's performance information presented in Section 2.0 and Appendix 1.

Resource Implications

None

Legal & Risk Implications

There are legal requirements highlighted within this report, linked to a risk of regulatory intervention if the Council does not adhere to the standards and expectations set by Audit Scotland.

Impact Assessment

An EqIA is not required because the report does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

Consultation

None required.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Audit Scotland published an update on Statutory Performance Direction in December 2021. The Council is required to report a range of information setting out:
- i. Its performance in improving local public services, provided by both (i) the Council itself and (ii) by the Council in conjunction with its partners and communities.
 - ii. Its progress against the desired outcomes agreed with its partners and communities.
 - iii. Its performance in comparison (i) over time and (ii) with other similar bodies including information drawn down from LGBF and from other benchmarking activities.
 - iv. Its assessment of how it is performing against its duty of Best Value, and how it plans to improve against this assessment.

Below is a Link to the Direction Statutory Performance Indicators published in December 2021: -

[SPI Direction - December 2021 \(revised\)](#)

- 1.2 Planning Services submit annually a Planning Performance Framework to Scottish Ministers which sets out the Planning Authorities performance against a range of national indicators. Once feedback is receiving from Ministers, the Service reports to committee on that feedback and overall performance benchmarked across Scotland.

2.0 Performance Reporting

- 1.1 The Directorates current challenges and priorities are detailed along with risks. Appendix 1 to this report is presented in the form of a balanced scorecard covering the areas of LGBF/P4F, Customer, Resources and Service Operations. A current snapshot of Service Challenges is included along with a section on Risks.
- 1.2 Planning Services reports across two Scrutiny Committees, with Climate Change aspects reporting to the Environment, Transportation and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee. Text in italics within the Appendix relates to this.
- 1.3 Overall performance across Planning Services is positive, set against an increased workload and challenges in recruiting experienced professional staff. The performance indicators, whilst focused on the speed of decision making, reflect the increased workload and growing complexity in the assessment of planning applications.
- 1.4 Customer feedback is sought, improvements identified and actioned. Regular liaison with groups of customers assists in identifying improvements.
- 1.5 The Service's workforce strategy has developed over recent years with a positive balance in the workforce in respect of age profile. This should have medium- and longer-term benefits in maintaining a skilled workforce. The Royal Town Planning Institute have undertaken research in recent years ('Resourcing the Planning Service', June 2021) which has highlighted challenges nationally. This was informed by a national study undertaken by Skills Development

Scotland and partners ('Skills in Planning Research Paper', February 2021). Workforce planning continues around developing skills, retention, and recruitment.

- 1.6 The risks and emerging risks are set out in Appendix 1 to the report and highlight the importance of planning to Fife's economy. Risks are monitored regularly, and mitigation identified.
- 1.7 Planning Services more detailed performance reporting is undertaken annually through the Planning Performance Framework (PPF) as outlined in para 1.2 above. The latest and 11th version 'Fife Planning Performance Framework 2021/22' was submitted to Scottish Ministers in July 2022. Once Ministerial feedback is received a report will be presented to committee.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 This report highlights the key challenges, risks and performance in relation to the items that the Enterprise and Environment Directorate oversees. Overall, performance in Planning Services is good, and the Service is seeking to make improvements in respect of the time to determine planning applications.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Planning Services Performance

Background papers

- 'Resourcing the Planning Service', June 2021
<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/research/2021/june/resourcing-the-planning-service-key-trends-and-findings-2021/>
- 'Skills in Planning Research Paper', February 2021
https://www.partnersinplanning.scot/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/23623/Skills-in-Planning-Research-Final-February-2021.pdf
- 'Fife Planning Performance Framework 2021/22', July 2022
https://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/406042/Planning-Performance-Framework-11-Final-Document-Accessible.pdf

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PLANNING

Current Challenges & Priorities

- Key challenges over the past year include:
 - *Addressing the Climate Emergency actions and associated strategic risks if not delivered.*
 - Increase in planning applications and related activity throughout late 2020 through 2022. Additional staff resources are currently being recruited.
 - Supporting Fife's economic recovery through the Covid-19 pandemic.
 - Demands created by Planning (Scotland) Act 2019; 49 new and unfunded duties.
 - *Climate literacy – achieving Fife Council as a Bronze level Carbon Literate Organisation, Planning Service as a Gold.*
 - Review of National Planning Framework 4 delayed through the pandemic and impact on timescales to review Fife Local Development Plan.
 - Working collaboratively with other services to deliver on the Housing Infrastructure Fund allocation through Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal for, and progressing delivery of, the strategic transport interventions at Dunfermline as part of strategic growth to ensure integrated delivery of infrastructure with new development consented.
 - Progressing delivery solution for new Primary School at Wellwood, Dunfermline to facilitate development and unlock education capacity.
 - Managing the number of planning applications and income, at the same time as an increase in the complexity of application assessment.
 - Recruitment and retention of staff.
- The current position of the Service reflects the key challenges outlined above. The current economic climate is likely to result in the number of Householder planning applications reducing, however, an increase in applications relating to Short Term let legislation for guest houses and bed & breakfast establishments, together with applications from businesses who wish to regularise developments which were implemented during the relaxation through the Pandemic is expected. Early work is progressing on the review of the Local Development Plan. A project plan is currently being finalised. This review provides the Council the opportunity for the Local Development Plan to be the spatial expression of the Plan4Fife and embed Place Leadership. Whilst the Council does not have the resources to assist community groups in detail in preparing Local Place Plans, guidance has been issued together with a workshop and video.

Addressing Climate Emergency is critical for Fife. The Service leads with the Reform and Recovery Board. Further work is being progressed to ensure that actions are worked up to have a lead, costed, and timescales clarified.

Housebuilding and other development across Fife is important to Fife's economy, creating jobs and meeting Fife's housing need. Housebuilding activity is buoyant and good progress is being made in realising strategic growth areas as allocated in the Local Development Plan.

Our staff are our most important asset, and we will continue to develop their knowledge, skills and experience, with a particular focus on growing our workforce and supporting mental health and wellbeing. We have embedded hybrid working.

- Monitoring of priorities, performance, and challenges is managed across the Service. Our annual Planning Performance Framework is submitted to Scottish Ministers and sets out the Planning Authorities' performance against a set of national performance targets and criteria. The Minister's

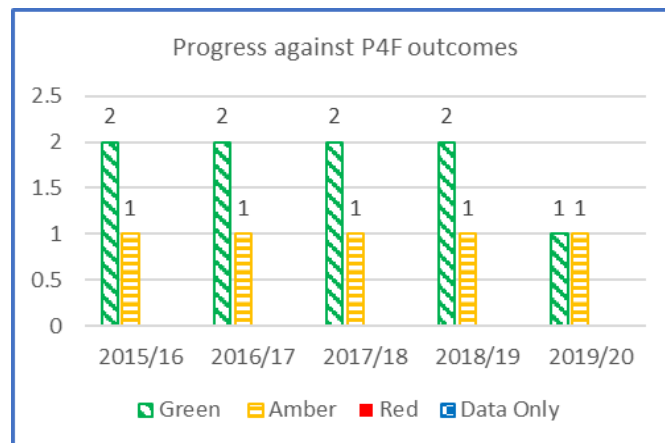
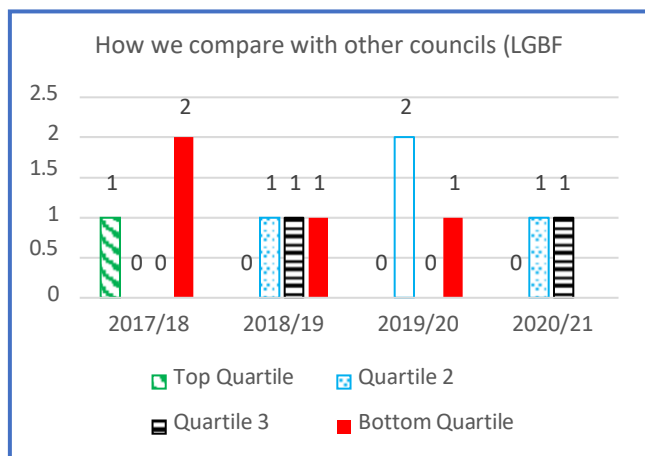
feedback to the latest (2021/22) Framework is due soon and will be reported to committee in due course.

- Continuous improvement is embedded, with a Planning Improvement plan currently being updated. LEAN process reviews are undertaken, ongoing customer feedback is sought, meetings are held with agents and developers to seek feedback, and the Service integrates any learning arising from complaints, appeal decisions and other feedback.

RISKS/EMERGING RISKS

- Planning Services are undertaking a review of Service risks and will implement any changes, including any arising from the Directorate risk management maturity assessment once undertaken.
- Emerging risks primarily relate to increase in costs to deliver new infrastructure and development. In respect of infrastructure this impacts on the Council's capital programme and is linked to facilitating development growth as set out in the Local Development Plan, to assist Fife's economic growth.
- The Service contributes to strategic risks EE002 Risk to the Fife Economy and *EE003 Climate Change*.
- The review of the Local Development Plan (FIFEPlan) has been considerably delayed as a result of delay in the implementation of National Planning Framework 4 as well as national Development Plan guidance being finalised. FIFEPlan is now 5 years old and technically is out of date.
- Changes in legislation arising from the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 are continuing to come into effect. The risk primarily relates to the impact on resources to deliver the new legislative requirements within set timeframes.
- The risk of new development growth slowing is monitored through the annual Housing Land Audit and through regular discussions with the housebuilding industry. This risk is also aligned to the delivery of new strategic transport and education infrastructure required to mitigate the impact of new development. The delivery of the strategic transport intervention measures at Dunfermline is monitored and aligned with the Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal grant allocation for Phase 1.
- *Risks relating to addressing climate emergency will be reported to the Environment, Transportation and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee.*

KEY OUTCOMES (LGBF/P4F)



LGBF

Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Q1 2022/23
Cost per planning application – Fife (LGBF)	£3,613	£3,985	£4,512	N/A	N/A
Avg Time Per Commercial Planning Application – Fife (LGBF)	9.6	8.4	11.1	N/A	N/A
CO2 emissions area wide per capita Fife (LGBF)	7.54	6.85	N/A	N/A	N/A

P4F

CO2 emissions area wide: within scope of LA per capita Fife (LGBF)	5.25	4.98	4.83	4.66	4.49
Area Wide Emissions (thousand tonnes of Carbon)	2941	2872	2806	2559	N/A
Total Fife Council Carbon Footprint – tCO2e	88965	83133	75956	62484	55784

(Note: indicators relating to climate change will be reported to the Environment, Transportation and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee.)

- The LGBF indicators as shown above reflect that the cost of processing planning applications is increasing. This is largely because of greater complexity and more detailed assessments that are required to consider and determine planning applications. The average time for determining commercial applications has fluctuates over the past 4-5 years. This is reflected more generally across all types of planning applications and is reported annually to committee through the Planning Performance Framework.
- The Service’s performance has been impacted by the pandemic, which amongst other impacts resulted in the increase in planning applications, particularly householder applications. Applications for major developments remains buoyant, whilst there has been a decrease in local applications. This reflects a national trend, although Fife continues to attract major applications. Monitoring is in place to assist with improving performance in respect of the speed of decision making. Speed of decision making must be balanced with achieving quality outcomes.

CUSTOMER

- The figures below illustrate the high level of customer satisfaction that is being maintained. During 2021/22 the Service's customer survey was extended to a wider group of customers beyond those submitting a planning application. This now includes customers who have submitted a representation to a planning application.
- A thorough customer complaints process is provided and given the nature of planning a relatively high number of complaints are received (ADD NUMBERS). Any lessons learnt from these complaints are actioned and where required built into the Service's continual improvements.

Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Q1 2022/23
Customers satisfied with planning service (%)	83.39%	82.02%	83.09%	72.73%	N/A
Planning Stage 1 Complaints actioned < 5 days	89%	100%	100%	77%	85%
Planning Stage 2 Complaints actioned < 20 days	72%	86%	81%	77%	67%

RESOURCES

- During 2022/23 the Service staffing budget increased by £347k as a direct result of the national increase in planning fees. Recruitment is ongoing and has been slower than anticipated resulting in an underspend within the current year for the Service. Recruitment for all posts is expected by early 2023.
- The Service has been supported through the Workforce Youth Investment programme which has allowed Graduate and Student temporary posts. In several instances, these individuals have progressed into permanent posts within the Service, assisting with the ongoing recruitment within a national/UK environment where there is a severe shortage of qualified Planners. A Future Planners project is being progressed nationally to consider ways in which opportunities to enter the profession can be supported.
- The workforce profile, as set out below, is positive.
- Regular continuous professional development programme is run across the Service and beyond, providing ongoing training and development opportunities. This is operated at a minimal cost.

Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Q1 2022/23
Planning Service – Average WDL per FTE	N/A	N/A	DIV/0	5.43	7.02*
Planning Service – Long Term WDL per FTE	N/A	N/A	DIV/0	3.25	5.02**
Planning Workforce who are Female (%)	46.90%	37.10%	33.80%	37.90%	N/A
Planning Workforce who are Full-time (%)	77.60%	77.10%	82.40%	84.80%	N/A
Planning Employees aged 24 and under (%)	12.20%	10%	8.80%	7.60%	N/A
Planning Employees aged 29 and under (%)	14.30%	14.30%	17.60%	15.20%	N/A
Planning Employees aged 55 and over (%)	16.30%	21.40%	22.10%	31.80%	N/A
Planning staff who are happy at work (%)	80%	87%	79%		N/A

The table below provides information on **Planning** workforce data by Budgeted (FTE) for the current year and the last 3 years. *Rolling 12-month average to the end of Q1 i.e. 31.2.22 ** the amount of sickness absence over 4 weeks (the classification of long-term) included in the 7.02 figure above

Budgeted (FTE) April 2019	Budgeted (FTE) April 2020	Budgeted (FTE) April 2021		Budgeted (FTE) April 2022	Difference in FTE 2021-2022
66.34	63.55	72.09		75.66	3.57

Whilst the key performance indicators below relate to the speed of decision-making, it is considered that the quality of the outcome of new development is a greater priority.

The Service is performing well in respect of progressing with implementing the Local Development Plan, FIFEPlan and the allocated development sites including the strategic growth areas. This assists with achieving the Council's outcomes relating to economic growth, meeting housing needs and facilitating with the delivery of strategic infrastructure.

The Table below recognises the increased workload combined with more complex planning assessments of applications. The increase in decision timescales is recognised and the Service continues to implement improvements to seek to improve performance against these national measures.

Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Q 1 2022/2 3
Avg time per Major planning application – Fife (weeks)	51.2	64.9	39.7	34.1	N/A
Avg time per Major planning application – Scotland (weeks)	32.6	33.5	41.3	44.6	N/A
Avg time per Local planning application – Fife (weeks)	8.8	8	9.6	13	N/A
Avg time per Local planning application – Scotland (weeks)	9	9.1	10	10.8	N/A
Avg time per Minor planning application – Fife (weeks)	7.5	7.3	8.2	11	N/A
Avg time per Minor planning application – Scotland (weeks)	7.2	7.3	8.1	8.7	N/A
Avg time per Non Householder planning application – Fife (weeks)	11	9	13	16	N/A
Avg time per Non Householder planning application – Scotland (weeks)	10.7	10.9	12.4	13.5	N/A
Number of housing completions per annum – Fife	1,118	1,088	818	N/A	N/A