



ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

# **PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK**

ANNUAL REPORT  
2019–2020





<b>Foreword</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Part 1: Qualitative Narrative</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1 Quality of Outcomes	10
1.2 Quality of Service and Engagement	18
1.3 Governance	28
1.4 Culture of Continuous improvement	36
<b>Part 2: Supporting Evidence</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Part 3: Service Improvements</b>	<b>45</b>
3.1 Report on Service Improvements for 2019-2020	45
3.2 Service Improvement Actions for 2020-2021	48
<b>Part 4: National Headline indicators (NHIs)</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Part 5: Official Statistics</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Part 6: Workforce Information</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Part 7: Planning Committee Information</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Scottish Government Performance Summary</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Performance Marker Checklist</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Staff Training – CPD</b>	<b>61</b>



## FOREWORD

Welcome to Aberdeen City Council's Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report for 2019-2020.

This PPF year has been a year like no other. Although last summer the word "Coronavirus" was something few of us were aware of, by the Spring of 2020 (and the end of this PPF year), it had become a focus and concern that all of us – across the world – were having to factor into both our personal and professional lives.

In this context, this report reveals the range and quality of outcomes delivered by Aberdeen City's Planning Service throughout the PPF year. It demonstrates the work that has gone into continuing to meet our customers' needs, whilst also supporting housing provision, delivering high-quality placemaking and encouraging business investment and wider economic recovery.

Our planning service has demonstrated great resilience this year, and I look forward to us building on that and working together with our partners to help the people and place of Aberdeen overcome the challenges that the Coronavirus pandemic will undoubtedly leave.

**Councillor Marie Boulton**

Convenor: Planning Development  
Management Committee

# Introduction

This is the ninth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) for Aberdeen City Council and is expected to be the last in the current format. The annual PPF Report highlights and celebrates our achievements over the PPF year (from 01 April 2019 to 31 March 2020) and helps us to identify our Service Improvements and Actions for the year to come.

Preparation of the PPF is led and project managed by Senior Management, with Officers across the Planning Service actively encouraged to put forward Case Study ideas and text and images for inclusion. This ensures that staff across the Service have a sense of ownership over the report and can take time to reflect on the past year, as well as consider improvement opportunities and actions for the year ahead.

## Our Planning Service

Within Aberdeen City Council the Planning Service sits within the wider heading of Strategic Place Planning. Both Strategic Place Planning and City Growth are within the Place cluster which has moved this year from a stand-alone cluster to now reside within the overarching Commissioning function. Strategic Place Planning is led by a Chief Officer, and the overall structure can be found below:







## Context

As well as looking at speed of decision making for planning applications, this report covers other key factors such as workload, quality of development on the ground, resources, organisation, improvements and outcomes.

Our Case Studies demonstrate the diversity and quality of our skills as well as the broad reach of the Planning Service and the value planning adds to the wellbeing of our communities and the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment.

A key event to happen during this PPF year was the passing of the Planning (Scotland) Bill on 21 June 2019. The Bill went on to gain Royal Assent on 25 July 2019, and thereafter became the **Planning (Scotland) Act 2019**. The new Act amended the primary legislation concerning the use and development of land in Scotland (the **Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997**) and impacts on almost every part of the planning system in Scotland. Amending and future proofing our working systems to take account of changes expressed in the new Planning Act have been evident throughout this PPF year and will continue for some time to come.

The second major event to happen during this PPF year was of a completely different scale. On 11 March 2020 the **World Health Organisation** (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. On 15 March, people across Scotland were encouraged to avoid all non-essential travel and to work from home where possible. On 23 March, Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom entered “lockdown” where only essential travel and limited contact with others was permitted.

This year we continue to have achievements and triumphs to highlight in our PPF, most of which were undertaken during 2019 before the Coronavirus pandemic started to take hold. However, we must also recognise that, in a phenomenally short timescale, the pandemic has had a massive impact, not only on our staff and our service, but also our City and across Scotland. This is reflected heavily in our Service Improvement Actions for the year to come.

Unless otherwise stated, all the activities / service actions detailed in the previous years’ PPFs are still being undertaken. Where actions or initiatives specified in this report demonstrate alignment with the key performance markers, this has been clearly cross-referenced in the text (e.g. **PM1**) Performance Markers are defined in **Appendix 2**.

## Planning for Health and Wellbeing

The practice of modern town planning arose from the public health crises of the early nineteenth century and, more recently, good health and wellbeing have been intrinsically highlighted through the United Nations **Sustainable Development Goals** – and in particular Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages. Even before the COVID-19 outbreak our Planning Service has had health and wellbeing at its forefront for many years, but this is evidenced across this PPF year in particular.

Ensuring physical and mental health and wellbeing goes beyond providing healthcare services – development should create a healthy environment whilst not contributing to negative health outcomes. This relies on creating environments that foster better health, reduce inequalities in wellbeing and which allow people to live active, engaged, independent and healthy lifestyles. As Scotland's third largest city, Aberdeen is an important regional centre for culture, retail and leisure. Our longstanding vision for Aberdeen is '*a place where all people can prosper*' and ensuring that our planning service can encourage successful placemaking, health and wellbeing is a key element of this. Healthy communities will fundamentally be sustainable communities.

As the quality of the place we live in can have a major impact on people's health and wellbeing, the focus of this report supports placemaking and reinforces regional significance. This is particularly relevant as Aberdeen continues to rise to the challenges of industry diversification and supporting growth sectors to bolster economic recovery in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and in preparing to exit from the European Union. At the same time, we continue to bring forward strategy and policy to direct the future shape of the city, recognising both our strengths and areas for improvement. This is particularly evident in the **Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan** and associated supporting documents which were approved by Full Council during this PPF year.





# Service Highlights / Development on the Ground

## Examples of highlights from this reporting year include:

- Consultation on, and analysis of responses to, the Local Development Plan's Main Issues Report (March – May 2019)
- Preparation and, in March 2020, Full Council approval of, the next Proposed Aberdeen City Local Development Plan
- The official full opening in April 2019 of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), a major infrastructure project to improve travel around North East Scotland
- The opening of the £333 million development The Event Complex Aberdeen (TECA), including the P&J Arena, in September 2019
- Approval of Aberdeen Adapts, a Climate Adaptation Framework for the city (December 2019)
- Preparation, consultation and approval of Technical Advice Notes on External Building Materials and Development Along Lanes to provide further guidance and advice to developers and members of the public
- Approval of enhancements to Aberdeen Railway Station
- Production of a Natural Heritage Checklist to assist Officers in deciding where surveys for wildlife may be required
- Refurbishment, enhancement and reopening of Aberdeen Art Gallery (November 2019)
- Opening of a Public Realm Project at Schoolhill to support access to the Aberdeen Art Gallery
- Awareness raising and training on Habitats Regulations Appraisals (HRAs) to ensure better understanding and compliance around the HRA process



## Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan Front Cover



Aberdeen Art Gallery



Aberdeen Railway Station



Nuart artwork on Aberdeen Market



## Other key achievements include:

- Customer Service Excellence accreditation achieved in October 2019 for the 8th year running
- Hosting students from the University of South Florida as part of the 4th Collaborative Urban Path (the Aberdeen CUP) in May 2019
- Taking part in World Children's Day in November 2019 and consulting with children and young people on preparation of the Materials Technical Advice Note

## Awards which projects and buildings in Aberdeen have received this year include:



### The Event Complex Aberdeen (TECA)

- ★ Awarded Development of the Year (Commercial) at the Scottish Property Awards
- ★ Shortlisted for the [Irvine Sellar Award](#) at the Property Awards 2020
- ★ Shortlisted in the Commercial and Leisure categories [RICS Social Impact Awards](#)
- ★ Awards for Commercial and Sustainability and High Commendation for Landscape/Urban Realm – Aberdeen Society of Architects Annual Design Awards

### Aberdeen Music Hall

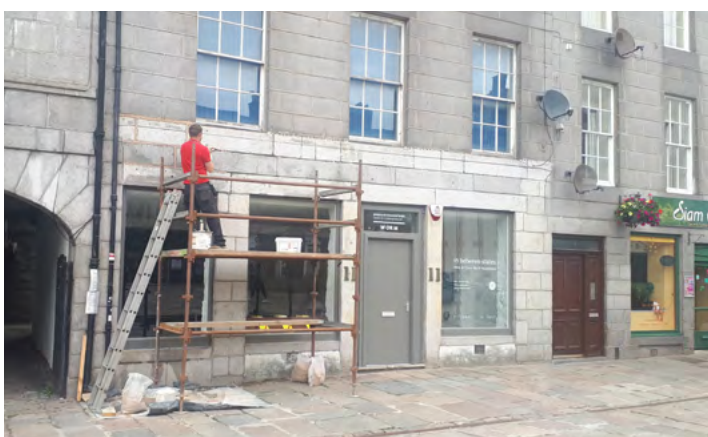
- ★ Award for Conservation and High Commendation for Interior at the Aberdeen Society of Architects Annual Design Awards

### Nuart 2019

- ★ Aberdeen City and Shire Tourism Award for Best Cultural and Arts Scheme

### Aberdeen Art Gallery

- ★ Shortlisted in the Heritage category at the RICS Social Impact Award
- ★ High Commendation for Conservation, Awards for Public Building and Regeneration and overall Project of the Year at the Aberdeen Society of Architects Annual Design Awards
- ★ Shortlisted in the RIAS/RIBA Awards 2020



### Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) School Shopfront Project

- ★ Awarded in the 'People' category at the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning





## Part 1: Qualitative Narrative

The Case Study examples in this PPF demonstrate how the service has delivered and supported achievements in placemaking, health and wellbeing across the city, as well as where we have supported sustainable economic growth. They also illustrate examples of how we engage with and listen to our customers in order to deliver an efficient and effective service.

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

The Strategic Place Planning (SPP) team is committed to shaping the future evolution of the City by creating a high quality, well connected, natural and built environment where people and businesses want to be and can prosper. All areas of the planning service have contributed to the achievements detailed in this report.

## Local Development Plan Team

The adopted Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2017 (ALDP) [Written Statement, Proposals Map, Constraints Map, City Centre Map \(PM7\)](#) and associated [supplementary guidance \(PM11\)](#) provides a land use framework for the City to support Aberdeen as a sustainable city at the heart of a vibrant and inclusive City Region. It continues to help deliver high quality development on the ground by providing a clear framework for the assessment and determination of applications for planning permission.

The forthcoming ALDP is on track to meet its target for adoption in Quarter 1 of 2022 as outlined within the [Development Plan Scheme, \(PM8\)](#) and is currently at the [Proposed Plan](#) stage (PM11). Analysis of the [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#), along with the comments received to the [Main Issues Report 2019](#) consultation, have shaped the development of the Proposed Plan. New policies on Changing Places toilets, specialist care facilities and a reconnection between health and wellbeing and planning have been implemented through a “health in all policies” approach to the next LDP, as well as a specific new chapter on “Health and Wellbeing”. This has involved cross partnership working between the Local Development Plan Team, City Council Senior Management, the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Grampian (see Case Study 1).

Further refinement of new policy has been sharpened by commissioning an update to the 2013 Retail Study ([Vol. 1](#), [Vol. 2](#), [Vol. 3](#)), with a focus on understanding the changing nature of the high street and the implications of this for policy and land allocations, whilst keeping in mind the Council’s prioritisation of City Centre regeneration and renewal through the [City Centre Masterplan and Delivery Programme](#).

Due to the requirements of physical distancing that were brought in towards the end of the PPF year, the Local Development Plan Team have been investigating innovative ways to ensure inclusive consultation on the Proposed Plan in the summer of 2020. Not only will the period for representation be extended to over 14 weeks but a [consultation hub](#) has been developed, and ongoing work will see the release of a storymap later in 2020. Digital drop-in consultation events are also being worked up and planned for later in the consultation period. This will be reported further in next year’s PPF report.





## Development Management Team

The Team Leader of Masterplanning, Design and Conservation is leading a project to create and implement a monitoring system to capture the 'value added' by Development Management through negotiations and planning conditions at the pre-application, application and discharge of conditions stages of all proposals. In order to ensure a consistent and efficient approach this has included production of an 'added value' procedural note and checklist. Officers across Development Management will be required to record how 'value' may have been added as they have gone about assessing each application. This will include added health and well-being benefits in accordance with the priorities of the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan.

This information will then be used to:

- measure the quality of outcomes of planning applications through the planning process,
- capture the value added by the pre-application enquiry service (**PM3**), and
- capture potential consistent issues with applications, which could be used to inform the production of future planning guidance (**PM6**).

The system will be implemented from July 2020, and the results will be included in the next PPF report as a balancing qualitative counterpoint to the standard quantitative performance measures such as speed of decision making.





## Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team

The Masterplanning, Design and Conservation (MDC) Team sits within the wider Development Management Team. Officers work collaboratively with a number of other services across the Council and provide advice and input into a number of strategic Capital projects. This year that has included a number of projects in the City Centre such as the [Union Terrace Gardens](#) project, the [Provost Skene's House](#) renovation and the [Queen Street Masterplan](#) project.

MDC Officers provide advice and support to case officers in order to help ensure high quality development can be delivered on the ground. MDC Officers provide guidance and advice on the determination of planning applications where there is a particular need for high architectural design quality, placemaking or the protection or enhancement of the historic environment. Some key examples this year include the proposed demolition and redevelopment of the Aberdeen Market building in the middle of the City Centre and proposals for [City Centre Parklets and Wayfinding](#).

The Team also works to ensure that development on the ground in all major land releases and new communities is guided by the relevant overarching Development Framework and / or Masterplan. The Team this year project managed consultation on an updated [Development Framework](#) for the Loirston site in the south of the City and re-established the Countesswells Placemaking Group (both discussed further in Section 1.2).

MDC Officers have this year been invited to sit on the judging panels of two local design awards: the [Aberdeen Society of Architects Design Awards](#) (biannual invitation) and the Aberdeen Civic Society Awards.

Officers with a specialism in Conservation have also continued to engage with key stakeholders, including Historic Environment Scotland, to ensure the protection of the historic environment. This has included providing specialist advice on proposals from Historic Environment Scotland to list a number of multistorey tower blocks within the City Centre, as well as advice on Buildings at Risk such as Bon Accord Baths and Westburn House.

As reported in PPF8, the [Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme](#) (CARS) is a £2.4 million building conservation scheme for Aberdeen's Union Street which launched in November 2017 (PM6). The project is led by a dedicated Project Officer in the MDC Team and offers grants to building owners to help repair and enhance historic properties. Good progress is being made in all areas and the Priority Projects are continuing to be developed. In the last twelve months, three formal grant offers have been made, four more have been approved by the CARS board and the two projects offered grants in the previous year have been completed.



## Environmental Policy Team

The Environmental Policy (EP) Team co-ordinates and leads the City Council's work in relation to outdoor access, natural heritage, tree protection, open spaces, climate change, Fairtrade and developing a food growing strategy.

December 2019 saw the approval of Aberdeen Adapts, a Climate Adaptation Framework for the city. The Framework was developed through collaborative working and sets priorities, goals and areas for action, to address the strategic climate risks for the city.

In October 2019 the Farburn Bridge project was officially opened. This Core Path / Active Travel project saw the installation of a new bridge over a tributary of the River Don and improvement of adjacent path. This substantial new structure was designed to fit into the natural riverside environment and, from the very start, the usage figures for the new bridge have been very encouraging. This was a project which built on many previous path improvements along the River Don Corridor, by both developers and the Council, which is creating an off-road, long distance route, which will ultimately connect the Beach Esplanade all the way out to the Formartine and Buchan Way into Aberdeenshire.

In February 2020, Aberdeen's Food Growing Strategy, Granite City Growing, was approved. A full overview of the project is provided in Case Study 2.



New Farburn Bridge

# CASE STUDY 1: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES

Proposed Aberdeen  
Local Development  
Plan Front Cover

## Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020

### Case Study Title:

Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan –  
A Focus on Health and Wellbeing

### Location and Dates:

City Wide, April 2019 to March 2020

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

Quality of Outcomes  
Quality of Service and Engagement

### Key Areas of Work:

Local Development Plan & Supplementary  
Guidance  
Collaborative Working

### Performance Markers:

**2** – Project Management  
**10** – Cross Sector stakeholder engagement  
**12** – Corporate working across services

### Stakeholders Involved:

Key Agencies (NHS Grampian, Aberdeen City  
Health and Social Care Partnership)  
Authority Other Staff (Aberdeen City Council  
Corporate Management Team, Housing Strategy)

### Overview:

**National Planning Framework 3, Scottish Planning Policy** and the Aberdeen City and Shire **Strategic Development Plan** all highlight the relationship between well-planned places, a healthy lifestyle, well-being and social inclusion. At a national level the six **Public Health Priorities for Scotland** aim to tackle inequality in health and wellbeing. By considering the Public Health Priorities for Scotland in the Proposed Local Development Plan we aim to better the health and wellbeing for all people across Aberdeen.

Throughout the preparation of the **Proposed Local Development Plan**, Officers from the Local Development Plan Team worked closely with the Council's Corporate Management Team, Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership and staff from NHS Grampian in developing a policy response to the health and wellbeing agenda. This was carried out through a series of workshops, presentations and meetings which covered a range of topics including; broad principles that could be applied throughout the



Proposed Local Development Plan, a “health in all policies” approach, and public health inputs and discussions of individual policies.

### Goals:

To ensure the planning service meets the health focus of both the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and Aberdeen’s Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) it was vital to include health and wellbeing as key elements of the next Local Development Plan. Policy and guidance on this topic will support Development Management Officers to make quick decisions, while also ensuring the development industry has a clear understanding of what is required from their development sites. Further multi-team working between different aspects of the Planning Service, such as Environmental Policy, Transport Strategy and Developer Obligations, can also be achieved when there is a “health in all policy” remit, thereby ensuring a consistent approach.

This is the first Local Development Plan to be produced since the formation of the Aberdeen Integration Authority (the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership). As a result of the Joint Working (Public Bodies) legislation, the local authority now has a vested interest and responsibility to improve the health and wellbeing of all citizens of Aberdeen.

The Planning Service, as part of the City Council, also has an obligation to fulfil its duty as a Community Planning Partner. The Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) notes there are wide divisions in health and life expectancy between the richest and the poorest communities in our City, with a 14 year life expectancy gap reported between some areas. The LOIP aims to help individuals and communities look after their health, particularly through the choices they make and lifestyles they adopt. Consideration also has to be given to future need, changing demographics, an ageing population and dementia friendly design.

Proposed Local Development Plan policies on open space, natural environment, sustainable and active travel, housing, food growing, energy, heating, and quality placemaking by design all facilitate health and well-being implicitly, whereas policies on air quality, noise, and specialist care facilities are more direct in their

link to health and wellbeing, i.e:

- **Safe, convenient active travel and good neighbourhood design promotes physical activity, enhances social connections and strengthens mental health.**
- **Compact neighbourhood design with walkable local facilities and public transport accessibility allows car free access to services, amenities and employment which increase health benefits and reduces the impact of poverty.**
- **Increased access to natural and planned open space with varied and safe opportunities to play and meet has a positive impact on physical activity levels and mental health.**
- **A mix of good quality affordable homes of all types and sizes to meet differing needs increase health benefits and reduces the impact of poverty.**
- **Protection from environmental hazards; increasing air and water quality, reducing noise pollution, and reducing carbon emissions has a positive impact on physical and mental health.**

### Outcomes:

All of the policies within the Proposed Local Development Plan have been examined against the six Public Health Priorities for Scotland with a view to improving and assessing their health impact. Many of the policies, with the help of the Aberdeen Health and Social Care Partnership, have been modified to bring health to the fore. A strong focus has been placed on limiting the negative impacts and enhancing the positive impacts of all the policies, and a new Health and Wellbeing chapter has been added to the plan. This chapter sees the introduction of a Healthy Development policy which asks what the health impact of developments is likely to be. For smaller scale developments this will be more limited and easier to gauge but for larger developments this will require a Health Impact Assessment.

Consultation on the Proposed Local Development Plan will take place in Summer 2020 and will be reported on in the next PPF Report.

### Name of key officer

Donna Laing, Local Development Plan Team

## CASE STUDY 2: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES



### Case Study Title:

## Granite City Growing: Aberdeen Growing Food Together

### Location and Dates:

City Wide, Autumn 2017 to February 2020

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

Quality of Outcomes  
Quality of Service and Engagement

### Performance Markers:

**2** – Project Management  
**12** – Corporate working across services  
**13** – Sharing good practice

### Key Areas of Work:

Environment  
Collaborative Working

### Stakeholders Involved:

General Public  
Authority Other Staff

### Overview:

The **Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015** gave local authorities the duty to prepare a food-growing strategy for their areas. **Granite City Growing** was approved at committee in February 2020; the culmination of nearly three years of work.

Food-growing has many co-benefits and, in Aberdeen, making strong links to health and wellbeing as a therapeutic activity and in providing fresh edibles has been locally important. Embedding it within the local spatial and community planning landscape has

underpinned the strategy throughout. As well as alignment to the **Local Development Plan**, **Granite City Growing** has also sought to fit in with the governance of the **Local Outcome Improvement Plan** and the **Sustainable Food City Partnership Aberdeen** vision and action plan.

Key stakeholders were brought together initially in workshops with the help of Greenspace Scotland, who went on to develop a **learning note** to help inform the food-growing strategy process in other local authorities. With the ambition to create a city-wide strategy, a cross disciplinary approach was adopted throughout, bringing together internal colleagues and external stakeholders



with skills and knowledge in, for example, contaminated land, biodiversity, allotments, community engagement, planning, asset transfer and food-growing. A Food-Growing Steering Group was set up and maintained to oversee the process. The City Council's membership of the Scottish Government Tripartite group meant that contributions could also be made to the [national statutory guidance](#) as it took shape.

A baseline was captured against which to measure progress and a vision, outcomes and key actions agreed. Strategic objectives were also set:

1. **to take steps to make food growing opportunities available to all residents of Aberdeen to improve their health, reduce health inequalities and to alleviate food poverty.**
2. **to embed the requirement to increase biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation within growing spaces through the choice of plants, heritage varieties, site design and management.**
3. **to encourage all forms of community-led enterprise and social enterprise through making available and encouraging the uptake of food-growing opportunities.**
4. **to make all of Aberdeen's food-growing spaces well managed community-empowered places, served by public transport and active travel, with quality facilities accessible by all, as far as is practicable.**

Development of the Strategy assimilated the learning from: two online surveys (which had response rates of 394 and 870 people respectively) and a city-wide consultation process; a Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations Appraisal; and a Community Food Growing programme which has funded 26 projects to date, including a Community Food-growing Officer, school gardens, educational materials, supply of water-butts, city bee project, raised beds in sheltered housing, mini allotment plots, edible walls and community growing spaces.

## Goals:

As a cross-cutting strategy sitting within both spatial planning and community planning, Granite City Growing has helped to shape the [Proposed Local Development Plan](#). The Food-Growing Steering Group was able to respond to the [Main Issues Report](#) consultation in 2019

and make a robust case for the inclusion of food-growing to deliver broad outcomes around food poverty, mental and physical health, place-making, biodiversity gain, intergenerational opportunities, climate adaptation and resilience.

A wider definition of community food-growing better reflects all forms of growing and foraging and not just allotments. Food-growing is mentioned throughout the Proposed Local Development Plan in the context of both the 'Health and Wellbeing' chapter and the 'Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment' chapter. Work is progressing to embed food-growing into the associated non-statutory guidance to support the next Local Development Plan. One particular goal for the 'Open Space and Green Infrastructure' guidance associated with the next LDP is to strengthen the case for community food-growing spaces within the developer obligations process (PM15) to enable a sustainable funding stream over the lifetime of the strategy.

A process has been set out in Granite City Growing linking to the Local Development Plan though the ongoing Open Space Audit and Strategy review. A map of Opportunity Sites has been put forward based on the map of Housing Revenue Account land. This map will be refined and expanded through the data collected by the next Open Space Audit in consultation with local communities.

## Outcomes:

The next stage will be delivery of an implementation plan. Key delivery partners are the Environmental Policy team, Operations and Community teams within Aberdeen City Council in partnership with CFINE, community councils and wider community stakeholders.

Skills and capacity-building around asset transfer, legal permissions, planning permissions, contaminated land, access to tools, biodiversity gain, community engagement, funding and communicating best practice are to be included. Internal communication and collaboration are also being redesigned to support community projects with the knowledge and contacts they need going forward.

## Name of key officer

**Sandy Gustar, Sustainability Officer**

## 1.2 Quality of Service and Engagement:

Throughout the PPF year the Planning Service has engaged with stakeholders both inside and outside the Council with the aim of delivering a high-quality service and a positive customer experience. This year stakeholder engagement has been particularly extensive and has included the following:

### External Liaison and Engagement

#### Delivering a Positive Customer Experience

Officers continue to work in accordance with the [Development Management Service Charter](#). This document is available on our website and makes clear the level of service that customers can expect from the Development Management Team. The Charter also helps our customers find out what we expect from them so that they can help us deliver that service and achieve specified service standards. Processing Agreements are available for all Major Development proposals, and this is publicised [on our website](#) (PM2).

Customer Service Excellence accreditation was achieved once more with thirteen 'compliance plus' awards (up from eight 'compliance plus' last year) (PM6). Areas of 'compliance plus' identified as part of the external audit included consultation techniques, building on customer feedback, introduction of service improvements, partnerships, benchmarking, communication channel analysis, empowering staff, working with disadvantaged customers, customer journey mapping and further development of the customer engagement strategy.

#### Local Development Plan Engagement

The programming and project management of the Local Development Plan review is outlined within the Development Plan Scheme (DPS) (PM8). Within the PPF reporting period [DPS 2019](#) was published. The Development Plan Scheme provides an effective tool to manage the progress and maintenance of an up-to-date Local Development Plan. At the start of the review process an initial DPS is published ([DPS 2017](#)), with an annual DPS published to show the current review stage and work to come. Further DPS reports can be viewed on the Local Development Plan [homepage](#).

The Local Development Plan Team completed the Main Issues Report Consultation between 04 March – 13 May 2019. This included:

- 12 drop-in public consultation events in community centres, sports facilities and shopping centres across the City;
- Key Agency workshop;
- Presenting to the Community Council Forum;
- Meetings with the Aberdeen Civic Forum; and,
- Attendance at wider Community Council meetings.

The above was supported by an [online consultation platform](#), [newspaper articles](#), [newsletters](#) and social media posts. A total of 633 representations were received to the [Main Issues Report consultation](#) (PM10).

Cross partnership working between the Local Development Plan Team, City Council Senior



Management (**PM12**), the Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Grampian also shaped the development of policies within the Proposed Local Development Plan. Further partnership working with NHS Lothian allowed for an understanding of an existing Health Impact Assessment, including the work streams involved in analysing a development and the skill sets required. The Local Development Plan Team also furthered connections to the wider health network by attending and presenting at a Public Health Grampian Networking Event, with an aim to further promote the linkages between planning and health and wellbeing.

Cross service working with the Council's City Growth Service (**PM12**) was also fundamental in assessing a Main Issues Report submission for an Energy Transition Zone, including how this would assist with mitigation climate change, diversify Aberdeen's economy and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

Further to this, the Local Development Plan Team has worked closely with SEPA, Scottish Water, and SNH on strategic flooding, drainage and water abstraction issues on the River Dee. The Team also worked closely with SNH on production of a Environmental Report (part 1, part 2 and part 3 which comprises Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Habitats Regulations Appraisal) and new case law surrounding Habitats Regulation Appraisal mitigation.

The LDP Team has also worked collaboratively with Aberdeenshire Council and the Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) to help get the Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan ready for Examination in Public. This included summarising and responding to representations received.

## **Engaging on Strategies, Advice and Guidance**

In order to assist with the provision of effective and useful guidance and advice to stakeholders, both at pre-application stage and during application assessment, the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team developed and consulted widely on 3 non-statutory planning advice documents during the PPF period (**PM3**) (**PM11**). These documents were prepared in the context of Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017) Policy D1 – Quality Placemaking by Design to help ensure high standards of design across the City:

**Technical Advice Note: Development Along Lanes** – this was prepared in response to the changing economic circumstances in Aberdeen's city centre and West-end office areas which are predominantly housed in valued historic buildings. The guidance encourages redevelopment of historic feus and their lanes in a way that is sympathetic to the context as well as emphasising that lanes should be an important aspect in the hierarchy of routes and places in masterplanning new areas.

**Technical Advice Note: External Building Materials and their use in Aberdeen** – this document provides technical guidance on a selection of different materials that could be used in the external walls and roofs of new buildings across the city. The TAN outlines criteria for quality placemaking based on good practice and experience, to encourage context specific approach to development.

**Loirston Development Framework** – this updated document was prepared by Masterplanning consultants for land allocated in the Aberdeen Local Development Plan (2017) as Opportunity Sites OP59, OP60 and OP61. Working within the principles set out in the LDP’s **Action Programme**, the updated Framework reflected material changes to adjacent and associated developments. The vision for a high-quality new neighbourhood and the level of expected development, however, remains the same. The update also includes alterations to phasing and development block locations to reflect current site delivery options and external market factors.

The MDC Team contacted local interest groups and the Aberdeen Society of Architects to actively encourage engagement in the development of the guidance with any interested party. During the consultation period a story on the ‘Materials’ TAN was picked up by the **Evening Express** which helped publicise the event and a face-to-face meeting was held with a local granite merchant.

MDC officers gave Elected Member briefings on the guidance documents and gave presentations at Planning Development Management Committee to outline the purpose and content of the documents. Praise was given by the Committee for the hard work which had gone into preparation of the documents.



## **Production of Local Place Plans**

Existing working relationships with members of the Community Council Forum and, in particular its Planning and Transport Sub Group, were built upon. A number of local Community Councils noted their interest in finding out more about the Local Place Plans enabled by the **Planning (Scotland) Act 2019**. The Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team worked with the Community Council Forum and members of the Community Planning Engagement Group to produce a “How To” guide (available upon request) which Community Councils and other community bodies would be able to use should they wish to prepare a Local Place Plan for their own areas. An important part of this exercise was managing the expectations of Community Councils as to the level of Officer resource and assistance which would be available to them as they went about developing, consulting on and writing a Local Place Plan.

Planning Aid Scotland also visited Aberdeen in November 2019 to discuss ideas surrounding the production of Local Place Plans with local PAS volunteers and other interested City Council Officers.





## Delivering the Action Programme

In order to help deliver the actions set out in the Local Development Plan's **Action Programme**, The Masterplanning Design and Conservation Team continues to foster strong collaborative working relationships with external masterplanning consultants, their agents and volume housebuilders with the aim of facilitating engagement and delivering high quality places. 'Design Workshops' are frequently recommended and hosted to openly engage, and to discuss options and solutions, to ensure placemaking principles are always at the forefront of decisions.

In autumn 2019, the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team re-established a 'Placemaking Group' alongside the Countesswells Development Limited and NHS Grampian. The purpose of this group, working in the context of the LDP's **Action Programme**, is to facilitate and steer the partnership's resources in delivering the Section 75 requirements of two new primary schools and a secondary school in addition to a community campus hub and associated infrastructure to support the long-term needs of a community of over 3000 new homes.





Children and Young People visit Marischal College on World Children's Day

## Engaging with Young People

Aberdeen City Council is currently working towards becoming recognised by UNICEF as a “Child Friendly City”. As part of the World Children’s Day celebrations in November 2019, Officers from the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team met with a panel of children and young people and talked to them about Aberdeen as a place. The panel were also presented with the Draft Materials TAN so that their comments could be explicitly included in the consultation process. Officers explored young people’s understanding of the homes they live in, their architectural style and how the materials around them give us a ‘sense of place’. Officers also discussed the importance of external building material choices, and provided the children and young people with a range of physical sample materials to try and identify what they liked and might want to build their houses from. This engagement exercise highlighted the importance of granite to Aberdeen’s sense of place, and the blandness of some modern materials such as renders. The panel also liked the idea of introducing green walls into buildings in the future, as well as colour, whether through the interesting use of timber cladding or the softer colours of natural stone.

A key part of the Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) project has been school pupil engagement, and we were proud to be announced as a Winner in the ‘People’ category in the **Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2019** for our School Shopfront Design Project. A new school engagement project with participation from five schools across the City began in early 2020, however had to be cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members of the Environmental Policy Team have also worked with young people during this PPF year by delivering a series of talks to students at **Scotland’s Rural College** (SRUC) on:

- How environmental awareness needs to be considered within planning
- How environmental awareness need to be considered in policy
- Whether organic farming or traditional farming is better for pollinators



## Working with Aberdeen Inspired

Members of the Applications and Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Teams have continued this year to work with Aberdeen Inspired – the Business Improvement District for Aberdeen’s City Centre – to help and assist them in the delivery of projects to reinvigorate the city centre for the benefit of all who work, live, shop and visit. This year that has specifically included offering guidance and advice on the planning permissions required as part of the **Nuart 2019** public art festival, and the **Parklets and Hanging Signs** (Wayfinding) Projects so as to ensure the projects are complementary long-lasting additions to the city centre.

## Internal Liaison and Engagement

### Local Development Plan and Other Policy Engagement

The Local Development Plan Team carried out significant levels of engagement with Elected Members at the Proposed Plan stage in development plan preparation (**PM9**). The Team carried out briefing sessions in February 2020 for each of the City’s 13 Ward Members on the results of the **Main Issues Report** consultation and the intended content of the next **Proposed Local Development Plan**.



Nuart artwork on Union Plaza

In June 2019, LDP Officers attended the City Council’s Extended Corporate Management Team (ECMT) meeting to give an overview of the planning system, changes to the planning system from the new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, and to present the initial overview of Main Issues Report responses and to outline cross service implications to the preferred options (**PM12**).

In developing the Proposed Plan post Main Issues Report stage, LDP officers held regular meetings with their assigned ‘buddies’. LDP ‘buddies’ included Officers from Development Management, but also specialist Officers from specific policy areas, such as Environmental Health Officers for air quality and noise policies. Beyond this, the Local Development Plan Team held inter-departmental workshops with colleagues across the Strategic Place Planning service; cross cluster meetings with economic development colleagues in the City Growth service; conversations and consultation with the LDP Working Group made up of wider Council Officers, and multi-team collaborative working on the Habitats Regulations Appraisal with the Environmental Policy Team.

The Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team also arranged and hosted internal engagement lunchtime presentations with question/answer sessions during the production of the 2 Technical Advice Notes (‘Development Along Lanes’ and ‘Materials’). These sessions successfully brought together colleagues from across the Planning Service to discuss ideas and potential issues.

For ‘Development Along Lanes’ this session helped ensure continued engagement with Roads Development Management colleagues. It also encouraged help and input from the experience of colleagues across the service.

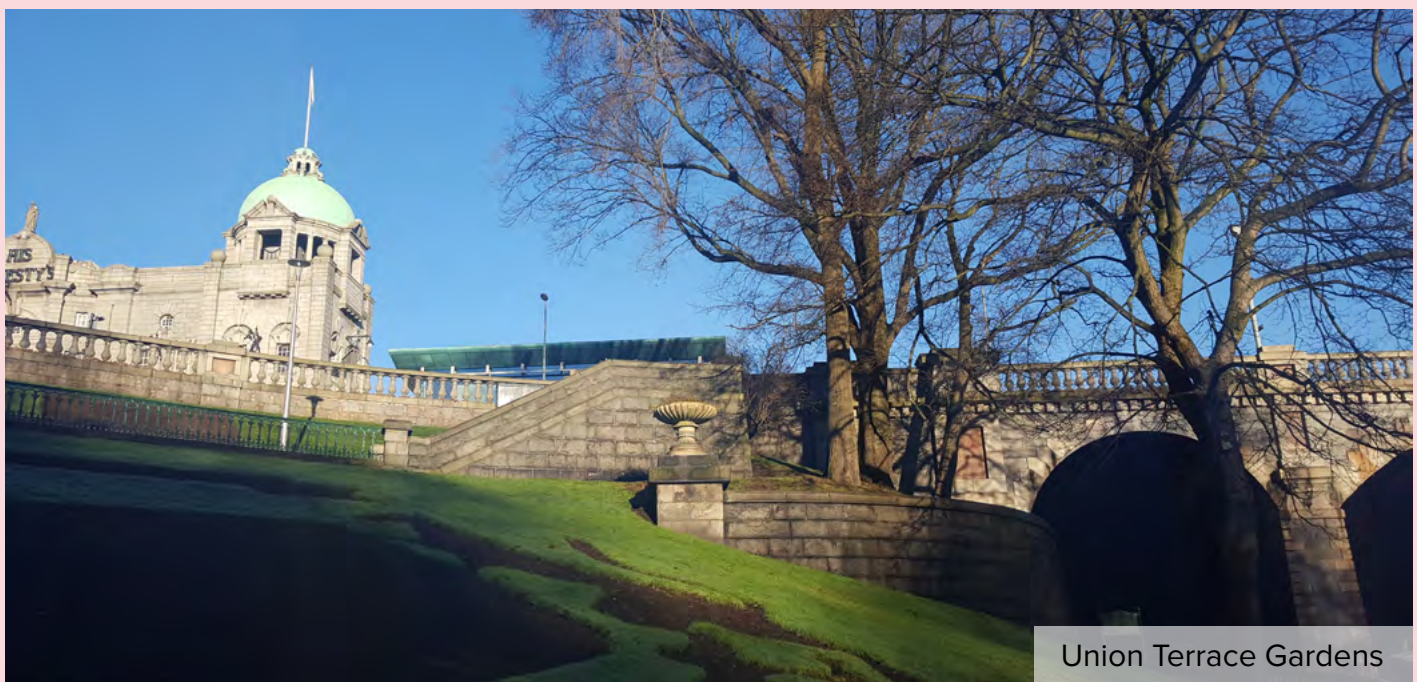
For the 'Materials' TAN the engagement session led to further valuable discussions and cross-team working with Environmental Policy to embed the principles of green roof design and climate change adaptability into the document and set the ideas for further work to be undertaken on sustainable construction in preparing for climate change and the changing shape of development and neighbourhoods in the city.

## Assessment of Planning Applications

For Development Management Officers, internal liaison and engagement continues to occur during pre-application advice meetings and planning application assessment meetings held with colleagues from across Strategic Place Planning and other Council areas. Regular Case Review meetings with Senior Management continued throughout the year to enable cross-service multi-disciplinary input into major and significant development proposals at the earliest possible stage.

A revised version of the Service Protocol between the Development Management Team and Environmental Policy Team was adopted in July 2019 and regular meetings of this cross-service working group continued throughout the year (**PM12**) (copy of Protocol document available upon request).

MDC and Applications Team Officers have worked together to review the Service Protocol between the Teams in order to find a more organic and natural way of working with Case Officers, developing the role of MDC Officers as a "collaborator" in the assessment of planning applications rather than a "consultee" (**PM12**).

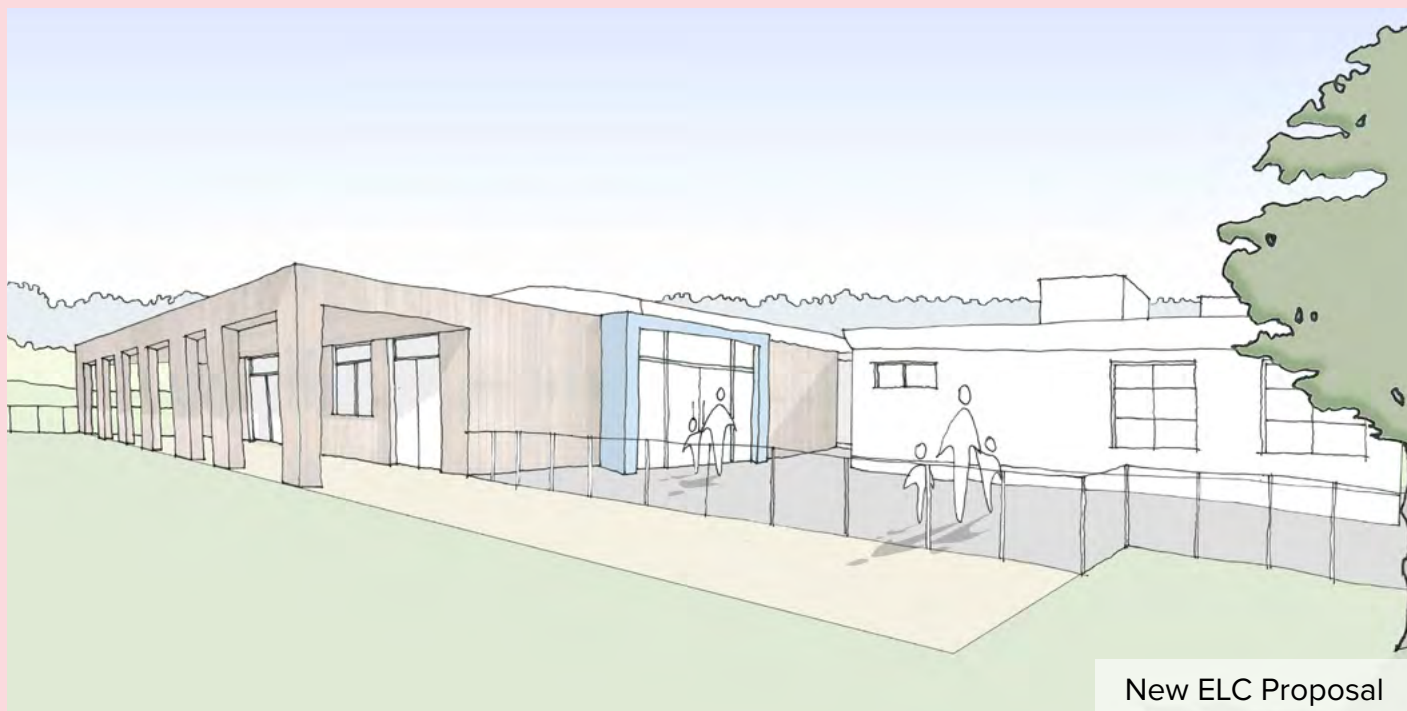


## Council Capital Projects

Whilst assessing the Listed Building Consent application for the redevelopment of Union Terrace Gardens, a green-lung in the heart of Aberdeen's City Centre, Officers from across the Development Management Team needed to ensure an effective working relationship with Officers in the Council's Capital Projects Team (as 'client'), whilst also maintaining the impartiality and non-political nature of the Planning Authority. A Union Terrace Gardens Working Group was set up to move the stalled LBC application forward to determination. This engagement took place regularly and brought in other City Council Teams and expertise when necessary. Clear dates and deadlines were set for both sides to ensure a timeous project managed process. Valuable lessons were learned in terms of best practise for future projects.



# CASE STUDY 3: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT



New ELC Proposal

## Case Study Title:

# Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion Programme

## Location and Dates:

City wide, April 2019 – March 2020

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

Quality of Outcomes  
Quality of Service and Engagement

## Key Areas of Work:

Planning Applications  
Placemaking

## Performance Markers:

- 1 – Decision Making
- 2 – Project Management
- 3 – Early Collaboration with Applicants and Consultees on Planning Applications

## Stakeholders Involved:

Authority Other Staff  
Authority Planning Staff

## Overview:

The Aberdeen City Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion Programme resulted from a Scottish Government commitment to expand the provision of funded early learning and childcare from 600 hours to 1140 hours per child by 2020. The expansion is intended to prioritise a high-quality experience for the child in order to capitalise on the significant contribution that

ELC can make to a child's development and to closing the poverty related attainment gap.

The Aberdeen City ELC Delivery Plan highlights the provision of outdoor learning to support wellbeing; improved accessibility to increase uptake; delivery of Family Learning to fully capitalise on the expansion programme; and the provision of a 'localised offer' to meet the needs of families within each community.

Following the approval of their delivery plans, the City Council's ELC Project Team submitted several pre-application enquiries to the Planning Service for a number of different sites across the City (**PM3**). At this early point a designated Case Officer was identified to co-ordinate and project manage the pre-application and application process from a planning perspective. This enabled Development Management Officers to provide feedback on not just the proposed site location, but also the layout options proposed. In tandem with this, the ELC Project Team set up project meetings with Development Management Officers and other Services within the Council, such as Roads and Education to further explore all selected sites and gather requirements of the different Services.

From a planning perspective, all application sites had different considerations. Some proposals were to be located on designated open space, others were within Conservation Areas / Gardens and Designed Landscapes, while some had potential impacts on Listed Buildings. As such, it was important for the Development Management Case Officer to raise any potential concerns with the ELC Project Team as early on in the process as possible. In total, sixteen developments were brought forward by the Project Team to application stage in this PPF year.

These included a mix of new standalone developments, school extensions and minor alteration works to existing schools. All developments included internal activity rooms with associated service rooms and all proposals included external play areas and, where necessary, parking provision. The external play areas were an important aspect of these developments as this allowed for improved outdoor learning which links in with a key aim of the project to promote health and well-being.

Submission of the planning applications began in early August 2019 and, from that date, the designated Case Officer set about assessing each application against the relevant policies of the Local Development Plan and taking all material considerations into account, including consultee comments and representations. Due to the nature of these applications, the submission of supporting information was required in order to undertake an adequate

assessment. While some of the information was submitted after the applications were made valid, clear dialogue with the applicant and relevant consultees was maintained to ensure a clear and transparent process. While some delays were encountered during the lifetime of the applications, these were accounted for by the use of project management tools , e.g. the use of processing agreements.

### Goals:

The **Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan** (LOIP) identifies a number of Stretch Outcomes in relation to allowing children and young people across the City to prosper. Our ambition as a Council is to support every child, irrespective of their circumstances, to grow, develop and reach their full potential.

This project involved partnership working with other Council Services in order to enable the delivery of the ELC Expansion Programme. This is not just through the application process, but also post application with the discharging of suspensive conditions, thus allowing for the construction phase of the developments to start as soon as possible. These new developments will allow for the promotion of outdoor learning for children across Aberdeen, and improve the health and well-being of all nursery aged children with a place in these facilities.

### Outcomes:

Work on the ELC Expansion Programme has demonstrated that excellent and effective communication between Council Services enables issues / requirements to be highlighted early. The hoped-for benefits from designating a single Case Officer were realised. More specifically, this approach enabled the effective co-ordination and project management of the pre-application and application processes from a planning perspective, as well as providing benefits to the applicant in terms of having a single point of contact and consistency of advice and decision making. There is no doubt that building relationships with in-house Project Teams is important to meet application submission requirements.

### Name of key officer

**Aoife Murphy – Senior Planner**



# Compliments

*“ Words fail me, in all my years MLA have never had a very complex series of planning applications consented so quickly. Receiving the planning consent today is just outstanding. The importance of the current consent, in these very uncertain times, means the contractor remains on site (hopefully) to meet an ambitious programme. It is hugely important for work continuity and employment too. From the College perspective, we now have a fighting chance to deliver the new dining hall and new frontage for the August return (hopefully) and then follow on with the energy centre and stair. Thank for being so proactive, pragmatic and sensitive to the programme needs and demands of the College too. ”*

*“ I have been in touch with you before in my official capacity as Secretary of the Civic Society but I wanted to write myself to congratulate you and the planning department on how well the changes to the streetscape outside the Art Gallery have turned out. Despite having a relatively small area to work with, the new steps up to the Gallery cafe look and work well and the wider footpath is a great improvement. The approach to the Gallery main entrance is suitably generous and the hardscape materials blend in with the surrounding buildings. The changes do not look too designed, indeed appear to have always been there and not only enhance the Gallery but the entire public space at the end of Belmont Street. ”*

*“ I would also like to thank you kindly for your patience in talking me through the completion of all the necessary forms. Thank you for sending those through so quick, it really is very much appreciated. ”*

*“ Thank you very much for the swift turnaround. Very much appreciated. ”*

*“ The level of service I have experienced from you both has been absolutely spot on. All your help has been very much appreciated. Thanks Again! ”*

*“ Just a wee note to say a big thank you for your time and professionalism yesterday – it was very much appreciated! The service I have received was very refreshing in this day and age and I promise to be a vociferous supporter of Aberdeen Council going forward. ”*

*“ Thank you to everyone on the team who made this possible at such short notice. It means a lot to me and can now complete my mortgage on time. ”*

*“ Had one of those days so happy to receive some good news towards the end of it!!! Thanks so much for your help, very much appreciated! ”*

*“ That’s great, thank you so much for doing that we really appreciate it, great choices! Look forward to seeing them on the gates around the school! Hopefully they will help promote the bus further as we set up our new routes. ”*

*“ With the helpful commentary provided we will continue to develop the statement. Once we have sufficiently developed the next iteration of the Heritage Statement we would intend to forward it to you for review along with the latest design proposals which have been progressed following the useful feedback offered at the February Workshop. When you have had the opportunity to review this information, we would welcome a further discussion to help progress towards formal submission. ”*



Aberdeen Town House, Union Street

## 1.3 Governance

The Planning Service has continued to adapt structures and processes to ensure that these are proportionate, effective and fit for purpose.

### **Schemes of Governance and Delegation**

In early 2019 the Council initiated an annual review of the Corporate Scheme of Governance including the Scheme of Delegation. Officers in Strategic Place Planning took this opportunity to introduce changes that would be required as a result of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. A **Report to the Council's City Growth and Resources Committee** set out the changes that were introduced by the new Act, and asked for Member approval on a number of discretionary powers.

One of the key elements of this review included amending the Scheme of Governance to allow the Planning Development Management Committee (rather than Full Council) to determine development proposals considered to be significant departures from development plan strategy.

### **Legacy Review Meetings**

Although the number of Legacy Case applications has risen in this PPF year, regular scheduled meetings between the Development Management Management Team and Case Officers continue in order to ensure continuous monitoring of these applications (**PM14**). Work continues with colleagues in Legal Services to conclude those cases where a legal agreement is required (**PM4**) using a legal agreement tracker discussed at monthly liaison meetings. This year a high number (five) of our Legacy cases are minor supplementary applications relating to a single site and where a major overarching application for planning permission is also pending. These supplementary cases will be "cleared" immediately after this overarching major application is determined.



## Developer Obligations

Processes and procedures have been set up to ensure the process of obtaining Developer Obligations (DO) runs as efficiently as possible (PM15). The DO Officer has responded to 136 requests for comments on planning applications, pre-application enquiries and follow-up queries during the PPF year.

Consultation responses have all been issued within relevant statutory timeframes. This year the governance arrangements for our Developer Obligations process have also been reviewed, and a new Developer Obligations Working Group has been set up. This comprises a series of Chief Officers within Aberdeen City Council who now meet on a monthly basis (PM12). The group is updated on all DO Assessment Reports issued in respect of live planning applications in order to ensure corporate awareness of the contributions being sought from new developments. It also makes decisions on proposals to spend existing developer obligations, as well as providing strategic direction on other DO matters.



Marischal College Fountains

A template version of the proposed Community Asset Plan has also been developed this year, with input from relevant services both within and outside the City Council. This will be subject to consultation with relevant stakeholders and interested parties in the next PPF year to ensure there is general awareness of and support in principle for the proposed approach. Thereafter draft Community Asset Plans will be produced and subject to more detailed consultation.

## Surgeries

The Environmental Policy Team hold weekly 'Tree Surgeries' to provide an opportunity for Development Management Officer to discuss new and existing cases in relation to the requirement for surveys, the extent of surveys, and arboricultural impacts based on submitted survey information with one of the Team's Tree Officers. The surgeries allow for quick decision making on minor matters, this in turn speeds up response time and in turn application processing times.

The Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team also continue to run 'Conservation and Design Surgeries' for Case Officers. Like the 'Tree Surgeries', these sessions are an efficient use of Officer time and resources and demonstrate an innovative way to address working priorities. The Conservation and Design Surgeries are discussed further in Case Study 4.



## CASE STUDY 4: GOVERNANCE



### Case Study Title:

## Conservation & Design Surgeries

### Location and Dates:

City Council Offices. Conservation Surgery runs every Tuesday and Thursday for 1 hour  
Design Surgery runs every Wednesday for 1 hour

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

Quality of Service and Engagement  
Governance  
Culture of continuous improvement

### Key Areas of Work:

Design  
Conservation

### Performance Markers:

**1** – Decision making  
**6** – Continuous improvement  
**13** – Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge

### Stakeholders Involved:

Authority Planning Staff



## Overview:

In order to ensure both the effective use of officer time and timely engagement, a series of informal, hour-long “surgery” sessions on both conservation and design matters are run by the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team. These surgeries involve drop-in sessions in the same room each week, and Case Officers and colleagues from across the wider Planning Service can obtain advice and comment. There is a commitment to resourcing the surgeries every week in order to make the sessions a reliable resource for the Service.

Case Officers come prepared to the session with the relevant information and provide a brief outline of the application and their initial thoughts. The use of the surgeries speeds up the process, removes the need for some formal consultations, and allows for closer engagement and collaboration with colleagues. It is an opportunity for each participant to put their thoughts forward in an informal setting and discuss matters such as design changes or technical details, as well as next steps and relevant feedback to applicants.

The surgeries provide an opportunity for Case Officers to discuss, evaluate and be advised of conservation and design matters as well as technical queries aligned to local and national policies, guidance and best practice. The discussions are for all development proposals and levels of detail 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.

## Goals:

In line with Team and Service Plans across Development Management, a key goal of the Surgeries is to assist in the process of collaboration by allowing for an informal discussion and removing the need to formally consult on smaller or less controversial development proposals but where guidance and advice is needed and sought.

The Surgeries also allow Case Officers to be able to crystallise the issues and respond timeously to agents, as well as gaining skills and experience in procedures and practices in specialist skills.

## Outcomes:

Conservation and Design Surgeries have now been in place for a number of years and their performance is regularly reviewed in terms of attendees and success in influencing decision making early in the determination process.

Making expertise available at regular time slots on regular days encourages Case Officers to approach colleagues early on in the process, knowing that there will always be someone available at that time to talk to. Being open to engagement and discussion has been key to this process succeeding. Other teams within the Strategic Place Planning service have also recently started to carry out their own Surgery sessions, including Tree Officers in Environmental Policy.

Introducing the drop-in surgeries has not only sped up the application process, but also encouraged a stronger, more open working relationship and respect between Teams. It is a minor change in the internal consultation process but a change that has nevertheless allowed for its streamlining by removing often unnecessary formal consultation processes and encouraging early engagement more effectively.

## Names of key officers

**Nigel McDowell – Senior Planner (Design)**

**Ross Wilson – Senior Planner (Conservation)**

## CASE STUDY 5: GOVERNANCE



Aberdeen Art Gallery, Schoolhill

### Case Study Title:

## Aberdeen Art Gallery & Schoolhill Public Realm

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeen Art Gallery, Schoolhill, from 2015-2019

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

Quality of Outcomes  
Quality of Service and Engagement  
Governance

### Key Areas of Work:

Regeneration  
Town Centres

### Performance Markers:

1 – Decision Making  
2 – Project Management

### Stakeholders Involved:

General Public  
Authority Other Staff

### Overview:

The redeveloped Aberdeen Art Gallery was officially opened in November 2019, and the opening of the doors was the culmination of an ambitious project to completely re-imagine one

of the city's greatest assets and return it to the heart of civic life.

Aberdeen Art Gallery was founded in 1873, and then substantially extended and modified between 1885 and 1926. The result was a grand



sculpture court, a major complex of galleries, a war memorial, and the Cowdray Hall – a medium-scale recital hall with a celebrated acoustic quality for chamber music.

By 2009 the Category A listed building was failing to fully engage visitors and the wider public, and suffered from a lack of accessibility, wayfinding and circulation. From a City Council perspective, there was also a pronounced ambition to dramatically improve the scale and quality of cultural activities, including enhancements to gallery space, and a desire to develop temporary exhibition spaces to attract international exhibitions to Aberdeen. The time had come to repair and renovate the building, making it fully accessible for the next generation of Aberdonians.

Applications for planning permission and listed building consent were assessed by Officers in both Development Management and Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Teams and, through extensive project management from inception to completion, the Planning Service has fulfilled the roles of visionary, ambassador, facilitator, challenger, mentor and advisor to support the re-creation of the building.

Funded principally by Aberdeen City Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund the redevelopment increased the size of the building by 27% through the addition of a new top floor housing a suite of temporary exhibition galleries and magnificent views across the city. The number of galleries dedicated to the collection was increased from 11 to 19 and the number of artworks on display from 370 in 2015 to 1,080 in 2019. The building is now a world-class venue worthy of both the exceptional collection it houses and its visitors.

In tandem and, as reported in PPF8, the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team acted as Project Lead for, and made a major design contribution to, the Schoolhill Streetscape Reconfiguration Project. Officers drafted, consulted, engaged and worked with colleagues in Roads Projects to deliver the first stage of a plaza by reclaiming some of the carriageway. These works were completed in Summer 2019 in time for the Gallery re-opening and delivered a new setting to the War Memorial and entrance to the Gallery by balancing the place and

movement needs of the area to create a new destination.

### Goals:

The goal was to work collaboratively with stakeholders both internally and externally to re-establish Aberdeen Art Gallery as one of Scotland's premier amenities and resources for art learning. The Planning Service worked to ensure a respectful re-invention and contemporary extension of the Category A listed building into a venue which best displays the city's collection in an accessible and engaging way.

Project Management of the Schoolhill Streetscape Reconfiguration Projects provided a high-quality public realm gateway to the newly refurbished Art Gallery, balancing place and movement needs of the area.

### Outcomes:

The outcomes were adherence to an exemplary vision, attention to detail, improving access to culture in the city, enhancing the existing internal space and excellent stakeholder management to re-affirm the Art Gallery and Schoolhill as one of our premier places in the city.

The level of investment, both public and private, and the quality of the vision and implementation have acted as a catalyst for significant private investment in Schoolhill including the adjoining new entrepreneurship hub (Opportunity North East) and 450 bed-space residential accommodation at Triple Kirks, a site that had previously lain vacant for over 40 years.

Feedback has been incredibly positive with 98% of respondents to initial visitor research rating their visit to Aberdeen Art Gallery as 'very good' or 'good'. The Gallery welcomed over 142,700 visitors from opening until the middle of March 2020, more than doubling previous visitor figures for the same period, and has been nominated for a number of local and national design and conservation awards.

### Names of key officers

**Tommy Hart – Senior Planner**

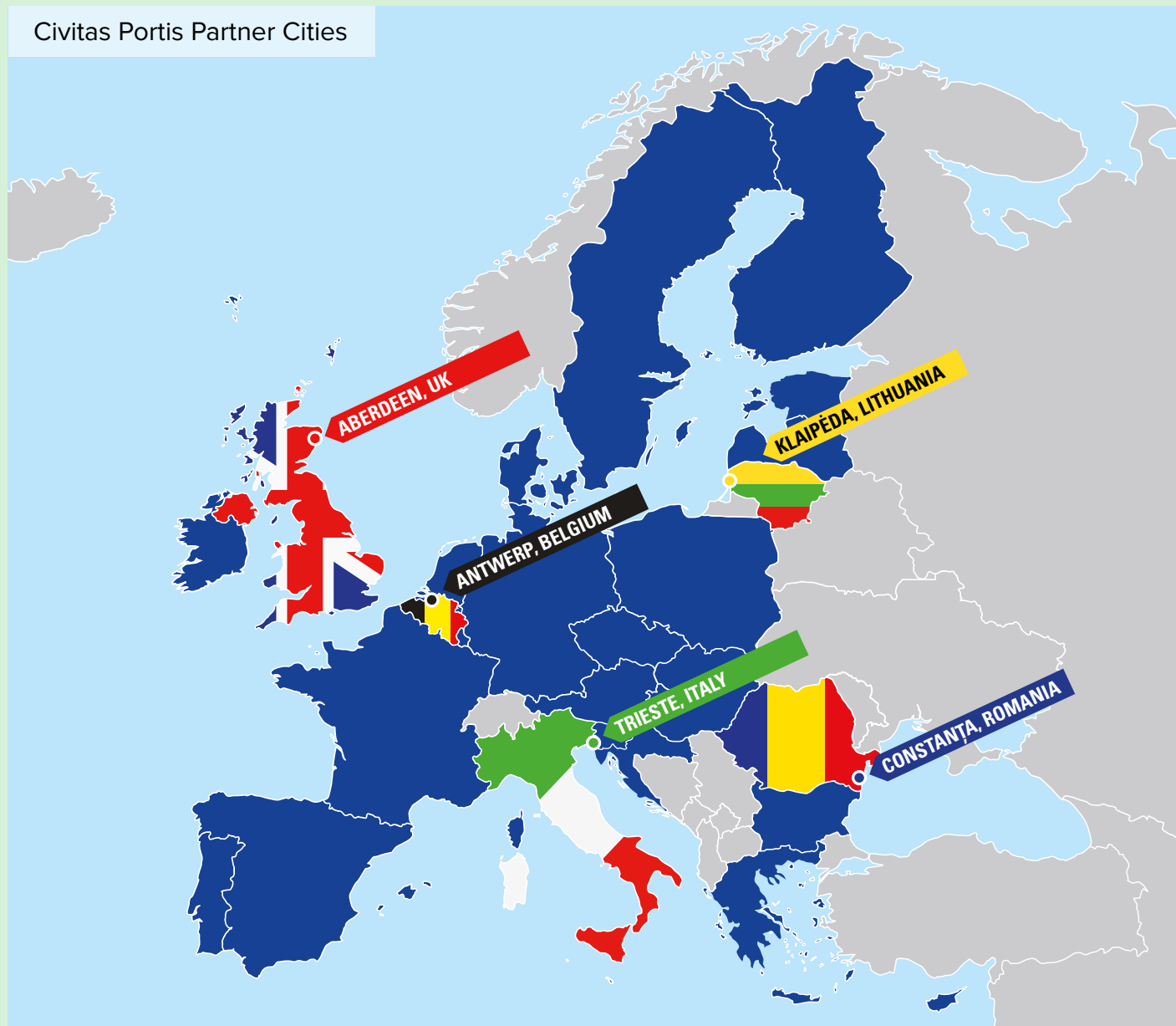
**Alex Ferguson – Planner**

**Ross Wilson – Senior Planner (Conservation)**

**Nigel McDowell – Senior Planner (Design)**

# CASE STUDY 6: GOVERNANCE

## Civitas Portis Partner Cities



### Case Study Title:

Civitas Portis

### Location and Dates:

Aberdeen City Region, September 2016 – August 2020

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

Quality of Outcomes  
Governance

### Key Areas of Work:

Transport  
Active Travel

### Performance Markers:

- 10 – Cross sector stakeholder engagement
- 11 – Regular and proportionate policy advice
- 12 – Corporate working
- 13 – Sharing good practice

### Stakeholders Involved:

General Public  
Authority Other Staff



## Overview:

**Civitas PORTIS** (which stands for **C**ity **V**ITAlity and **S**ustainability and **P**ort Cities – Innovation for **S**ustainability) is a European funded project from the Horizon 2020 programme. Aberdeen is classed as an 'Advanced City' within this project and is undertaking a number of measures which look at active and sustainable travel improvements which, in turn, will also help improve the urban environment and attractiveness of our City Region.

A number of improvements have taken place as part of the project, including the following:

- approval of the Roads Hierarchy and Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP),
- a study looking at the Origin and Destination of journeys using various sources of data,
- implementation of additional electric vehicles to the Co-Wheels fleet,
- installation of additional EV Charge Points,
- Roadshow Engagement Events with companies in key industrial areas,
- installation of bike parking and maintenance hubs,
- the development of a Park and Ride website,
- additional wayfinding and signage,
- development of a journey planning app,
- investigation of a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) and what this would look like for Aberdeen,
- creation of a freight visualisation tool
- working with pilot partners to deploy e-cargo bikes and hydrogen-diesel vehicles within the private sector.

Additionally, working with our local partners such as NESTRANS (our regional transport partner), we have also undertaken several engagement events. This includes Evening Talks, Business Breakfast events, active and sustainable travel promotional leaflets, user engagement workshops and co-design events. We realise that engagement with the public, as well as online surveys, are crucial pieces of work to ensure that the solutions we deploy to encourage the take-up of active and sustainable travel, are fit for purpose and the measures we implement will have a significant, positive impact.

## Goals:

Civitas PORTIS has helped achieve, and

accelerate, the Local Transport Strategy. It also contributes towards the goals of the City Centre Masterplan by being the catalyst to begin to look at a bike hire scheme for the city. It aims to:

- promote innovative and sustainable transport solutions,
- create a safer and greener transport system,
- reduce the need for the private vehicle on the transport network,
- improve air quality and attractiveness of the city centre,
- increase collaborative working with key partners and private sector,
- facilitate improvements in healthy and sustainable living,

## Outcomes:

This has been a complex and multi-layered project which has been running since Autumn 2016 and will end in late 2020. Through creating good working relationships with our local partners – NESTRANS, Aberdeenshire Council, Aberdeen Harbour Board and Robert Gordon University – the project has much to be proud of. Through the four years of the project we have undertaken large studies which have informed longer-term action plans and aspirations as well as implemented several measures and events which have helped improve active and sustainable transport.

Through our work we also have a greater understanding of the use of data and how important this is for analysis, evaluation and future planning. As part of the project extensive data collection was undertaken each year which has then been used for evaluation reporting to measure the impact of the project. This summarised report is due to become available in late 2020. Lessons learnt will also be included in the final evaluation reporting.

Overall Civitas PORTIS has enabled greater partnership working, the implementation of improvement measures, allowed the ability to host additional dissemination events and talks and has created a lasting legacy. It is our intention to apply for additional funding to continue to implement improvements to the active and sustainable transport network.

## Name of key officer

Amye Ferguson – Senior Project Officer

## 1.4 Culture of Continuous Improvement

This section details how the Service has progressed with the Service Improvement Commitments identified in PPF8 and highlights how we have worked to demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement over the last five years (PM6).

As discussed in the Introduction to this PPF, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a massive impact on our staff and our service this year, and this will likely result in different ways of working for many years to come. The entire planning service has moved rapidly and effectively to full home working, however productivity in terms of planning application determination rates have been maintained. Internal and external meetings between staff and with applicants and agents have continued via Microsoft Teams and other forms of video conference. A need to continue changes to the way we work is reflected in our future Service Improvement Actions for the year to come, alongside Actions falling out of the implementation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.

Our journey of continuous improvement over the last five years has delivered improved performance, greater efficiencies and increased collaboration across the planning service (PM6). Our strategy was predominately to digitalise – i.e. introduce end to end electronic processing, beginning with changeover of the casework system in 2016. This was played out by taking customers with us and collation of their feedback was part of the Customer Service Excellence accreditation. Changes were discussed and refined with customers in the Agents Forum, all whilst operating within a dynamic market and with increasing financial constraints and resourcing issues.

### Local Development Plan Team

Due to secondments, maternity leave and vacant posts the team has been working against a backdrop of decreased staff resource yet has endeavoured to maintain performance and was successful in both consultation of a Main Issues Report and production and approval of a Proposed Local Development Plan in this PPF year. On 31 March 2020 the team had three full time and one part time vacancies. For nine months of the reporting period there were no Senior Planners within the Local Development Plan Team.

At the onset of Covid-19 lockdown the Local Development Plan Team rapidly had to amend plans for consulting publicly on the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan and its associated documents. This involved team members very quickly digesting and understanding the new legislative background and adapting the Development Plan Scheme and forthcoming consultation period to fit these new circumstances. The LDP Team will be looking at innovative ways of consulting and will report on these in the next PPF report. Restrictions on physical distancing will require an exploration of digital and virtual communication tools.

### Development Management Team

The Development Management Teams have also endeavoured to maintain performance against a backdrop of decreased staff resource. Six Case Officers left the Council in 2019-2020, the Team Leader (Major Applications) post was vacant for eight months, and there were eight unfilled case officer vacancies as of 31 March 2020.

As a direct result, planning performance in terms of speed of decision making for Major Development applications took a dip in 2019-2020, as illustrated in the table below (Scottish Government PPF Red-Amber-Green rating shown by colour). However, overall – taking into



account the staffing situation outlined above – the Team has done exceptionally well to maintain a similar performance level to last year in all other application categories. It should also be noted that performance was better than the Scottish Local Planning Authority average in all three of the National Headline Indicator categories of planning application – as shown in the table.

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)							Scottish Average
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2019-20
Major Developments	47.6	24.1	43.9	23.1	19.9	28.1	33.5
Local NHH Developments	16.6	14.3	13.0	10.2	8.1	8.6	10.9
Householder Developments	12.8	12.8	8.7	7.3	6.8	6.9	7.3

As described under the Quality of Outcomes heading, work has started to formulate a set of criteria for measuring the value added by the Planning Service in assessing and determining applications for planning permission. This work builds on and adapts the approach pioneered at Angus Council (reported as a Case Study in Angus Council’s PPF8). The final methodology will be informed by the new national emphasis on measuring quality of outcomes to be embodied in Heads of Planning Scotland guidance for forthcoming PPFs.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the last few months of the PPF reporting year, the entire applications team has moved rapidly and effectively to full home working. Planning Development Management Committee and Local Review Body meetings have been successfully held electronically and broadcast **online**, as will be reported on further in next year’s PPF report. Neighbour notification, newspaper advertising and display of site notices have all continued during lockdown.

## Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team

Officers within Masterplanning, Design and Conservation have worked with Officers in Development Management to help resource the statutory role of the Planning Service to assess and determine applications for planning permission. Three Officers within MDC have taken on either a full or part time case load of planning, listed building and conservation area consent applications. This has helped to maintain performance levels across Development Management, as well as up-skilling MDC Officers in case work proposals. A number of Masterplanning, Design and Conservation projects have however been delayed as a direct response to this.

The Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team also all moved to home working in the last few months of the PPF reporting year, however the resilience of the Team has been remarkable and overall productivity has not been detrimentally impacted. Internal and external meetings between Officer and with applicants and agents have continued via Microsoft Teams and other forms of video conference, and the Team is developing a series of “virtual” lunchtime training programme for staff across the Planning Service to benefit from whilst working from home. This will be reported on further in the next PPF report.

## South Florida University Visit – Collaborative Urban Path (Aberdeen CUP)

The annual Collaborative Urban Path (Aberdeen CUP) was held in Aberdeen between 20-31 May 2019. This summer workshop was first established in 2016 and has been running as a joint collaborative between the University of South Florida (School of Architecture and Community Design) and Aberdeen City Council ever since. This collaboration is an innovative education programme for postgraduate architecture students pioneered by the Planning Service and is part of a long-term vision by the City Council to produce good practice in effective collaboration and innovative engagement with academic institutions.



The 11 week workshop has created a platform for students to investigate new opportunities for regeneration of the Aberdeen City Centre, and expand ideas and design strategies based on the **City Centre Masterplan**. The 2019 Aberdeen CUP programme focused on a mixed-use development for North Dee (a former fish processing district). Following a combination of walkthroughs, presentations and workshops delivered by City Council and Aberdeen City Heritage Trust Officers in Aberdeen, the 11 students had the opportunity to develop their proposals in Tampa, Florida and had a videoconference presentation at the end of their semester.

Further information including works and reflections from previous years can be found on the project website: [www.collaborativeurbanpath.com](http://www.collaborativeurbanpath.com). All 2019 final presentations can be seen on the [project channel](#).

## Environmental Policy Team

A Natural Heritage Checklist (copy of document available on request) was this year completed and adopted by the Environmental Policy Team. This Checklist was created to assist Case Officers to decide under which circumstances surveys for wildlife may be required for planning applications, and when they would need to consult further with the Environmental Policy Team. It also contains a locally relevant calendar for survey seasons so that Officers can make sure a seasonably bound survey is acceptable when submitted.

The Environmental Policy Team has also been involved in other work which helps to drive the culture of continuous improvement through the holding of Tree Surgeries, the launch of the NESBiP Developer's Hub and the continuing Environmental Policy / Development Management Cross Service Working group.

The NESBiP (North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership) Developer's Hub is a fantastic resource primarily aimed at developers, but which also provides lots of useful information for local authority planners. The Hub has been developed by NESBiP and its partners to support planning decisions within the area covered by the partnership.

Due to recent changes in case law, work has also been undertaken over the past year to raise awareness of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) process. This has included work to raise awareness, produce templates, improve internal processes and deliver training on HRA across the Planning Service in order to ensure better understanding, compliance and reduce misconceptions around the HRA process.



## Timeline of Additional Continuous Improvement Evidence

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Key issues	Validation of applications transferred to the Administrative Support Team adding to shorter timeframes.	Issues with Major development applications and consents relating to the quashing of the Strategic Transport Fund Guidance.	New structure of Planning Service agreed.  New Scheme of Delegation approved.	Completion of the restructure of Development Management into Majors Team and Applications Team.	Planning (Scotland) Act changes introduced.  Local Review Body outcomes reviewed.  Developer Obligations reviewed.
Service/ Performance Improvements	New casework system introduced in July 2016 resulted in 4 weeks of downtime. Project Management Plan for application assessment introduced. Pre Application engagement procedures established.	Introduction of Duty Planner service.  Pre-Application Advice introduced.  Service Review exercise.	Pre- Applications enquiry numbers up.  Processing Agreements promoted.  Validation guidance introduced.  Place Standard Tool utilized for Local Development Plan review.	Developer Obligations Team Leader appointed.  Masterplan process reviewed.  Place making workshops established.  New customer charter developed.  Legacy cases halved.	Validation failures reduced.  Food growing strategy approved.  Habitats Regulation Appraisal training/ guidance.  Resilience and maintained performance during COVID-19 pandemic and the need to work from home.
Customer Service Excellence (CSE) external formal accreditation	CSE – Development Management/ Building Standards Teams  4 ‘Compliance Plus’ awards.  CSE to be rolled out service wide.	CSE - Development Management / Building Standards  4 ‘Compliance Plus’ awards.  Separate CSE Award – Service-Wide  4 ‘Compliance Plus’ awards.	CSE Service-Wide Together (October 2017)  5 ‘Compliance Plus’ awards.	CSE Service-Wide Together (Oct 2018)  8 ‘Compliance Plus’ awards.	CSE Service-Wide Together (Oct 2019)  13 ‘Compliance Plus’ awards.
Business Impact	New operating system investment of £250k.	Operating system now bedded in.  Headcount less (8 posts) (circa £250k).  Increased performance and efficiency.	Efficiencies and speed improved.  Headcount reduction (9 posts) (circa £270k).	No further reduction in headcount but recruitment freeze on filling of vacancies.	Vacancy freeze and greater digitalisation introduced.  Further cost savings across all teams.

## **Training, Secondments and CPD**

### **Elected Members Briefings**

The Local Development Plan Team have carried out significant levels of engagement with Elected Members at the Proposed Plan stage in development plan preparation (**PM9**). The LDP Team carried out briefing sessions in February 2020 for each of the City's 13 Ward Members following the Main Issues Report consultation but prior to the Proposed Plan being considered at Full Council.

In January 2020, comprehensive Elected Member training in planning decision making (with special attention to the implications of the new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019) was carried out for all members of the Planning Development Management Committee and other interested Members. A separate Members session was also held on the adoption of infrastructure – led by the Roads Development Management Team with input from the Applications Team.

### **Trinity Group**

The Trinity Group continues to provide a high-level partnership between Council officers, Elected Members and public and private sector leaders in the development industry. Activity this year included attendance at evening meetings and a training session in Development Viability which was delivered by the private sector partners of the Group to Elected Members and Officers.

### **Professional Development**

Officers have this year learned from, and shared experiences with, other local planning authorities across Scotland by continuing to attend Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS) Sub Committee Meetings and Conferences and to discuss and collaborate on new ideas via digital platforms such as the Knowledge Hub (**PM13**). In addition, a member of the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team currently sits on the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Scottish Executive Committee, and Officers across the Service contribute to both the RTPI's Scottish Young Planners Network and the RTPI Grampian Chapter. A member of the Local Development Plan Team currently acts as Convenor for the RTPI Grampian Chapter. A number of our Officers also volunteer with Planning Aid Scotland in their own time.

### **Trainee Planners**

The Environmental Policy Team employed one Trainee Environmental Planner for a fixed 12-month period as maternity cover, approximately evenly split over the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 PPF years. Two Trainee Planners were also taken on within Development Management.

### **Secondments**

In order to ensure Officers were encouraged to develop individual skill sets, specialisms and interests, a number of staff within the Planning Service have taken up a Seconded position from their contracted role. This year this has included the following:

- **Senior Planner from Local Development Plan Team seconded to Team Leader of Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team**
- **Planner from Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team seconded to the role of Project Officer for the Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)**
- **Planner from Development Management Applications Team seconded to Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team to specialise in built heritage and conservation**
- **Planner from Local Development Plan Team seconded to City Growth Hydrogen Team**
- **Planner from Local Development Plan Team seconded to Senior Planner in Local Development Plan Team**



## COVID-19 Temporary Movement of Staff

A Temporary Movement of Staff process was launched to support the city-wide response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the last few months of the PPF reporting year. This process relied on Officers volunteering to undertake alternative roles or duties and being matched to where there is significantly increased need, e.g. as a result of increased demand in an area critical to the COVID-19 response; new requirements to support the city with the response; or critical areas experiencing reduced capacity due to the impacts of COVID-19 on their team or operations. All Officers were encouraged to volunteer to move to critical roles or to do alternative duties to support the organisation at this time, and a number of Officers across the Planning Service were moved to different services on a temporary basis. The impact of this will be reported on in the next PPF year.

## Training

The Planning Service is committed to organising training opportunities for Officers which contribute to their need for continued professional development (CPD). A full programme of in-house staff training, workshops and seminars has continued this reporting year – mostly co-ordinated or led by staff in the planning teams. Appendix 3 gives a selection.



The Event Complex Aberdeen (TECA)

## Twinning Partnership

Our Twinning Partner this year was North Lanarkshire Council, who visited Aberdeen City in September 2019 (**PM13**). The meeting was opened by the Chief Officer of Strategic Place Planning, and included discussion on a wide range of topics, such as:

- Monitoring of legal agreements (Sections 69 and 75) (**PM4**)
- Legacy case management changes which had resulted in Aberdeen City halving the number of cases from the year before (**PM14**)
- Uniform templates and agile working
- Best practice on workload monitoring
- Validation duty responsibilities
- Duty officer role, and
- Pre-application enquiries, meetings and recording outcomes (**PM3**).

There was also an update on site working access given by Building Standards colleagues on how issues have been overcome to allow for an electronic end to end casework solution to be effective both in planning and building standards.

The site visit was to the brand new £333 million development, state of the art complex, TECA (The Event Complex Aberdeen), which opened for Offshore Europe in September 2019. TECA boasts 48,000 square meters of multi-purpose event space with world class conference and exhibition halls, a superior arena, spacious hospitality boxes and a high-end restaurant. The development also has two on-site hotels (Hilton and Aloft). The visiting party were shown around the complex by the Council's Programme and Projects Manager.

As part of discussion on the planning challenges involved in such a big project, the role of the detailed Masterplan that was prepared and adopted as Supplementary Guidance was emphasised. This document was crucial in shaping the design, connectivity, public realm and landscape benefits stemming from this project.

As part of the design, TECA has its own innovative energy centre which uses food and garden waste from around Aberdeen, which is digested in an anaerobic plant and the resulting hydrogen gas harvested and used to power the energy centre which supplies heating, cooling and power not only to TECA but also the onsite hotels

A network of over seven kilometres of new footpaths serve the site, connecting it to surrounding areas and over 29,000 trees and shrubs were planted on-site. The proposal involved building in the airport safety zone designated to protect the flight path approach to Aberdeen airport and diverting four burns that previously flowed across the site to form a single channel with the need to involve planning consultees such as NATs, BAA (in relation to the airport flightpath) and SEPA (in relation to flooding issues associated with the burn diversion).



The follow up visit by Aberdeen City Officers to North Lanarkshire Council took place in early November 2019. The meeting was held in the BRE (Building Research Establishment) Innovation Park on the site of the former Ravenscraig steel works. The Ravenscraig site is Scotland's biggest regeneration site and a national development within National Planning Framework 3.

The Head of Planning and Regeneration opened the meeting and gave an overview of the planning service in the North Lanarkshire Council context. The main focus for the team in terms of the future direction of the Council is on improved economic opportunities and outcomes for the people and communities of North Lanarkshire.



The challenges faced with regard to regeneration and growth include:

- **The ambition to re-think and create a vision to transform each of the eight main town centres in the longer term**
- **The re-provisioning of 48 tower blocks and the delivery of 5000 new council homes by 2025**
- **The provision of infrastructure and land supply to create business locations attractive to investors.**

The Environmental Policy Planners all deal with a full range of topics, but the North Lanarkshire Greenspace Team are proactive and deal with policy, promotion and development (country parks, etc.) and biodiversity, and often comment on landscaping aspects of planning applications. With regard to Environmental Policy, North Lanarkshire often buy in expertise for larger projects (e.g. wind turbines – SNH provide 50% grant at Clydeplan level).

All Development Management Planners in North Lanarkshire deal with a full range of applications, and there is no dedicated resource to deal with listed buildings. A review of North Lanarkshire's Conservation Areas is soon due, and this work will go out to consultants.

While North Lanarkshire Council highlighted successes in conservation (e.g. the Carnegie Library conversion in Coatbridge), there are significant challenges to the commercial viability of the high cost of retaining high quality buildings in low land value areas. Examples were given of listed buildings unlikely to be maintained or redeveloped.

Following the general discussion, the teams broke into smaller groups to discuss various topics including:

- **Local Development Planning and consultation techniques**
- **Discussions on the implementation of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2019**
- **Conservation Area Regeneration Schemes**
- **Masterplanning, Built Conservation and Design**
- **Development Management issues**



The group were taken on a tour of the area. The route was chosen to give a flavour of the scale and connectivity of business, housing and other forms of development, juxtaposed with the countryside setting and the scale and variety of Green Network and urban fabric. It was important to convey the extensive business development taking place, the motorway connections, the innovation taking place and key expansion sites.

It was agreed that the exchange visits had been worthwhile, and that links would be maintained to further explore issues raised and to share best practice.

## Part 2: Supporting Evidence

Wherever possible supporting evidence is contained throughout the report in the form of hyperlinks to websites. The names of other documents to support the evidence in the report with are given below.

Page Number	Name of Document
24	Service Protocol – Development Management Team and Environmental Policy Team
38	Natural Heritage Checklist

### Checklist for Part 2: Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies

The table below relates to issues covered by the 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	✓ (pages 30-31)	Interdisciplinary Working	
Conservation	✓ (pages 30-31)	Collaborative Working	✓ (pages 16-17)
Regeneration	✓ (pages 32-33)	Community Engagement	
Environment	✓ (pages 16-17)	Placemaking	✓ (pages 25-26)
Greenspace		Charrettes	
Town Centres	✓ (pages 32-33)	Place Standard	
Masterplanning		Performance Monitoring	
LDP & Supplementary Guidance	✓ (pages 14-15)	Process Improvement	
Housing Supply		Project Management	
Affordable Housing		Skills Sharing	
Economic Development		Staff Training	
Enforcement		Online Systems	
Development Management Processes		Transport	✓ (pages 34-35)
Planning Applications	✓ (pages 25-26)	Active Travel	✓ (pages 34-35)



# Part 3: Service Improvements

## 3.1 Report on our Service Improvement Actions in 2019-2020

This section summarises our progress in the last year in delivering the Service Improvement Actions committed to in PPF8:

Committed improvements and actions	Complete?
<b>Service-Wide</b>	
<b>Maintain the Customer Service Excellence Award Service-wide</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer Service Excellence accreditation was achieved once more this year with The Event Complex Aberdeen (TECA) used as the site visit and customers from the Disability Equity Partnership participating in the Audit.</li> </ul>	Yes
<b>Local Development Plan Team</b>	
<b>Complete the review of the Developer Obligations process and progress development of Asset Plans</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Processes and procedures for Developer Obligations have been set up and responses sent to 136 requests for comments on planning applications, pre-application enquiries and follow-up queries (PM15). The governance arrangements for the Developer Obligations process have been reviewed and a new Developer Obligations Working Group has been set up. A template version of the proposed Community Asset Plan has also been developed, with input from relevant services both within and outside Aberdeen City Council. This will be subject to consultation with relevant stakeholders and interested parties later in 2020 to ensure there is general awareness of and support in principle for the proposed approach. Thereafter draft Community Asset Plans will be produced and subject to more detailed consultation.</li> </ul>	Yes
<b>Tailor working practices in anticipation of changes emerging from the Planning Bill, particularly in relation to community planning</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Proposed Local Development Plan has been prepared to make clear that all Supplementary Guidance bar Developer Obligations will now become Aberdeen Planning Guidance (PM15).</li> <li>Ongoing discussions with the Community Council Planning Forum and Community Engagement Group over Planning (Scotland) Act and Local Place Plans</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Continue to foster closer working arrangements with community organisations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Local Development Plan Team continues to attend regular Community Council Planning Forum meetings along with full Community Council Forum and Civic Forum meetings at key stages in the LDP process. Members of the Team also attend Community Planning Partnership Engagement Group meetings. This is a continuing and ongoing process.</li> </ul>	Yes

<b>Development Management Applications Teams</b>	
<p><b>Make any changes necessary to accommodate the requirements of the forthcoming Planning Bill e.g. including considering the initiation of new charges for services (including charging for pre-application advice)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The progress of subsidiary legislation pursuant to the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 has been carefully monitored and a work programme is being rolled out to implement changes required as regulations come into force. For example – new processes have been set up to ensure notification of MPs, MSPs and Elected Members of Major Applications and Standing Orders have been amended to remove the requirement for applications considered to be significant departures from the Development Plan to be determined by Full Council.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<p><b>Investigate a process for measuring the quality of outcomes from the application process (value added)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A set of criteria for measuring the value added by planning applications has been formulated – building on and adapting the approach pioneered at Angus Council (PPF8). The final methodology will necessarily be informed by the new emphasis on measuring quality of outcomes to be embodied in guidance on the national PPF structures for 2020-2021 and captured within the casework system.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<p><b>Undertake an analysis of Local Review Body (LRB) outcomes and procedures with a view to introducing improvements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A review by the Development Management Management Team of the decisions taken in the year shows that all had a firm basis in Development Plan Policy or legitimate material planning considerations. It is considered that the greater the number of members on the LRB the more robust and secure their decision making will be. With this in mind, Member training has repeatedly emphasised the need for Members to put themselves forwards for the LRB. Despite these efforts, the LRB has not met with anything more than quorum (3 Members). Options being actively considered for the Governance Review for 2020-2021 include increasing the LRB quorum to 5 or, in line with other planning authorities, for consideration of LRB cases to take place at the end of Planning Committee with participation by all Members in attendance. On the positive side it should be noted that the average determination time for applications considered by Aberdeen City's LRB (6.8 weeks) was faster than that of any of Scotland's other 31 planning authorities in 2019-20 (the Scottish average was 12.8 weeks).</li> </ul>	Yes
<b>Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team</b>	
<p><b>Update and consult on the Aberdeen Masterplanning Process guidance document</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Review of this document has been consciously delayed in order to allow the document to include guidance on the production of Local Place Plans, work on which is still ongoing with partners including the Community Council Forum and Community Planning Partnership Engagement Group. An updated Masterplanning Process document will be prepared as Guidance to support the next Aberdeen Local Development Plan.</li> </ul>	Ongoing



<p><b>Prepare to consult on a Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Union Street/ Aberdeen City Centre</b></p> <p>A draft of the Union Street Conservation Area Character Appraisal has been prepared and is scheduled to be presented to Committee with a recommendation to proceed with public consultation later in 2020. Consultation on this document has been consciously delayed in order to ensure it would not overlap with consultation on the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan, thus potentially resulting in confusion or consultation fatigue.</p>	Ongoing
<p><b>Prepare and consult on Technical Advice on Materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new Technical Advice Note on External Building Materials was subject to a public consultation exercise in late 2019 (<b>PM11</b>). This consultation included a workshop with school children from across Aberdeen on World Children's Day. Results of the consultation were reported back to Planning Development Management Committee on 19 March 2020, and the document was approved as non-statutory planning advice at this meeting.</li> </ul>	Yes
<p><b>Review of how MDC engage and work with Development Management Applications Team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As noted above, the Team Leader of Masterplanning, Design and Conservation is leading a work strand to create and implement a monitoring system to capture the 'value added' by Development Management through negotiations and planning conditions, and this will include collaboration with MDC Officers. The system will be implemented from July 2020, and the results will be included in the 2020-2021 PPF.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<p><b>Complete the Action Plan for Station Gateway</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As discussed in PPF 7, the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team have reviewed the Action Plan associated with the approved development brief and are ready to begin discussions on next steps when further proposals are brought forward by the associated developers.</li> </ul>	Ongoing
<b>Environmental Policy Team</b>	
<p><b>Update templates, guidance and associated training on Habitats Regulation Appraisal following changes to case law</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal templates, which have guidance built-in, have been updated and circulated service wide. An external trainer was brought in to run a session for staff across the service.</li> </ul>	Yes
<p><b>Undertake a multi-agency learning exercise on Sustainable Drainage Systems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Flooding and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Training Workshop was successfully run in April 2019 with contributors and participants from a wide variety of Council teams and external organisations.</li> </ul>	Yes
<b>Application Support Team</b>	
<p><b>Continue to monitor the reasons for applications failing at the validation stage with a view to increasing the number of applications valid first time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work has been completed on the reduction in the numbers of applications not valid first time. Plain English guidance was sent out to the Agents Forum and placed on our website. In addition, 18 short videos have been produced, published online and are sent to help customers understand and correct the most frequent validity failures, these are also available <u><a href="#">on our website</a></u>.</li> </ul>	Yes

## 3.2 Service Improvement Actions for 2020-21

This section sets out our planned Service Improvement Actions for the year ahead:

### Planned improvements and actions

#### Service-Wide

- Analyse and improve remote working resilience across the service as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Maintain the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation Service-wide.

#### Local Development Plan Team

- Innovative consultation process for Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan adapting to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Digital consultation drop-in events.
- Continue to foster closer working arrangements with community organisations.
- Continue to foster closer working arrangements with Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership and NHS Grampian.
- Wholesale review of Supplementary Guidance documents to produce suite of Aberdeen Planning Guidance (APG) (**PM11**).

#### Development Management Applications Teams

- Introduce changes to processes and procedures to accommodate the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and enabling legislation including consideration of charging for pre-application enquiries and advice.
- In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, facilitate and enable more effective home and remote working to improve crisis resilience and move towards more agile, resource efficient service delivery.
- Progress the alignment of the Planning and Roads Construction Consenting Process within the framework of Scottish Government Policy “Designing Streets.”
- Implement a process for measuring the quality of outcomes from the application process (‘value added’).

#### Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team

- Consult on a Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Union Street / Aberdeen City Centre
- Review of Aberdeen Masterplanning Process document to become Aberdeen Planning Guidance (APG) (**PM11**).

#### Environmental Policy Team

- Raise awareness throughout the wider Council of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) process, i.e. why HRA may be required, how to complete an HRA and where assistance can be sought.
- Deliver the Food Growing Strategy Implementation Plan.

# Part 4: National Headline Indicators (NHI)

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 table below.

## A: NHI Key outcomes – Development Planning:

Development Planning	2018-2019	2019-2020
<b>Local and Strategic Development Planning:</b>		
Age of local/strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period. Requirement: less than 5 years	<b>2 years and 3 months</b>	<b>3 years and 3 months</b>
Will the local development plan be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	<b>No</b>	<b>No</b>
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>

Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs <sup>1</sup>	2018-2019	2019-2020
Established housing land supply (City Only)	19,911 homes (16,318)	19,911 homes (16,318)
5-year effective housing land supply programming	10,816 homes (6,242)	10,816 homes (6,242)
5-year effective land supply total capacity	10,816 homes	10,816 homes
5-year housing supply target	7,509 homes	7,509 homes
5-year effective housing land supply	7.2 years	7.2 years
Housing approvals	2,015 homes	2,015 homes
Housing completions over the last 5 years	4,704 homes	4,704 homes
Marketable employment land supply	223 hectares	210 hectares
Employment land take-up during reporting year	0 hectares	12 hectares

## Commentary

The Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan was been approved by Full Council in March 2020, and the period for objections and representations will be held during the Summer of 2020.

Work on Aberdeen Planning Guidance (non-statutory planning guidance) will be completed by the adoption of the Aberdeen Local Development Plan, which is expected in 2022. Publication of the Proposed Plan for consultation will be two months late due to COVID-19.

The Housing Land Audit for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire in 2020 has been delayed in its finalisation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated 'Lockdown'. A draft Audit was carried out earlier in the year, and its figures will be subject to checks and consultation in the second half of 2020, when there is increased capacity amongst all stakeholders for meaningful engagement. This explains why we have not changed the housing figures above. The Employment Land Audit was however completed and the figures there have been updated.



## B: NHI Key outcomes – Development Management:

Development Management:	2018-19	2019-20
<b>Project Planning</b>		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice	<b>48.6% (417)</b>	<b>13.6% (187)</b>
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	<b>56.3 % (9)</b>	<b>16.6% (2)</b>
<b>Decision Making</b>		
Application approval rate	<b>91.8%</b>	<b>95.0%</b>
Delegation rate	<b>96.5%</b>	<b>95.9%</b>
Percentage of applications valid on receipt	<b>47%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Decision-making Timescales</b>		
Major Developments	<b>19.9 weeks</b>	<b>28.1 weeks</b>
Local developments (non-householder)	<b>8.1 weeks</b>	<b>8.6 weeks</b>
Householder developments	<b>6.8 weeks</b>	<b>6.9 weeks</b>
<b>Legacy Cases</b>		
Number cleared during reporting period	<b>32</b>	<b>12</b>
Number remaining	<b>12</b>	<b>19</b>

### Commentary

Planning performance in terms of speed of decision making for Major Development applications and the determination of legacy cases declined in 2019-2020 (**PM14**). It should be noted, however, that the figure for Major applications was skewed considerably by a single complex application for 258 flats at South Esplanade (181702/DPP) which had a determination time of longer than a year. This application required a significant number of amendments to make it acceptable to Officers, and involved a series of joint workshops between the applicant and the Planning Service. Furthermore, the applicant delayed paying their advert fee, which prevented the decision notice being issued by more than two months after the Committee decision.

The performance in terms of speed of determination of all other application types is similar to last year and held up remarkably well considering the staffing situation outlined below (**PM1**).

A year ago, the Applications Team was already considered to be working at capacity. On the basis of the forthcoming loss of five case officers from the Application Team during the PPF reporting year, last year's PPF predicted the consequent likelihood of a decline in performance. It transpired that the

loss of six case officers in 2019-2020 exceeded the predicted figure. The Application Team finished the year with eight unfilled vacancies. This reduction in capacity was only partially compensated for by the recruitment of two planning trainees, the return of one Case Officer from secondment to the MDC Team later in the reporting year, and other Officer support afforded by the MDC Team. Finally, it should also be noted that the Major Applications Team was without a Team Leader to drive performance for eight months (from June 2019 onwards) due to unavoidable delays with the recruitment process.

Budgetary restrictions as a result of the squeeze on Council funding resulting from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a consequent recruitment freeze will mean that, despite best endeavours, it may be difficult to maintain performance in 2020-2021.

## C: Enforcement Activity

	2018-19	2019-20
Time since Enforcement Charter published / reviewed. Requirement: review every 2 years	10 months	1 month
Complaints lodged and investigated	235	229
Breaches identified – no further action taken	152	163
Cases closed	101	115
Notices served	12	22
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	1
Prosecutions	0	1

## Commentary

Enforcement continues to operate with only one Inspector, however the Inspector is assisted on a part-time basis by a Senior Planner and Planner in dealing with Enforcement enquiries. The Enforcement Charter was reviewed and updated in April 2020 and introduced a new focus on prioritisation of enforcement activity to improve the amenity of the City Centre in line with the City Centre Masterplan and the Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme. The Enforcement Charter is available to view on the [website](#) (PM5).

Of the 229 cases taken up and investigated across the city in this PPF year, 163 were identified as having planning related breaches. These required further action to resolve either through negotiation, submission of planning applications or formal enforcement action. The remaining 66 cases were, after investigation, identified to be 'permitted development', or works/activities established to be in compliance with a valid planning approval or permitted planning uses.

# Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics

## A: Decision-Making Timescales (based on 'all applications' timescales)

Timescales	2019-2020 Number of %	2019-2020 Average Weeks	2018-2019 Average Weeks
<b>Overall</b>			
<b>Major developments</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>28.1</b>	<b>19.9</b>
<b>Local developments (non-householder)</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>8.1</b>
Local: less than 2 months	(79.7%)	6.4	6.1
Local: more than 2 months	(20.3%)	17.3	17.6
<b>Householder developments</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.8</b>
Local: less than 2 months	(94.3%)	6.5	6.6
Local: more than 2 months	(5.7%)	13.9	8.6
<b>Housing Developments</b>			
<b>Major</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>23.1</b>
<b>Local housing developments</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>12.6</b>
Local: less than 2 months	(50.0%)	7	6.1
Local: more than 2 months	(50.0%)	38	25
<b>Business and Industry</b>			
<b>Major</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>–</b>
<b>Local business and industry developments</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>9.8</b>	<b>7.5</b>
Local: less than 2 months	(73.3%)	6.5	6.9
Local: more than 2 months	(26.7%)	18.9	12.4
<b>EIA Developments</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Other Consents</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6.4</b>
<b>Planning/legal agreements</b>			
Major: average time	<b>4</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>18.9</b>
Local: average time	<b>8</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>26.2</b>

## Commentary

Further to the Commentary against the National Headline Indicators above, reduced staff numbers across the Development Management Applications Teams has resulted in planning performance in terms of average application determination times dropping this year (**PM1**). Most of the increase in times taken are however very minor taking into account the reduced Officer resource available.

It must also be recognised, however, that speed of determination does not show the “value added” or quality of outcome as a result of the Development Management process. As previously reported, work is ongoing to determine the “value added” by Officers in the determination of planning applications, and a set of criteria for measuring the value added has been formulated. The initial feedback from this exercise will be reported in the next PPF for 2020-2021. It should also be noted that performance was better than the Scottish Local Planning Authority average for all three National Headline Indicators for planning applications – as shown in the table on page 37.





## B: Decision-Making: Local Reviews and Appeals

Type	Original decision upheld				
	Total number of decisions No.	2019-20 No.	%	2018-19 No.	%
Local reviews	21	6	28.6%	16	45.7%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	14	9	64.3%	6	46.1%

### Commentary

The Local Review Body reversed 15 (71%) of the 21 delegated decisions that it considered in 2019-2020. In line with a PPF action from last year's report, the planning reasons for delegated refusals in 2019-2020 were carefully considered by the Team Leader (Applications) before sign-off to ensure the consistency and planning rationale for decision making. A review by the Development Management Management Team of the decisions taken in the year shows that all had a firm basis in Development Plan Policy or legitimate material planning considerations

# Part 6: Workforce Information

## Our Planning Service

Within Aberdeen City the Planning Service sits within the wider heading of Strategic Place Planning. Both Strategic Place Planning and City Growth sit within the Place cluster which has moved this year from a stand-alone cluster to now sit within the overarching Commissioning function. Strategic Place Planning is led by a Chief Officer, and the overall structure can be found below:



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

Staff Age Profile	Headcount	RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount
Under 30	5	Chartered staff	23
30-39	32		
40-49	6		
50 and over	12		

### Commentary

The Workforce information above is a snapshot of the planning staff in position on the 31st of March 2020. The figures given take account of Officers from Development Management, Local Development Plan, Environmental Policy and a proportion of the Application Support Team (which is shared with Building Standards).

## Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committee & Site Visits	Number per year
Full Council meetings	6
Planning committees	10, plus 2 Pre-Determination Hearings, making 12 in total.
Area committees	Not applicable
Committee site visits	3
Local Review Body	11
LRB site visits	3



# Appendix 1:

## Scottish Government Performance Summary

### Performance Markers Report 2019-2020

In January 2020, the Scottish Government published its official feedback on Aberdeen City's planning performance for 2018-2019, as shown in the table below. This feedback included an assessment against performance markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action.

This feedback was reported to Members of the Planning Development Management Committee as a "Bulletin" Report in April 2020. We believe this is a useful process in order to ensure that Councillors are aware of the Scottish Government's comments and feedback and can contact the Chief Officer of Strategic Place Planning to discuss any queries, concerns or suggested future improvements.

The Planning Service gained 13 green indicators (targets met or exceeded/ performance improvement), 2 amber (targets not fully met) and no red indicators (targets not met/ declining performance). This repeats the performance from the 2017-2019 assessment, albeit the two amber markers are this year for different criteria.

No.	Performance Marker	RAG 2018/19	Comments	RAG 2017/18
1	<b>Decision-making:</b> continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Green	<b>Major Applications</b> Your timescales of 19.9 weeks are faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 32.5 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Local (Non-Householder) Applications</b> Your timescales of 8.1 weeks are faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 10.7 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Householder Applications</b> Your timescales of 6.8 weeks are faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 7.2 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b>  <b>Overall RAG = Green</b>	Green
2	<b>Processing agreements:</b> offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and availability publicised on website	Amber	You promote the use of processing agreements to prospective applicants and we note that there has been an increase in their use. <b>RAG = Green</b>  You state that processing agreements are available on your website however you have not provided a link. <b>RAG = Amber Overall RAG = Amber</b>	Green
3	<b>Early collaboration with</b> applicants and consultees availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information	Green	Since the middle of last year, you began offering a pre- application advice service and validation guidance. Both of which are available online. You note the advice service in particular has received positive feedback from stakeholders and you are working on a customer charter/applications processing protocol. <b>RAG = Green</b>  You provide case studies which demonstrate a clear and proportionate approach to requesting supporting information. <b>RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green</b>	Green

4	<b>Legal agreements:</b> conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Green	Your timescales for concluding legal agreements is faster than last year and faster than the Scottish average. You have processes in place to monitor progress and help ensure conclusion within 6 months of reaching the minded to grant stage.	Green
5	<b>Enforcement charter</b> updated / re- published within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was 10 months old at the end of the reporting period.	Green
6	<b>Continuous improvement:</b> progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report	Green	Your decision making timescales are all faster than last year, your LDP and Enforcement Charter are up to date and you have cleared a good number of legacy cases. <b>RAG = Green</b> You have completed 13 out of 18 improvement commitments and identified a good range of commitments to take forward in 2020-21. <b>RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green</b>	Amber
7	Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption	Green	Your LDP was 2 years and 3 months old at the end of the reporting period.	Green
8	<b>Development plan scheme</b> – next LDP: on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale	Amber	Your LDP is due to be replaced within the required timescale. <b>RAG = Green</b> It is not clear from your report how you are project managing the replacement of your LDP to ensure the timescale for adoption is met. <b>RAG = Red Overall RAG = Amber</b>	Green
9	<b>Elected members engaged early</b> (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>	Green	You report that elected member involvement (through member briefings) has already been initiated in preparation for the development of the MIR and the service shall consult with elected members at key stages of the bill. For example, the Place Standard tool was used to help community councils identify a broader range of issues.	Green
10	<b>Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early</b> (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i> <i>*including industry, agencies and Scottish Government</i>	Green	You provided evidence of early engagement with cross- sector stakeholders in advance of the preparation of the MIR. Community organisations were targeted for this along with cross-service interdisciplinary teams.	Green
11	<b>Regular and proportionate policy advice</b> produced on information required to support applications	Green	Your placemaking review to assess your master planning process has taken place to develop the services understanding of policy and practice requirements, this will translate into policy next year. Elsewhere, you began to offer a Pre-Application Advice service and Validation Guidance both of which are published and promoted online.	Green

<b>12</b>	<b>Corporate working across services</b> to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)	<b>Green</b>	You provide examples of corporate working across services, seen in the Union Terrace Gardens case and listed building conversion case studies. In these cases, the services worked with other services and more effective protocols for service delivery were created. Elsewhere, you appointed the Planning Advisory Service to conduct an independent service review. This was used to inform an action plan focused on service improvement with some actions completed and others underway.	<b>Green</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge</b> between authorities	<b>Green</b>	You share good practice through peer reviews, with Edinburgh City Council acting as a PPF twinning authority. For the third year, you hosted students from the University of South Florida and other institutions for a collaborative workshop on urban regeneration.	<b>Green</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Stalled sites / legacy cases:</b> conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than 1 year old	<b>Green</b>	You have cleared 32 cases during the reporting year however, that means that 20 cases reached legacy status during the reporting period. We note the number has been halved as per your improvement commitment.	<b>Amber</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Developer contributions:</b> clear and proportionate expectations set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and in pre-application discussions	<b>Green</b>	<p>Your LDP, supported by supplementary guidance and masterplans, sets out expectations for developer contributions. The recruitment of an in-house Developer Obligations officer should assist in making expectations clearer to developers.</p> <p><b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>Expectations for developer contributions are clarified in your pre-application discussions. Your pre-application advice note enshrines this in your teams protocols. <b>RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green</b></p>	<b>Green</b>



# Appendix 2: Performance Marker Checklist

Where sections of this report demonstrate compliance with the performance markers this is clearly indicated in the text e.g. **PM1**

Performance Marker		Measure	Policy Background to Marker	Part of PPF report best suited to evidence this marker
<b>DRIVING IMPROVED PERFORMANCE</b>				
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 <u>and</u> 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"> <li>availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications</li> <li>clear and proportionate requests for supporting information</li> </ul>	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’ <sup>2</sup>	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"> <li>show progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators</li> <li>progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report</li> </ul>	Progress on all commitments	Delivering Planning Reform; PPF Report	Culture of Continuous Improvement Service Improvement Plan
<b>PROMOTING THE PLAN-LED SYSTEM</b>				
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"> <li>on course for adoption within 5-year cycle</li> <li>project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale</li> </ul>	Y/N Y/N	Planning Act (s16); Scottish Planning Policy	NHI Quality of Outcomes Quality of service and engagement
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Evidence of activity		Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
10	Cross-sector stakeholders, including industry, agencies and Scottish Government, engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation	Evidence of activity		Quality of Service and Engagement Governance
11	Production of regular and proportionate policy advice, for example through supplementary guidance, on information required to support applications	Evidence of activity		Quality of Service and Engagement
<b>SIMPLIFYING AND STREAMLINING</b>				
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
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"> <li>set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan,) and</li> <li>in pre-application discussions</li> </ul>	Y/N Examples		Quality of service and engagement

## Appendix 3: Training and Continued Professional Development (CPD)

<b>April 2019</b>	Flooding and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems Training Workshop
<b>April 2019</b>	Badgers and Development Planning
<b>April 2019</b>	Civitas Portis Evening Talk Series
<b>May 2019</b>	Planning Service Lunchtime Talk, Urban Conga
<b>May 2019</b>	Countesswells – Flooding and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems event
<b>May 2019</b>	Planning Service Lunchtime Talk, Historic Environment Policy for Scotland (HEPS) Review
<b>May 2019</b>	4th Collaborative Urban Path (Aberdeen CUP)
<b>May 2019</b>	Civitas Portis Evening Talk Series
<b>June 2019</b>	Training on HRA/AA from SNH
<b>July 2019</b>	Planning (Scotland) Act seminar delivered by Brodies
<b>July 2019</b>	Lunchtime Talk, Internal consultation on draft placemaking guidance (Materials)
<b>July 2019</b>	Lunchtime Talk, Internal consultation on draft placemaking guidance (Development Along Lanes)
<b>Aug 2019</b>	Tour of the Tollbooth
<b>Aug 2019</b>	Lunchtime Talk: Our Urban Realm – the proposed Aberdeen specific approach and specification for all new urban realm projects internal consultation
<b>Sept 2019</b>	Talk on works at Provost Skene's House
<b>Oct 2019</b>	Lunchtime Tour, Aberdeen Sheriff Court
<b>Nov 2019</b>	Proposals to List Modernist Buildings in Aberdeen by HES
<b>Nov 2019</b>	Local Place Plans training by PAS
<b>Nov 2019</b>	Training on the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 by Morton Fraser
<b>Jan 2020</b>	Community Council Development Day, workshop on the Open Space Audit/ Strategy and Granite City Growing
<b>Jan 2020</b>	Training for Elected Members in Planning Decision Making and participating in the Local Review Body
<b>Jan 2020</b>	Training for Elected Members in adoption of streetworks
<b>Feb 2020</b>	Development Viability Training from the Trinity Group
<b>Feb 2020</b>	Visit from the DPEA Chief Reporter
<b>March 2020</b>	Six-monthly cross agency working group meeting for SNH and SEPA planners with City and Shire Environmental Planning/ Development Management/ Local Development Plan/ Masterplanning teams.
<b>March 2020</b>	EIA Training with Historic Environment Scotland



