

Aberdeen City Council Planning & Building Standards Newsletter

Edition 7: November 2018

Welcome to our latest newsletter, thank you for **opting-in** to receive these updates! Our newsletters are sent out on an ad-hoc basis, when there is sufficient news and updates from our teams.

Service Review

In our March 2018 Newsletter we mentioned the Service Review, at that time we were waiting for the final report, we promised to come back and update you on the service improvements we will be introducing over the coming months.

Firstly, from April 2018 and as part of the wider Council-wide transformation 'Planning and Sustainable Development' has a new name: '**Strategic Place Planning**'. The structure and responsibilities within the service are broadly the same as before, with the key changes being as follows:

- Roads Projects and the Public Transport Unit are no longer part of the service;
- Transport Strategy and Programs team now sit with Planning and Environmental Policy, managed on an interim basis by David Dunne.
- One additional area has joined the service - Housing Strategy – also within the Planning and Environmental Policy Team;
- Development Management have reconfigured from North and South area-based teams to a 'Major Applications' team and an 'Applications' team. The Major team will deal with most large development proposals and the applications team with all other applications including householder;
- Roads Development Management/RCCs team now sit alongside Building Standards, and both managed by Gordon Spence.

We are delighted to announce that our new permanent **Chief Officer is Gale Beattie**, who many of you will know already. Gale has been promoted from the Planning and Environmental Policy Manager position.

The Structure and key contacts for Strategic Place Planning are as follows:

Chief Officer		
	Gale Beattie	GALEB@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Development Management		
Manager	Daniel Lewis	DLewis@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader - Major Applications	Kristian Smith	KriSmith@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader - Applications	Garfield Prentice	GPrentice@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader Masterplanning, Design and Conservation	Sandy Beattie	SBeattie@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Building Standards		
Manager	Gordon Spence	GSPENCE@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader South	Grant Tierney	Gtierney@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader North	David Kidd	DAKIDD@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader Roads DM/RCC	Mark Wilkie	MWikie@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Planning and Sustainable Development		
Manager	David Dunne	DDunne@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader LDP	Andrew Brownrigg	ABROWNRIGG@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader Environmental Policy	Sinclair Laing	SiLaing@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader Housing Strategy	Mel Booth	MeBooth@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader Transport Strategy and programmes	Joanna Murray	JoannaMurry@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Application and Business Support		
Manager	Pauline Wilkinson	PWilkinson@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Team Leader	Dawn Ramsay	DRamsay@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Agents Forum Meeting

A successful Agents Forum Meeting was held on 12th September 2018. It was agreed that this will be a twice-yearly event henceforth.

Development Management (DM)

The Service Review resulted in an 'action plan' for the DM Team which is being implemented. This includes more effective performance management; application project management and progress monitoring; the enforcement of protocols for response times for consultees; the simplification of reports; and delegation of some supervisory responsibility to Senior Planners.

Attached to this newsletter is a draft 'Customer Charter'. Part of the Charter of relevance to applicants and agents is the behaviours and customer service standards that we will deliver and the expectations we have of customers in order to achieve those standards. The expectation will be for applicants/agents to have engaged in pre-application advice which we currently offer and promote, to ensure that advice and suggested amendments on a proposal are given before an application is submitted and applications can be validated first time with a complete suite of supporting information. With the foregoing in mind, once an application is lodged, only one chance only will be offered for applicants to amend proposals, and only one meeting will be offered to discuss a scheme, prior to a determination based on the information available. All within the 4 and 2 month timescales for 'major' and 'local' applications. The aim is to see faster, more certain decision making which will benefit all parties.

There has already been engagement on this new approach with developers/agents at the September Agents Forum meeting, and it is intended that full implementation will start on Monday 5th December 2018. Comments are invited before that date to Daniel Lewis, Development Management Manager dlewis@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Developer Obligations

The Council has decided to bring the developer obligations process in house and discontinue the service level agreement with Aberdeenshire Council. Recruitment is currently underway for a Developer Obligation Officer, to be positioned within the Local Development Team.

Building Standards

Following on from the feedback provided from the agents who attended the forum on 12th September 2018 we have revised the procedure for sending invalid letters when the application fee has not been received. When the application is submitted through the eBuilding portal and the option to pay later is chosen the application will not be valid, however the invalid letter will only be sent if the payment has not been received within three days of receipt of the application.

In addition, concerns were raised regarding the "Tiff" file format used for returning approved building warrant plans. We have revisited this procedure and developed a process which will see the stamped plans packaged as a single PDF file and returned through web-based system ShareFile. This process is currently being tested and if successful will be introduced without delay, we will provide updates and user guidance on this prior to going live.

Pre-application

Come to us early and enter into a pre-application agreement – we will include roads colleagues at the pre-app stage. We anticipate that this will help speed up the process. We are currently receiving in the region of 10-15 pre-apps per week.

City Centre Affordable Housing Waiver

At Planning Development Management committee on the 20th of September 2018, approval was given for the introduction of a waiver on Affordable Housing. Further information can be found in the additional document attached with this newsletter.

Application and Business Support

Submission of plans and payments: Please submit planning applications and building warrants via the relevant electronic portals as this has advantages and benefits for both applicants and the Council. All amended plans should also be submitted via the Portal. Please do not use file sharing websites such as Drop Box for this purpose. Application fees can now be paid at the time of submission via the electronic portal or, after submission via our website <https://www.civicaepay.co.uk/AberdeenCityEstore/estore/default/Catalog/Index?fundcode=33>

eBuilding Standards Portal <https://www.ebuildingstandards.scot/eBuildingStandardsClient/>

ePlanningPortal <https://www.eplanning.scot/ePlanningClient/>

Aberdeen City Council ePayment

<https://www.civicaepay.co.uk/AberdeenCityEstore/estore/default/Catalog/Index?fundcode=33>

Updated Validation Guidance

We are committed to achieve an increase in the number of planning and related applications that can be validated on receipt, currently only 19% of applications received can be validated on the day received. The validation guidance has been updated to make it clear to applicant what is required to make an application valid, to help speed up the processing time and provide a faster service for developers/agents. We would appreciate your assistance with this. The updated guidance can be found:

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/planning-and-building/planning-applications/planning-application-decision-making-process>

Staffing Changes

Since our last newsletter, we have had a few staff changes:

In **Building Standards**, Jim Ritchie (Building Standards Officer) retired in December 2017 after over 30 years of service. Bill Beattie (Senior Building Standards Officer) also retired, after over 30 years of service in July 2018. Martin Gow (Building Standards Officer) also left in July 2018. Rebecca Chapman has now returned from maternity leave and is working remotely. Rebecca's working days are currently Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9am - 4pm,

Development Management, Andrew Miller (Senior Planner) left at the end of June and Gavin Bruce (Planning Inspector) retired at the end of July, after over 40 years of service with the Council. Recruitment is currently well advanced to fill two Senior Planner vacancies in the Major Applications Team

Application Support Team, Jemma Petersen, Application Support Officer left ACC on 30 June 2018.

Feedback

If there is any topics you feel would be of interest that we are not currently providing updates on, please contact us on: planningsuggestions@aberdeencity.gov.uk.

We are continually trying to improve our quality of service and would like to know your views. Please complete a short feedback form at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/PlanningDM> for planning or at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BStands> for Building Standards to enable us to continuously improve our service.