

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22





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FOREWORD

It is with great pleasure and pride that I welcome you to Aberdeen City Council's Planning Performance Framework report for 2021-2022.

It has been another year of achievements as well as challenges. Highlights have been the continuing resilience of the planning service in navigating the latter stages of the COVID pandemic and, more recently, the carefully planned transition from remote to hybrid working patterns in line with the relaxation of national restrictions.

During this time the service has been instrumental in driving and supporting the refresh of the City Centre Masterplan that seeks to re-imagine the city centre as part of our post-pandemic recovery.

Finally, I would like to thank Cllr Boulton for her dedication and hard work as the previous Convener. I look forward to continuing her good work in collaboration with the planning team to build on improvements and delivering positive outcomes that enhance the quality of life and the sustainable economic growth of the City.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dell Henrickson', written in a cursive style.

Dell Henrickson

Convenor, Planning Development Management Committee



Introduction

This is Aberdeen City Council's eleventh Planning Performance Framework (PPF) report in which we record, highlight and celebrate achievements for the reporting year, from 01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

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

Our Planning Service

Aberdeen City's Planning Service is part of the Strategic Place Planning cluster, led by an Interim Chief Officer and located within the Commissioning Directorate. The structure and location are the same as was reported in last years' PPF.

Context

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

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

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



Water fountain at Broad Street

Resilience

It had never been envisaged that another year of lockdown would be reported in this year's PPF report. However, officers have continued to work successfully from home, collaborating with colleagues, maintaining performance levels and meeting customers over Microsoft Teams throughout the year.

There was a carefully planned trickle of staff back to the office as COVID restrictions eased in the first quarter of 2022 and this has been monitored by way of a desk booking system. The service has entered a test and trial phase of future ways of working, aiming to build on what has worked well during the Covid 19 lockdown, whilst considering best practice. The trial is taking on board customer feedback and adopts customer focused service improvement. Strategic Place Planning (SPP) staff are trying out different approaches to working, whilst maintaining performance and continuing to deliver a first-class customer service, evidenced by the successful retention of Customer Service Excellence accreditation.

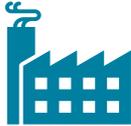
The pandemic has continued to define how the service interacts with the public. We have been working with the remaining 2% of customers, to assist them to work fully online with both

applications and payments, this led to the successful achievement of 100% end to end digital planning submissions. Following a lead from the Local Development Plan process, QR codes were introduced on application site notices as a customer service improvement.

During the height of the pandemic site visits were undertaken primarily by way of submission of photographs or videos and use of Google-street imaging but over the course of the last year they have returned to near normal. Towards the end of the year the COVID site visit protocol was relaxed to allow officers to carry out site visits to the interior of properties, with masks worn at the discretion of property occupiers and owners.

Committee meetings have evolved to a hybrid model with attendees both in person and over Teams. From June 2021 onwards Planning Development Management Committee, Pre-Application Forum, Local Review Body meetings and Pre-Determination Hearings were successfully held in hybrid form and broadcast live for the first time; with some members, agents, and members of the public present in the Council Chamber and others participating from their homes.

Aberdeen City & Shire Economy

11.5%
of Scottish GVA (2020) 

GVA PER HEAD
= £31,584 
27.9% and 16.4% above
the Scottish and UK averages (2020)

GVA PER HOUR WORKED:
£35.40 
Scotland: £34.40, UK: £35.20 (2019)

EMPLOYMENT RATE:
 **76.9%**
ABERDEEN
74.1%
ABERDEENSHIRE
Jan - Dec 2021
Scotland: 73.1% UK: 74.7%

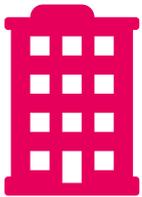
EMPLOYMENT:
241,000
January - December 2021
(compared with 243,500
January- December 2020)

IN 2021 MEDIAN ANNUAL
EARNINGS FALL BY:

8.4%
ABERDEEN 
8.8%
ABERDEENSHIRE
1.4% fall in Scotland, 2.3% fall in UK

HOUSE PRICES
Calendar year average 2020 - 2021

 **4.2%**▲
ABERDEEN
6.9%▲
ABERDEENSHIRE
Scotland increased by 10.5%
UK increased by 9.3%

VACANT
OFFICES 
13.9%
Q1, 2022

 NORTH EAST
20% of the Scotland's
food & drink output

CITY CENTRE FOOTFALL
2.2 million 
(March 2022)

HOTEL OCCUPANCY RATES
73% 
(April 2022)

THIRD HIGHEST
business registration rate
IN SCOTLAND (2020)
38.8
ABERDEEN 
33.4
ABERDEENSHIRE
per 10,000 people
Scottish average: 32.6

INTERNATIONAL EXPORTS
GOODS AND
SERVICES (2019) 
£11.5 billion

PATENT
APPLICATIONS
 **48.1**
per 100,000 population (2020)
2x HIGHER
than UK average 17.8

NORTH SEA 
TRANSITION AUTHORITY

2018	2019	2020	2021
601 million /boe	599 million /boe	594 million /boe	478 million /boe

Source: North Sea Transition Authority Feb 2022



2 
WORLD RENOWNED
UNIVERSITIES

City Centre Masterplan Refresh – Investing for the future

- In May 2021 the Council decided to review and refresh the **2015 City Centre Masterplan** with a view to the city’s post pandemic future and the urgency to create a ‘city centre first’ focus to help halt decline and promote regeneration. This was backed by a £150M fund enabling the City Growth and Resources Committee to bring forward scoping options for identified projects. Hub North-East were appointed to co-ordinate a team of consultants and the process was overseen by officers from City Growth and Strategic Place Planning.

The identified projects are:

- **West End** – to regenerate a cluster of streets adjacent to Union Street that form a traditional mixed-use area of local independent traders.
- **Union Street** – to improve the urban realm and creating a better balance between place-making and movement to achieve the full potential of the street that gives Aberdeen its distinctive city image.
- **Castlegate** – to redesign one of the City’s most historic and under-utilised city squares to accommodate regular events as well as serving the recreational needs of the residents of the wider area.
- **Schoolhill & Upperkirkgate** – to create a new plaza at the entrance to the Art Gallery and Robert Gordons’ College, rationalise accessible car parking and create a better pedestrian route from Marischal College to Union Terrace Gardens.
- **Beachfront** – to produce a Development Framework to inform future investment and decision making. The aim is to transform the existing leisure and recreational facilities of the Beach area – including renovation of the Beach Ballroom, pier walkway, landscaping, play areas and new leisure facilities, swimming pool, new city sports stadium and an outdoor watersports centre.

The timing of the refresh is aligned to the ending of the Spaces for People interventions, which enabled physical distancing and continued outdoor hospitality during the pandemic. It will lay planning foundations for the long-term sustainable regeneration of the city centre. It builds upon the initial programme of City Centre Masterplan projects that were more focused on some of the City’s most important historic assets, including:

- the re-birth of the award-winning Category A-listed Aberdeen Art Gallery as the restored and extended home to an internationally renowned art collection,
- the re-opening of Category A-listed Provost Skene’s House as a ‘hall of heroes’ museum,
- the refurbishment of the Category A-listed Music Hall as a music and cultural destination, and
- the redesign of Union Terrace, as the premier park in the city centre, complete with three commercial pavilions that will open later in 2022.

Case Study 4 examines the results of the on-line simulator survey that was completed by over 7,500 people and effectively endorses the city centre first approach to renewal whilst emphasising the importance of the Union Street and the beachfront area. In addition, children and young people in the City’s primary schools were engaged and encouraged to record their ideas for city centre improvement on postcards to inform all the urban realm visioning projects as part of the city’s bid for UNICEF Child Friendly Cities accreditation.



View towards Mitchell Tower and Aberdeen Town House

In February 2021 the Council confirmed:

- **A further options appraisal for urban realm and traffic movement alterations on Union Street between Bridge Street and Market Street – including full pedestrianisation.**
- **Restoration of historic buildings on central Union Street by bringing forward an investment plan for all Council owned property and engaging with owners of all privately owned buildings.**
- **Traffic Orders for public transportation prioritisation for Bridge Street, Guild Street and Market Street.**
- **Confirmation to proceed to establish a ‘Café Culture’ quarter in Back Wynd, Little Belmont Street and Belmont Street as well as re-introducing taxi ranks and accessible car parking.**
- **Bringing forward a masterplan for the George Street area including re-use of the former John Lewis building.**
- **Extension of the urban realm project area between Union Street, the Market project and the bus and train stations to include St Nicholas Street.**

The city centre and beach masterplan project areas, along with the redevelopment of Aberdeen Market continue to be the priority projects for the year ahead. Teams have been formed across Strategic Place Planning, Resources and Operations and Protective Services to draw on collective expertise in management and delivery.

Case Studies on project delivery will be presented in future Planning Performance Reports.

Service Highlights / Development on the Ground

Examples of highlights from this reporting year include:

- Continuing to support officers across the Planning Service to work from home during the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Continuing to ensure a “business as usual” service for our customers in the context of Scottish Government restrictions around work and travel.
- Application focus continued to be dominated by householder applications and public realm transformation.
- Submission of the Development Plan Scheme 2021. (PM8)
- Submission of the Proposed Local Development Plan to the DPEA for examination. (PM7)
- Confirmation from the DPEA the Proposed Local Development Plan examination of conformity with the participation statement was complete and the Examination in Public would commence.
- Partnership working contributing towards the eventual roll out of the Low Emissions Zone (PM12)
- Consultation of the City Centre Masterplan refresh.

Approval of significant major planning applications:

The roll out of implementation of the Council’s ambitious housing programme continued apace during 2021-22 with the planning team and project delivery team liaising monthly on 10 active projects in the city. This facilitated the approval of Council led affordable housing developments on brownfield land of 212 social rented units at the former Kincorth Academy site ([210185/DPP](#)), 99 units at the former Craighill Primary School ([210038/DPP](#)) and 70 units at Coningham Road, Tillydrone ([210041/DPP](#) and [210042/DPP](#)). Matters Specified in Conditions were also granted for a Council led development of 536 homes at Cloverhill, Bridge of Don, ([210884/MSD](#)).

Other notable major developments approved during the year included an affordable residential development of 167 dwellings at Falkland Avenue in Cove Aberdeen ([200584/DPP](#)) and a mixed-use development including approximately 498 residential units, commercial and business use, recycling centre and park and ride facility on the site of the former Aberdeen Exhibition And Conference Centre in Bridge of Don, ([150824/PPP](#)). Planning permission was also granted for major renewable energy battery storage facilities in the Dyce area, ([210665/DPP](#)) and ([220026/DPP](#)).

Other key achievements and awards:

Customer Service Excellence accreditation was retained for the 10th year. Further information on this accreditation will follow on later in this report.

The sensitive restoration and conversion of Provost Skene’s House to showcase the achievements of the most notable people of the Northeast of Scotland was the winner of the RICS award for best heritage project in Scotland. The judges felt the project achieved an excellent series of outcomes demonstrating attention to detail, consideration of historical features, innovation, and determination along with high levels of communication.



Mugiemoor housing development

PART 1: Qualitative Narrative & Case Studies

The Case Studies in this report demonstrate how the Service has managed to deliver significant and successful outcomes despite the ongoing pandemic. They also highlight the continued engagement with customers and communities, collaboration and focus on delivering the best outcomes for the place of Aberdeen.

The headings for the qualitative narrative section are:

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

1.1 Quality of Outcomes

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 teams have contributed towards achieving this vision and this has been illustrated in the chosen case studies.

All areas of the Planning Service have contributed to the achievements detailed in this report, and the Senior Management Team would like to express their sincere thanks to everyone who worked so hard this year in such challenging circumstances.

Local Development Plan Team

Work has been ongoing on the adoption of the next Development Plan, the Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2022. A report was submitted to Full Council on 21 June 2021, asking Elected Members to note the representations received during the consultation process on the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020, approve the Schedule 4 Summaries of Unresolved Issues, and authorise the submission of the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020 ([written statement](#), proposals [maps](#), [constraints map](#), [city centre map](#)) to the Scottish Ministers for Examination; and authorise officers to respond to any requests for further information or hearings during Examination (**PM9**).

The Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 was formally submitted to the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division on 22 July 2021 for the [Examination in Public](#) (**PM7**). The Schedule 4 documents which cover 43 Issues. On 3 November 2021 a lead reporter was appointed to carry out the Examination in Public of the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020. Notification of this was sent to those who made comment during the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 consultation and, taking influence from other teams within the department and communication methods prevalent during the pandemic, QR codes were added to electronic and paper correspondence linking directly to the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division website (**Case Study 5**). On 5 January 2022 the reporter concluded the examination of conformity with the participation statement had been concluded, and the examination into the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 would commence. Four further reporters have since been appointed to the process and, at the time of writing, a total of four Further Information Requests have been actioned. The Examination in Public is anticipated to be completed in August 2022.

The [development plan scheme 2021](#) (**PM8**) was updated to reflect the move from Stage 3 to Stage 4 of the process. It has been noted within the development plan scheme receipt of the Report of Examination is anticipated in June 2022. This allowed for a 9 month Examination in Public period, and would take the Local Development Plan beyond the 5 year review period – this ended in January 2022. The time taken to process and consider the representations received to the Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 was longer than anticipated, this was due to the significant volume of representations received, and staffing losses. In the interim, the Local Development Plan 2017 remains the adopted development plan for Aberdeen City Council.

The Local Development Plan team have assisted on, and inputted into, several Scottish Government consultations during the reporting period. Team members have participated in and helped to facilitate Improvement Service workshops on the draft National Planning Framework 4 (**PM13**). An Officer in the Local Development Plan team is currently executive Vice Chair for the Development Plan Sub Group with Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPs). As part of their role, they prepared and facilitated a number of interactive sessions on the content of the draft National Planning Framework 4 for Policy and Development Management Planners across all Scottish Councils. These workshops formed the basis for HoPs detailed response to the draft NPF4. Cross service working was paramount to the service wide response to the draft National Planning Framework 4, and the team also responded to the Development Plan Regulations consultation and fed into the consultation on Open Space Strategy and Play Sufficient Assessments. Although our next Local Development Plan will be assessed in accordance with the current planning system as per the Chief Planner's letter of November 2020, having an awareness and understanding of draft National Planning Framework 4 and the legislation of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 is critical for the team and future workload planning.

Development Management Applications Team

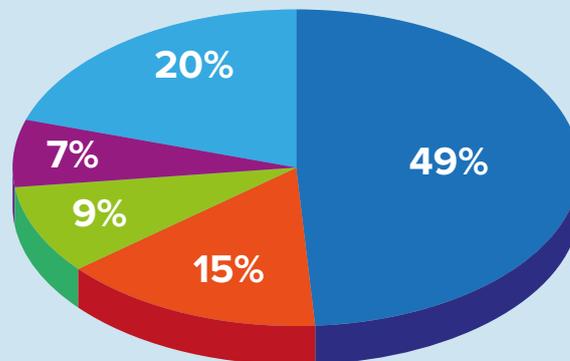
The first full year's data on recording of the "added value" created by the development management service became available (this was included in Case Study 1 of last year's PPF) (PM3). This information provides a balanced qualitative counterpoint to standard quantitative performance measures such as speed of decision making. The data shows that the planning service was instrumental in positive improvements to 51% of development proposals at the pre-application or application stage – slightly more than the 48% achieved in 2020-21. Most enhancements relate to design (49% of all applications with improvements) – achieved via negotiated modifications to the layout, elevational treatment, materials or scale or massing of proposals. Other notable areas where value was added were to:

- **Amenity (additional open space, garden ground or daylight and sunlight levels) – 15% of all amended applications**
- **Natural environment (enhanced landscaping, wildlife protection and tree protection) – 9%**
- **Road safety – 7%**

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

Added Value

- Design
- Amenity
- Natural Environment
- Road Safety
- Other



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

As reported in PPF 2019-2020, a number of the ELC developments approved by the Planning Service have now been constructed and brought into use (Case Study 3 of 2019-2020). An example of this is the Outdoor Nursery at Duthie Park. The development involved a single storey extension to a category B listed Gate Lodge with the added constraint of being located within a HES designated Garden and Designed Landscape. Several meetings were held by the Planning Service to ensure an appropriate design was approved that fully respected the sensitive nature of the site.

In March 2022, having been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the nursery, costing approximately £1.4 million, opened to the delight of youngsters, families and officials alike. It is expected that stakeholders will help shape the creation of learning experiences which are likely to include a mud kitchen, gardening area, loose-parts play space, transient art hub and water play area.

Councillor Malik, Convener of the Education Operational Delivery Committee, said "Aberdeen City Council continues to lead the way in providing our young children with new state of the art premises to enjoy learning. These facilities at Duthie Park will provide some great opportunities for our young children to enjoy outdoor play and to meet other children from differing backgrounds as a means of learning."



Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team

The Masterplan, Design and Conservation (MDC) Team is part of the larger Development Management Team. MDC liaises with external parties and interest groups including the Disability Equity Partnership as part of the wider delivery of corporate and strategic planning projects.

The Spaces for People Infrastructure, that provided defined space within the carriageways of the city and neighbourhood centres during the pandemic, to enable physical distancing, seating and occasional extension to out-door trading, was removed in tranches between September and December 2021. Over 300 parklets, locally made from timber decking, and comprising of decking rafts, benches and planters, as well as temporary bus totems, were moved into temporary storage until a programme of redistribution was agreed by the Council Leader.

Utilising community networks expressions of interest for re-use were sought from community groups, community centres, schools, allotments, and Men's Sheds so that we had to ensure 'best-value' and a sustainable approach to Council assets. Collaborative working between Strategic Place Planning and Operational Services ensured that the parklets were distributed to all those groups who requested them (PM12). The re-uses have included bench seating and opportunities for community groups to take an active role in providing seasonal planting, planters for community in bloom displays, allotment boardwalks and composting enclosures, with all remaining timber going to Men's Sheds to re-work for projects in their communities.

Duthie Park Nursery has been shortlisted in both the Innovation in Delivering a Sustainable Learning Space and Early Learning Childcare (ELC) categories at this year's Learning Places Scotland Conference Exhibition Awards 2022.





Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)

As reported in PPF10, the **CARS** Scheme is a £2.4 million building conservation scheme for Aberdeen's Union Street which launched in November 2017 (**PM11**). The project is led by a dedicated Project Officer in the MDC Team. The post was vacant for a large part of the year with a new post holder appointed in February 2022. Some activity was in effect on hold awaiting the new postholder (and easing of pandemic restrictions), but most building grants have remained in progress under the lead of the Senior Planner (Conservation). An additional £721,673 funding was secured early 2022, for 4 new CARS projects, with £233,254 from HES and £488,419 from ACC. Activity is now increasing, as we enter the final year of the scheme.

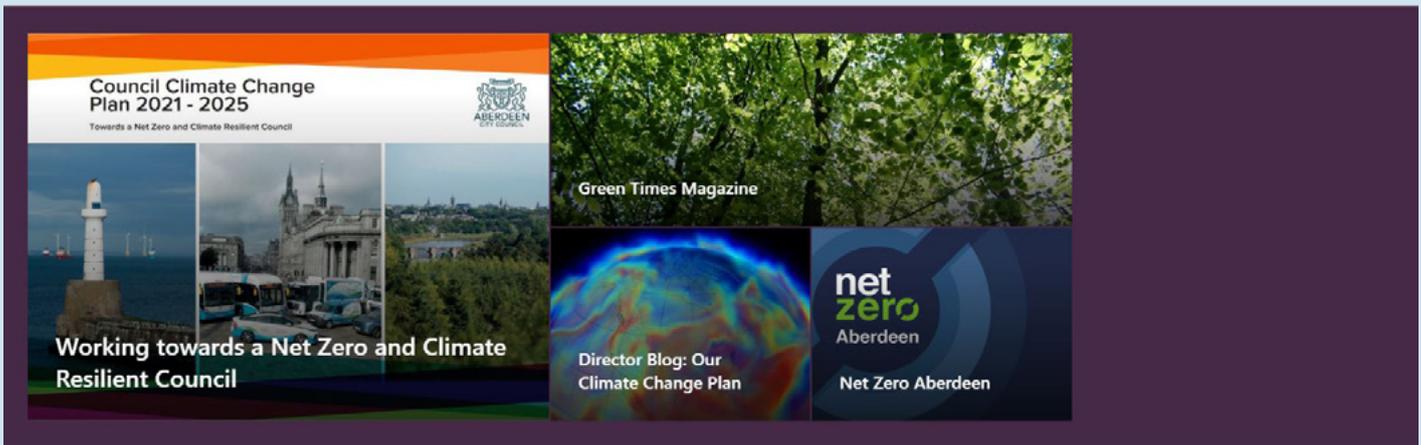
Aberdeen City Heritage Trust

During 2021-22, Aberdeen City Council continued to collaborate with Aberdeen City Heritage Trust, providing a contribution towards salary costs and in-kind support. The Trust delivered a suite of activity, including: 1) Grants for the repair of traditionally constructed buildings in areas adjoining Union Street Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (of which the Trust is a Board member) that are important for reinforcing CARS improvements, 2) Aberdeen Heritage Lectures- a series of 5 virtual lectures packed with CPD content and 3) Capturing the memories, by an oral historian, of those associated with the city's granite industry in the Trust's Granite Oral History Project, which is to culminate in a pop-up exhibition later in 2022 (**PM12**).

Environmental Policy Team

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

Over the past year the Environmental Policy team has continued to focus on moving forward the Council's work around climate change. A key document regarding this is the **Council Climate Change Plan** which, as reported in last year's PPF, was approved by the Council in March 2021. Since then, programmes of work are being implemented to deliver on the plan. Some highlights of progress include:



Latest Green New Stories

+ Add

Take part in the council staff travel survey

Scottish Government grant awarded for second phase of...
Aberdeen City Council has received ...
Sara Cameron 4 days ago
70 views

Aberdeen residents encouraged to participate in survey on cle...
Aberdeen City Council is supporting...
Jenny Jindra 18 August
73 views

See all

Welcome to Green Workplace! These pages are here to provide information, education, practical tips and ideas and opportunities for you to get involved in our Energy and Climate Change agenda.

- Sustainability plans and commitments
- Green Training
- Green Knowledge Hub

Green Workplace

- **Transition to LED lighting: 63% streetlights are now LED, equating to 20,000 intelligent streetlights across Aberdeen City which can be controlled, dimmed, and remotely monitor faults. These new lamps will avoid a total of £4m in energy, maintenance, and disposal costs over 10 years. Furthermore, LED light upgrades to ACC's HQ have been made to reduce emissions, maintenance, and cost.**
- **Zero emission fleet transition featuring a growing number of electric fleet vehicles and plant including the participation in an EU funded pilot to deploy and test 1 of 7 fuel cell refuse trucks, to demonstrate the effectiveness to reduce emissions. The outcome of this pilot is still to emerge and will inform our fleet replacement programme.**
- **21/22 Tree planting totalling 8,000 trees across the city, including 500 streets.**
- **Appointment of Climate Change Group President with £150k Climate Change action plan funding agreed by the Council March 2022.**
- **Commitments signed:**
 - **Glasgow Food Declaration: Making a commitment to sustainable food**
 - **Cities race to Zero: Pledging to reach net zero emissions**
- **UK Accreditations:**
 - **Food for Life Bronze – Pledging to reach net zero emissions**
 - **Fair Trade City Status: We have a resolution to support Fairtrade**

A dedicated page on the intranet called the Green Workplace has been created to communicate the Climate Change Plan to staff, featuring content such as vlogs from the Oversight Group Chair, Theme Leads and links to the plan and project register as well as press releases/ articles on programmes of work progress.

It is recognised though that this work cannot, and should not, be done alone by the Council but instead needs support and buy in from the wider community and stakeholders. This is especially true as Scottish net zero targets are driving a pace of change to legislation, strategy and standards across sectors including planning, buildings standards, transport, land use and energy. Therefore, in February 2022, the Council gave its approval to a suite of documents covering net zero for the City of Aberdeen aiming to shape the pathway towards collaborative citywide work on climate change, collectively known as **Net Zero Aberdeen (PM11)**. The Council co-ordinated development of these

documents however, the documents were co-created by business, organisation, community, public and third sector representatives, representing their expertise, input and highlighting commitment to acting on climate change. The strategic documents include:

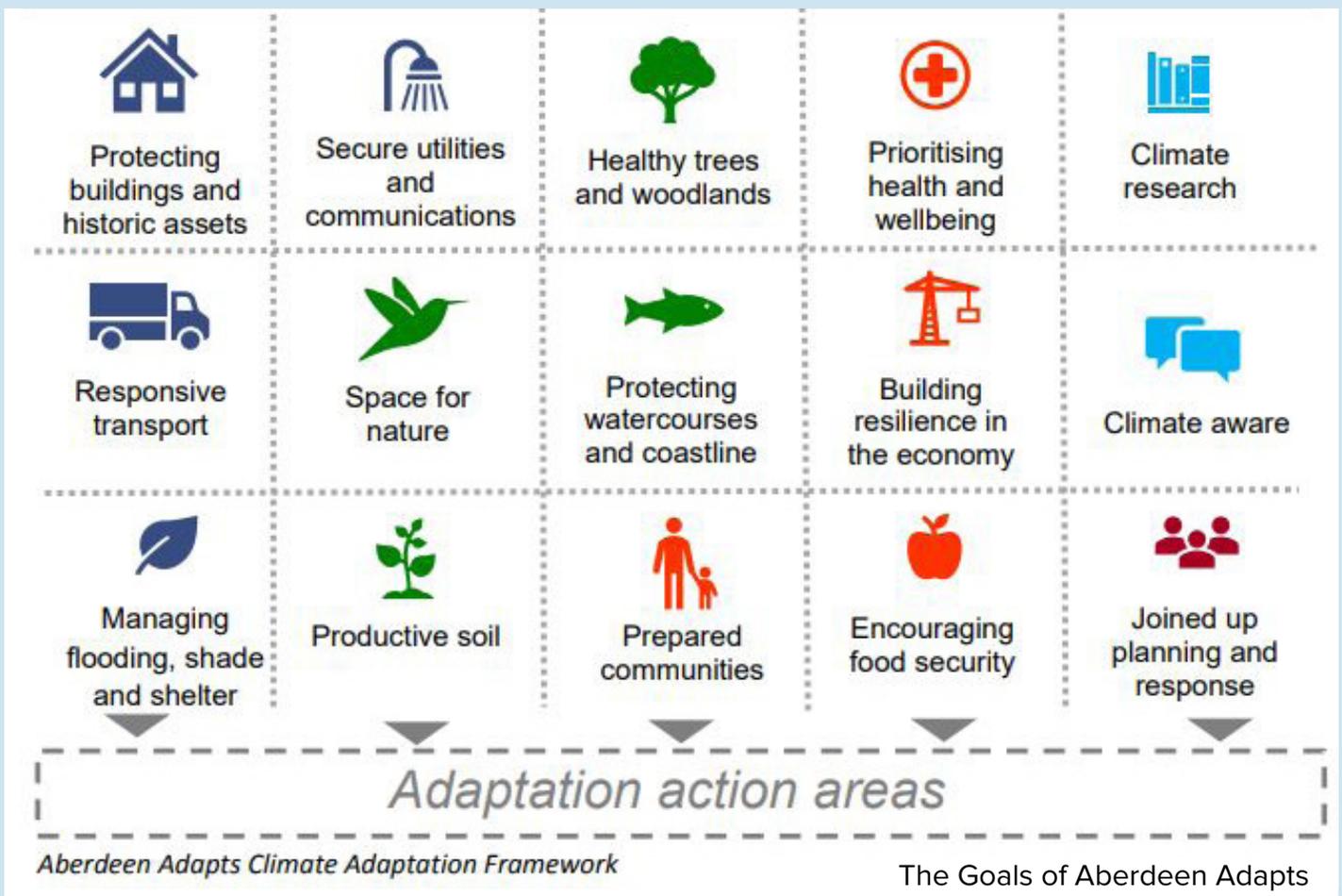
- **Net Zero Aberdeen Route map, setting out a citywide approach towards becoming a net zero emissions city by 2045.**
- **The Routemap is accompanied by 6 enabling high level strategies, covering: Mobility, Buildings and Heat, Energy Supply, Circular Economy, Natural Environment and Empowerment.**

As well as seeking to tackle climate change, we must also adapt to the effects that are already impacting upon us and that will affect us soon. A refresh of **Aberdeen Adapts**; the city Climate Adaptation Strategy was approved in February 2022 (PM11). This was updated to align with the Net Zero Aberdeen Routemap and supporting strategies. It identifies synergies and interdependencies with the net zero and adaptation agendas. This recognises that there will be impacts as the climate changes and alongside accelerating net zero actions, it will be essential to integrate actions to adapt, to avoid locking in climate risks.

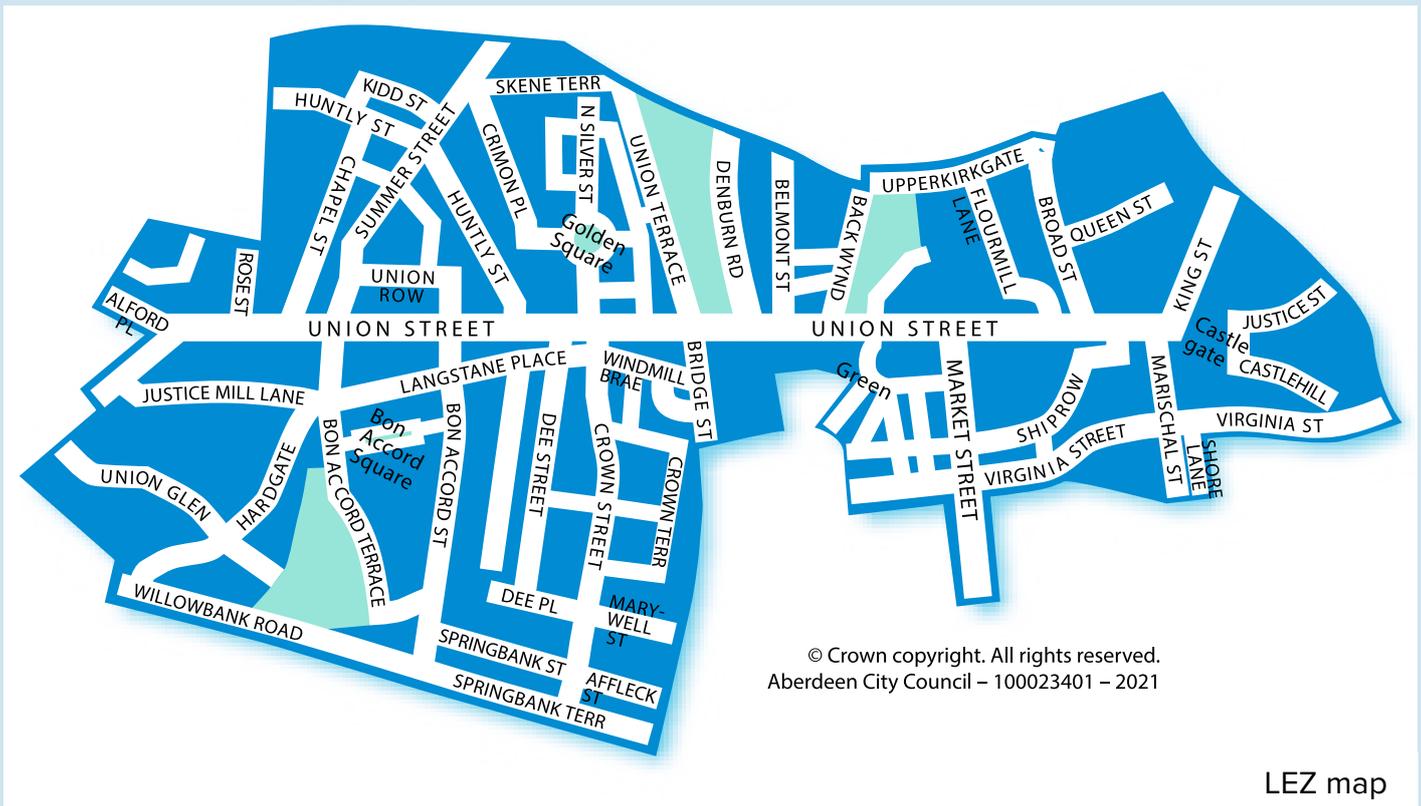
Training:

The Environmental Policy team delivered a training session on Tree Preservation Order (TPO) and Conservation Area regulations and tree work application to the Technical Team in November 2021. The team also offered training for Open Space Audit Volunteers. 10 people were trained to undertake the site survey element of the Aberdeen Open Space Audit, this was carried out on various dates and includes a mixture of Council staff and student volunteers.

A member of the team also gave a guest lecture to students at Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) on Environmental Planning in a Local Authority Context in May 2021.



CASE STUDY 1: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES



LEZ map

Case Study:	
Aberdeen Low Emission Zone	
Location and Dates:	
City Centre. Declared on 30th May 2022	
Elements of a High-Quality Planning Service this study relates to:	Key Markers:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of outcomes Quality of service and engagement Governance Culture of continuous improvement 	12, 13
Key Areas of Work	Stakeholders Involved:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment Placemaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Public Local businesses



Union Street

- Ongoing and iterative sifting and appraisal of options against a range of criteria and informed by traffic and air quality modelling; and
- Public and stakeholder engagement on options to understand the likely impacts on residents and businesses.

Given uncertainties around any sustained long-term travel behavioural change resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the LEZ was furthermore subject to ‘alternative futures’ testing to ensure that it remains relevant under different future scenarios and robust to variations in network conditions that may occur in a post-pandemic world.

Option appraisal work and implementation has been guided by a local Delivery Group, comprising of representatives of the Council (including Transport Strategy, Environmental Health, Traffic Management and Road Safety, Planning, Enforcement, Communications, and Licensing teams); Aberdeenshire Council (as neighbouring local authority); Nestrans, the Regional Transport Partnership for the Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire areas; NHS Grampian Public Health Directorate; Transport Scotland; SEPA (Scottish Environment Protection Agency); and SYSTRA (ACC’s modelling and appraisal consultants).

ACC also works closely with the other Scottish LEZ cities (Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow) and Transport Scotland, sharing experiences and best practice via a number of working groups, covering aspects such as Consistency (to ensure LEZs throughout Scotland are as similar as possible from a user’s perspective), Enforcement and Communications.

Goals:

Air pollution is believed to be a contributing factor in a growing number of serious health problems linked to poor air quality. This has a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable members of society, particularly the young, the elderly and those with chronic heart, lung, and respiratory conditions. As well as the Public Health benefits there are wider benefits to improving air quality, in terms of making Aberdeen and the City Centre safe, desirable, and welcoming environments for living,

Overview:

In response to longstanding issues of poor air quality in Aberdeen City Centre, currently an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), Aberdeen City Council has declared a **Low Emission Zone** (LEZ), an area where only certain vehicles are allowed to enter based on their emissions standards to keep within the Scottish Government’s annual mean Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) objective.

The LEZ has been subject to a robust option generation, appraisal and testing process using the National Low Emission Framework (NLEF) and National Modelling Framework (NMF) and following Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG). This has encompassed:

- Identification of a long list of LEZ options which were sifted into a manageable number of realistic options for appraisal;



New housing at Countesswells

working, shopping and leisure. In this regard, we anticipate the LEZ will support economic recovery and city centre regeneration as we emerge from the pandemic.

Based on emissions analysis, delivery of the LEZ in combination with key transport elements of the CCMP, will significantly improve emissions (an average NO₂ reduction of 87% on Union Street), bringing the majority of NO₂ exceedances in the city centre to within objective limits. Emissions of Particulate Matter (PM₁₀) are also anticipated to fall. Although the LEZ is restricted to the City Centre, its impacted will be much wider, reducing NO₂ and PM₁₀ throughout the city. A localised reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions is also expected. The road network will operate with small increases to average journey distance travelled and average journey times for non-compliant vehicles, although this impact is balanced against the significant predicted reductions in NO₂ levels and traffic flows inside the LEZ. Congestion overall is anticipated to reduce across the network.

Outcomes:

Through strong partnership working, Aberdeen City Council has now declared a LEZ. The final LEZ boundary has been informed by detailed traffic and emissions analysis and substantial

public and stakeholder participation. This has seen the boundary undergo various changes throughout the option appraisal process, in response to concerns raised by members of the public and local businesses, without compromising the main air quality benefits of the scheme.

Work is now underway to deliver the LEZ 'on the ground' and will see the erection of boundary and early warning signage and the implementation of the enforcement camera system in advance of the LEZ becoming fully operational. Enforcement is due to take place from 1st June 2024.

Ongoing monitoring of the LEZ will take place to ensure that the air quality objectives of the scheme are being met, that no unforeseen negative impacts manifest, and that the LEZ remains fit for purpose and the optimum solution for Aberdeen.

Name of key officer

Will Hekelaar, Senior Engineer

CASE STUDY 2: QUALITY OF OUTCOMES



Union Bridge safety barrier

Case Study:

Union Bridge Safety Barrier (Suicide Deterrent)

Location and Dates:

Union Bridge, City Centre. Design process 2017-2022. Installation 2021-2022.

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

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

Key Markers:

1, 3, 6, 12, 13

Key Areas of Work

- Design
- Conservation
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working
- Placemaking
- Skills Sharing

Stakeholders Involved:

- Planning Staff
- Authority Other Staff

Overview:

The Category B Listed Union Bridge, on Union Street is the largest single-span granite bridge in the world. In 2013, because of numerous suicides and attempted suicides, the Enterprise Planning and Infrastructure Committee instructed officers to develop and deliver a safety barrier for the bridge. A proposed safety barrier was refused Listed Building Consent in 2015 on design grounds. In 2016 a new proposal was drawn up to tie in with the revitalisation works at Union Terrace Gardens.

The Masterplanning, Design & Conservation Team (MDC) and the Development Management Case Officer engaged with the design team for Union Terrace Gardens (UTG) (which included other Council staff, external architects, and contractors) at an early stage of the design process. Officers encouraged a move away from the 2016 scheme as it was similar to the scheme refused in 2015. MDC suggested tying the design for the safety barrier in with the proposed design for the balustrading in UTG. This was taken on board by the UTG design team. MDC also suggested that the barrier not be attached to the cast iron balustrade and that all fixings to the bridge be kept to a minimum and be as discreet as possible. A new proposal was then drawn up and refined with further input from MDC and the Case Officers.

The safety barrier was consented ([180364/DPP](#) & [180367/LBC](#)) with conditions regarding the final finish and method of construction of the barrier. Several samples were prepared for the planning service's consideration. Recommendations for improvements regarding welding, consistency of form and the finished colour of the barrier were made by the planning service. These suggested alterations were taken on board by the UTG design team resulting in a high-quality modern intervention to a sensitive, key historic site within the city centre. The resulting barrier also ties in seamlessly with the Union Terrace Gardens Interventions, bringing the design quality rather than its function to the fore.

Goals:

Through early and continuous engagement with other Council services and external stakeholders, the planning service sought design development which could achieve works of a higher quality which are also appropriate to the architectural heritage of the bridge. Collaborative working was seen as a way forward in delivering a design solution for a challenging intervention (safety barrier) in an extremely sensitive city centre site.

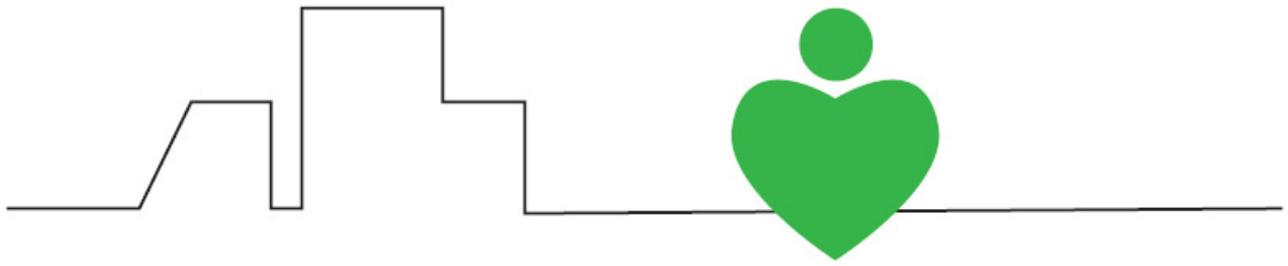
Outcomes:

The new structure is simple, lighter in form and colour (though is finished in gold to match the existing detailing) than the original structure and reads clearly as a modern, complementary addition to the bridge. The new barrier does not attempt to replicate or to visually extend the existing structure but is distinctly different and physically separate. The new barrier appears to float above the existing bridge, with no physical points of contact between the two during the run of the cast iron section. In this way the existing bridge ironwork is neither visually confused nor physically damaged or altered by the new barrier.

This is a high quality, complementary, contemporary addition to Union Bridge that fulfils a functional need. It was possible due to the high level of collaborative working between the planning service and the UTG project team. It also demonstrates how a considered informed design process can result in a first-class modern intervention in even the most sensitive and historic locations.

Name of key officers

Ross Wilson, Laura Robertson, Nigel McDowell (MDC) Sepideh Hajisoltani and Lucy Greene, Case Officers



URBANOME

Urban health, wellbeing, liveability

1.2 Quality of Service and Engagement:

This PPF year has been a combination of restricted consultation and engagement for the first part of the year, with Microsoft Teams forming the basis of most of the engagement. As restrictions eased the service have moved to a hybrid model with face-to-face engagement and Teams being used in tandem.

External Liaison and Engagement

Staff from Environmental Policy, Local Development Plan Team and City Growth have been actively involved with **URBANOME**. The project, a 4-year Horizon 2020 project, focuses on research areas related to the climate, the environment and their interaction with health and wellbeing in urban settings. The overall objective of URBANOME is to promote urban health, wellbeing, and liveability. Aberdeen is one of 9 Living Labs with Robert Gordon University acting as project partners. Two meetings have taken place, the initial to outline the project and a second where stakeholders were asked to help narrow down the scope of the research to a handful of manageable, defined topic areas, identify and outline pilot projects, and identify innovative and engaging methods of consultation. Aberdeen City Council staff have shared knowledge and expertise on projects relating to greenspace enhancements, open space audits, low emission zones, youth engagement, virtual consultation and several Council strategies related to health and wellbeing and urban improvement, as well as emerging areas of work and research foreseen within the urban environment sector. Further meetings are to follow over the next reporting period (**PM12**).

Customer Service Excellence

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) accreditation was retained for the 10th year. This year's audit was carried out virtually and, following discussion with a range of customers and other stakeholders, the Assessor reported that the professionalism, empathy, and friendliness of staff was a consistent theme. Customers spoke of staff 'going the extra mile' and responding quickly to supporting them during stressful times. This year's virtual case study was the opening of Provost Skene's House. Overall, SPP have been given another two compliance plus scores, moving from 14 up to 16. The

new compliance plus scores were for Senior Management Team commitment and the contribution of all staff and dedication of the CSE working group to putting customers at the heart of all that they do.

Masterplan, Design and Conservation (MDC) Team

The 6th annual Collaborative Urban Path (Aberdeen CUP) was held between September and December 2021. This workshop has been running since 2016 as a collaboration between the University of South Florida (School of Architecture and Community Design) and the Council's Development Management Team. It constitutes of an innovative education programme for postgraduate architecture students pioneered by local authority town planners and is part of a long-term vision by the council to promote good practice in effective and innovative engagement with academic institutions. This has created a platform for the students to investigate new opportunities for regeneration of the city centre and expand ideas and design strategies based on the City Centre Masterplan. The 2021 Aberdeen CUP program focused on mixed-use development for **Broadford Works** (a 3.5-hectare site formerly occupied by Richards' textile mills). The programme also involved engagement with the site owner (Inhabit), architect (Sheppard Robson) and the planning consultant (Ryden). Following a combination of virtual presentations and workshops delivered by ACC, students had the opportunity to develop their proposals in Tampa; culminating in videoconference presentation at which they received feedback from a wide range of stakeholders.

Further information on this collaboration project can be found at the following [link](#).

Open Space Public Consultation

As part of the Aberdeen City Open Space Audit, a public consultation was carried out in February and March 2022. This consultation asked members of the public that live, work, or visit Aberdeen to provide their opinions on open spaces within the city. The consultation was carried out in two parts, one of which sought the general views on open spaces across the city, and the second which allowed users to select open spaces which are important to them from an online map and give feedback on specific spaces. The consultation which closed on the 20th of March received a total of 1,363 responses and will add community value to the audit. Work is now ongoing to analyse these responses (**PM9**).



Hazlehead Park

Green Times / Green Champions



Green Times is a quarterly digital magazine showcasing the latest Environmental news such as volunteering, funding, and learning opportunities across Aberdeen City. Green Times subscription has increased by 3% in the previous year to 3,511 subscribers in total. Article submissions are provided by various community and friends of groups, schools, council services, partner organisations and more.

Green Champions are a volunteer network of staff implementing sustainable change in the workplace. The project is driven through the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, particularly through an Improvement Project which has the aim: Reduce public sector carbon emissions by at least 7% by 2023.

In 2021-22 Green Champions focussed on gamification and raising awareness through the testing process and activities based around Climate Week. From there Green Champions have run a biodiversity workshop and met to discuss a workplace growing partnership. Current projects that Green Champions are working on include:

- Partnering with Workplace growing
- Pass it on items for upcycling and recycling
- Improve waste separation at a small depot/site
- Green Champions partnered up with waste reduction project and distributed sustainable products including reusable pads and cups to museums and galleries
- Implementing food waste champions
- Single use coffee cup reduction in the workplace
- Step challenge collaboration with mental health

Plans for later in the year have a focus on energy and continue to build on projects suggested by Green Champions. Green Champions include staff from Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, NHS Grampian, and Police Scotland.



COMPLIMENTS 2022

“ Just a wee note to say the officer’s presence at the Union Street Business Group Network and the Uptown/West End Business Network on 25th and 26th respectively, was very helpful indeed. He came over as inclusive, personable, enthusiastic, with a strong grip of his portfolio. We had around 50 businesses at the two sessions. We will ensure we keep you good people updated on our continued Business Network sessions as we look to keep up regular and constructive engagement with our city-centre businesses at this critical time. ”

“ Keep up the good work ”

“ All my emails have been responded to quickly and with answers that demonstrate understanding of the issues. ”

“ Many thanks for following up on our telephone discussion with a confirmatory email. Thank you also for your very professional, personal and efficient approach to dealing with my enquiry. I actually thought it might take some time to elicit a response but your approach and detailed knowledge provided a very impressive service. You are a credit to the team ”

“ Application dealt with timeously and professionally ”

“ Thank you and many thanks also for your patience in my long running house alterations ”

“ Keep doing what you’re doing. Fantastic service. ”

“ Just to say a huge thank you to all of you for all your efforts and the quick responses. What Superstars you all are!! In the best possible way, we hope we don’t have to bother you all again. ”

“ Hello! I’m the Bike User Group coordinator for XXXX in Aberdeen and was pleased to see a few of your installations popping up in Aberdeen on my travels. ”

“ Thanks very much for playing such an instrumental part in making this happen in challenging circumstances. Denis Law Legacy Trust are very appreciative of all your hard work and assistance.

The feedback on the statue has been extremely positive, and most importantly, from Denis Law himself and his family. I joined the family on a return visit to the statue on Friday when they had an opportunity to admire it at their leisure, albeit with a few autograph and selfie hunters! They absolutely loved it - the setting, the granite plinth and they were especially happy with the words.

All our guests thoroughly enjoyed the unveiling ceremony and the civic reception and all aspects of the media. Everyone commented upon how smoothly the event was run and in a very professional and friendly manner. Working together I think we achieved something that will stand the test of time. The charity is extremely proud and hopefully all of you are also. ”

“ No improvement required ”

CASE STUDY 3: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT



Proposed Aberdeen Market

Case Study:

Aberdeen Market Redevelopment

Location and Dates:

City Centre. July 2021 – May 2022.

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

- Quality of outcomes
- Quality of service and engagement

Key Markers:

3, 12

Key Areas of Work

- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working

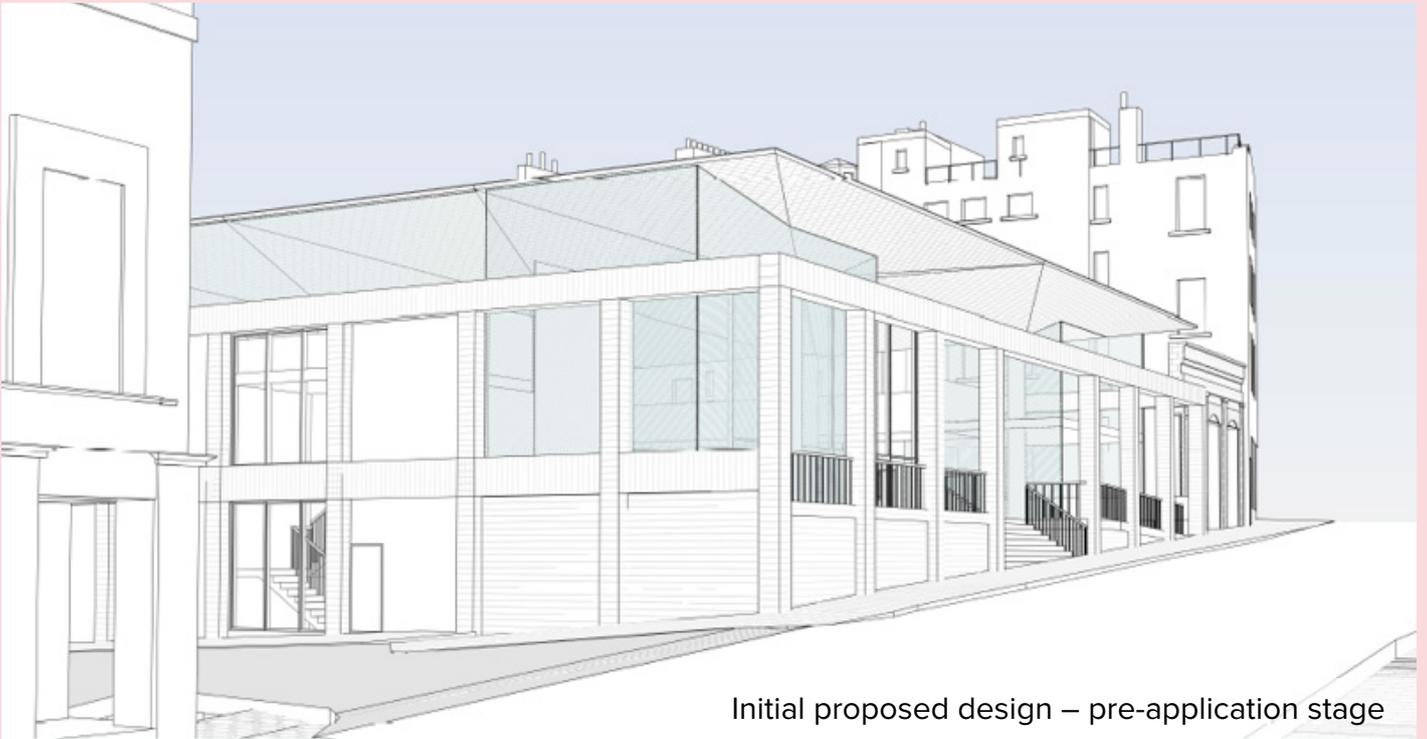
Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority planning staff
- Authority other staff
- Project design team

Overview:

The 2015 City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) identified the 1970s era Aberdeen Indoor Market and former BHS store as a significant redevelopment site and an opportunity to introduce a mix of uses, including retail, which would enhance the overall vibrancy and attractiveness of the medieval Green area of the City Centre. A key part of the opportunity was to improve the site's relationship with the surrounding streets and enhance pedestrian

connectivity between Union Street and Guild Street. The BHS store had lain vacant since 2016 and the indoor market from 2020. **Planning permission** was granted for an office-led mixed-use development in February 2021; however, it became apparent that it was unlikely to proceed due to office market conditions. The Council purchased the site and a **planning application** for redevelopment was submitted in October 2021. The proposals comprise of a contemporary indoor food hall, featuring food outlet & bars,



Initial proposed design – pre-application stage

and a semi-covered open market stall area. A key element is a new pedestrian route, including bridge, between Union Street and The Green, enhancing connectivity between important parts of the city centre, with a particularly significant potential role in linking the railway station, bus station and Union Square shopping centre to the historic heart of the city, focused on Union Street.

Given the potential catalysing role of the new development in the regeneration and transformation of the City Centre it was important to ensure that any planning matters were identified at an early stage and then

carried through to final project realisation. The Council's Planning Service was seen as a key facilitator in ensuring that the project evolved to meet key City Centre objectives and progressed without problems during the formal application stage. This was achieved through regular pre-application design workshops between Development Management and the external project architects and planning consultants appointed by the Council. The weekly workshops were typically attended by the Development Management case officer, Development Management Manager, Major Applications Team Leader and a Senior Planner



Final approved design following collaborative design development



Final approved design following collaborative design development

specialising in urban design. Crucially the first workshops were held at the concept stage, significantly earlier than the Planning Service would normally be involved in a development. The project architects and planning consultants would then report back to a wider project team including project managers and technical consultants. The limited attendees in the workshops between the Planning Service and project architects allowed for a clear focus and efficiency that would not have been possible with a larger stakeholder group.

The Development Management application case officer also attended the wider project team meetings held weekly and attended by a range of professional disciplines. This gave the Planning Service an appreciation of how the project was progressing in terms of the wider context of the City Centre Masterplan refresh that was progressing in tandem over a wider area of the City Centre, including its relationship with the proposed pedestrianisation of the immediately adjoining section of Union Street (between Market and Bridge Street).

Mindful of the dual role that the Council has in the project, as planning authority but also as developer/applicant, it was essential that an actual and clear separation was maintained between Council officers sponsoring the development and planning officers considering the application. To this end, professional planning advisors were appointed as part of the

project team to provide advice on a consultancy basis to the Council's Corporate Landlord service. It was also made clear at workshops that the attendance of planning officers was to allow pre-application advice to be provided, rather than to form part of the project team.

Goals:

To promote an open and collaborative approach between the planning service and project team to ensure that a high-profile planning application could be designed to integrate with the historic townscape whilst meet the objectives of the City Centre masterplan in term of creating linkages between key areas in the City Centre and facilitate city centre regeneration. The end result being that the application could progress through the planning process as smoothly as possible.

Outcomes:

Regular workshops with the design team allowed the planning service to help guide how the proposals developed, rather than reacting to a proposal that had already been in development for some time. The project architects provided an update on design development each week, with planning officers providing feedback. This resulted in a planning application being submitted which required no significant changes to be made and which attracted no significant objection as issues had already been addressed. For example, the images show how the Union Street elevation went through several iterations



Final approved design

and was revised to reduce the size of the canopy and to take account of the part of the structure from the previous building being retained. The images show how the Market Street and Hadden Street elevations went through several iterations and was revised to create a fully enclosed food hall which presented an active frontage to the street and a focal point at the junction.

Planning permission has been granted and demolition of the existing buildings began in

March 2022. Development Management officers will continue to work closely alongside the project team and Council colleagues to ensure the terms of planning conditions are met and that the aspirations of the project are translated into a quality development on the ground.

Name of key officers

Matthew Easton, Daniel Lewis, Scott Leitch, Nigel McDowell (Development Management Team)



Final approved Union Street elevation following design iterations and canopy reduction

CASE STUDY 4: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT



The Future of Aberdeen City Centre and the Beach



The Future of Aberdeen City Centre and the Beach

Our commitment

Aberdeen City Council is committed to ensuring that our City Centre and Beach are places that the people of Aberdeen are proud of and enjoy spending time in. We also want to make sure our city and beachfront are both attractive and enjoyable places for people to visit and invest in.

What has happened already and what is next?

The City Centre Masterplan was first approved in 2015. Since then we have made a number of achievements, including the completion of Aberdeen Art Gallery, the Music Hall, Marischal Square and Broad Street.

Over the coming months we will see completion of Provost Skene's House and the regeneration of Union Terrace Gardens.

Impact of Covid-19 and what have we learned?

Over the last year, we have gained a greater appreciation of what our city has to offer. We have also developed a better understanding of the important role that good quality public spaces can have to supporting and improving health and wellbeing. This was seen by the number of people visiting areas of the city such as the Beach during the easing of lockdown restrictions. We also had to respond to challenges presented by Covid-19 such as providing safe spaces for pedestrian movement and access to local businesses, e.g. pedestrianisation of parts of Union Street.

Runs from:
June 12, 2021
Until:
July 2, 2021

Engagement Simulator Webpage

Case Study:

The Future of Aberdeen City Centre and the Beach: Engagement Simulator

Location and Dates:

City-wide. 12 June – 2 July 2021

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

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

Key Markers:

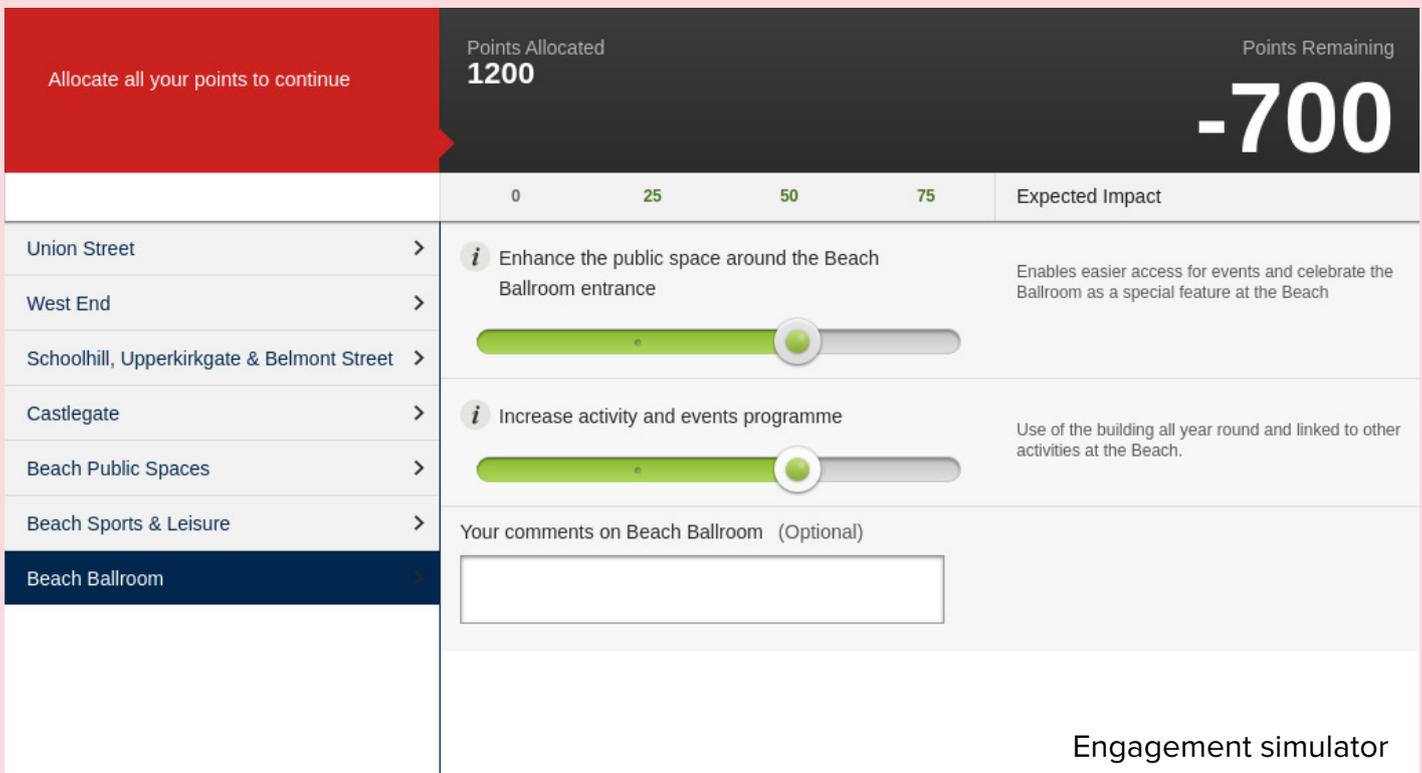
3, 6, 9, 12

Key Areas of Work

- Community Engagement
- Masterplanning

Stakeholders Involved:

- General Public
- Key Agencies



Overview:

The 2015 Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) which is a regeneration blueprint that is transforming the city centre whilst conserving its proud heritage. The goal is greater prosperity and a better quality of life for all.

In May 2021, a review of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) was approved at the Council’s City Growth and Resources Committee, and it was agreed to incorporate the area known as the Beach. Officers were instructed to undertake public consultation on a series of proposed interventions and ask what would attract people to the City Centre and the Beach. A public engagement exercise entitled “**The Future of Aberdeen City Centre and the Beach**” was carried out online in the form of a ‘simulator model’. The ‘simulator’ was developed by Council officers and hosted by Software provider ‘Delib’. This was based on the simulator’s previous use on the engagement for the Aberdeen Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

Goals:

The overall goal of the public engagement ‘simulator’ was to understand current public views and reflect the changing socio-economic context since the approval of the Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan in 2015 (now including the Beach). The ‘simulator’ model was developed

to create an engagement exercise which was both interactive and appealing to a wide range of audiences. It worked by allocating ‘points’ to a series of potential intervention areas, which in turn created a scenario where participants had to ‘rank’ intervention areas based on their relative importance. The goal of gathering this data was to help identify a list of priorities to aid all decision-making on future regeneration of the city centre and the beach.

Outcomes:

Running for 3 weeks from 12 June – 2 July 2021, the ‘simulator’ was hugely successful and returned a total of **7697 responses**. Of these responses, 2753 included “free text” in one or more of the comments boxes, which provided a wealth of suggestions for improvements alongside participants’ ranking scores. The Council’s press release advertising the ‘simulator’ was well publicised through local news and social media.

It has also been noted by Delib, the company providing the software, that this is one of the most successful exercises ever undertaken in terms of number of responses (since tracking began in 2019). The number of respondents far exceeds the generally accepted figure of approximately 2,000 required to gain a representative sample size and had the highest number of respondents on its launch day.

Rank	Intervention area	Follow up projects
1	Union Street as the Heart of the City	Union Street visioning exercise has been carried out as part of the CCMP Review.
2	Make outdoor café culture in the Belmont Street area permanent	Proposals currently being developed for a permanent café culture in the Belmont Street and Back Wynd area, and outdoor seating at the Art Gallery.
3	Focus on building maintenance and upkeep for Union Street	Officers instructed to undertake a building condition survey for all properties on Union Street, identify maintenance improvements, costs and develop an implementation plan.
4	Beach as location for a new stadium	Part of ongoing technical work related to the emerging Beach Masterplan.
5	More trees, flowers and green spaces on Union Street	Union Street visioning exercise has been carried out as part of the CCMP Review.
6	Pedestrianised central section of Union Street (Market Street to Bridge Street)	Major redesign of the streetscape of Union Street, West End, and Schoolhill/Upperkirkgate at project design stage.
7	Improve connections from the Beach to the City Centre	Part of ongoing technical work related to the emerging Beach Masterplan.
8	Remove street clutter on Union Street	Union Street visioning exercise has been carried out as part of the CCMP Review.
9	Castlegate - make more of the space	Major redesign of the streetscape of Castlegate area is at project design stage.
10	Improve connections from the City Centre to the Beach	Part of ongoing technical work related to the emerging Beach Masterplan.

The opinions raised by the public through the ‘simulator’ has ensured that all decision-making on the future of the city centre and beach regeneration is focussed on the priorities identified by participants. This has as led to several follow up projects to direct opportunities and investment in Aberdeen’s city centre and the beach (see table above).

Key demographic data gathered from the simulator highlighted that there were less than 1% of respondents in the under 18 age group, which was probably due to the timing of the consultation at the end of a challenging academic year. To address this and in the interests of continuous improvement follow-up stakeholder engagement at project level has been targeted through our schools and education networks to encourage young people to participate in designing the future of their city.

Name of key officers

Rebecca Kerr (Development Management), Martin Wyllie (Transformation and Improvement Advisor), Sandy Beattie (Queen Street Masterplan Manager)

CASE STUDY 5: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT



ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

TRANSPORT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2019

THE LOW EMISSION ZONES (EMISSION STANDARDS, EXEMPTIONS AND PENALTY CHARGES)
(SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2021

THE LOW EMISSION ZONES (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2021

Aberdeen City Council proposes to introduce a Low Emission Zone (LEZ) in Aberdeen from 30th May 2022.

QR code on Low Emission Zone letter

Case Study Title:

QR Codes

Location and Dates:

City-wide. Local Development Plan neighbour notification notices issued November 2021

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

- Quality of service and engagement
- Culture of Continuous Improvement

Key Markers:

6, 9, 12

Key Areas of Work:

- Development Management Processes
- Skills Sharing

Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:

Taking reference from the active use of QR Codes in daily life during the pandemic, and an awareness that the Transportation Strategy team within the service was using QR Codes for on-street notices for the Low Emission Zone (required as part of the statutory objection period), the Local Development Plan Team looked to utilise this technology to inform the public during the Local Development Plan process. Transport Strategy and Programmes were contacted to understand the process

required to generate QR Codes. An online QR Code generator was used, and the resulting QR Code inserted to all external communication with stakeholders, consultees and added to the public advert. The QR Code led directly to the Aberdeen Examination in Public online site of the Planning & Environmental Appeals Division website, allowing individuals to integrate and keep up to date with the progress of the Examination in Public. The use of QR Codes was discussed with Development Management colleagues who investigated the possibility of using them

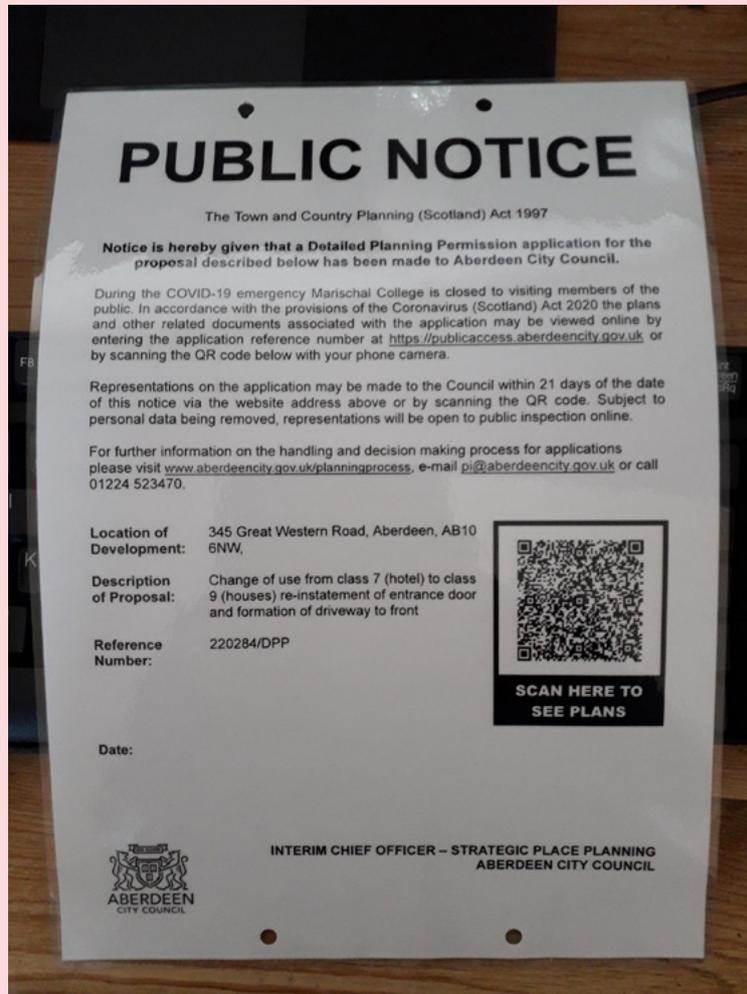
for neighbour notification notices and site notices. It was ascertained that the case work system used to process planning applications already had the ability to generate QR codes, so the templates for notices were updated to include them. When scanned the code will open the relevant planning application on the Council's online planning register, saving customers time and making the application more readily accessible.

Goals:

Finding innovative and new ways to engage with individuals, stakeholders, the general public and other interested parties is paramount to good consultation. During the pandemic this forced a reliance on virtual and paperless communication. The goal was to direct those who were interested in finding out more about the Low Emission Zone and noted planning applications to further engage in the process and, if relevant, submit comments. For the Low Emission Zone, QR codes were added to on-street notices to provide a quick method for users to find all the information they might need and how to submit an objection if they wished to do so. For the Local Development Plan, the QR Codes were used to keep consultees informed of the Local Development Plan review process.

Outcomes:

The use of QR Codes has allowed for the simple exchange of information using a piece of technology a high percentage of the population have on them at most times, the mobile phone.



Public Notice with QR code

This allows people to engage with site notices on the spot and allow them to access information relating to any future development. The use of QR Codes with the development plan process is being investigated as a way of improving the neighbour notification process for the next Local Development Plan. It is considered possible to establish a bespoke online site for this part of the development plan process, which will explain the function of the development plan before identifying the site neighbour notification has been issued for.

In terms of application sites notices, which a customer would see when out and about, the use of a QR code allows plans to be viewed on their phone faster than would be the case if they were to type in the standard web address and application reference number. This has the potential to enhance engagement with the planning process as applications are more likely to be viewed there and then whilst a customer is at the location of an application.

Name of key officers

Will Hekelaar (Senior Engineer), Donna Laing (Local Development Plan), Matthew Easton (Development Management)

CASE STUDY 6: QUALITY OF SERVICE AND ENGAGEMENT



Case Study Title:

A Guide to Planning Consents for the Aberdeen Inner-City Multis

Location and Dates:

Various sites in and around the City Centre. January 2021 - May 2022.

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

- Quality of Service and Engagement

Key Markers:

11

Key Areas of Work:

- Conservation
- Local Development Plan & Supplementary Guidance
- Process Improvement

Stakeholders Involved:

- Quality of service and engagement
- Other: Historic Environment Scotland (HES)

Overview:

On 18 January 2021 Historic Environment Scotland designated eight multi-storey blocks of flats in Aberdeen as Category A listed buildings in recognition of their architectural and historic interest of national and international significance. These concrete buildings were constructed as part of the city's post-second World War Housing programme.

In the absence of any national guidance on the topic of modern listed buildings, the Masterplanning, Design and Conservation Team initiated the preparation of a local guidance document. The aim of the **guidance document** was to provide clear answers to commonly expected questions that homeowners and other stakeholders were likely to have regarding the listing of Modern and Post-modern buildings and the need for listed building consent, and/or planning permission for works to these newly listed modern blocks.

Drafting this guide has been an innovative way of delivering a positive customer experience and service. The document adopted a user-friendly format and graphics including a simple 'traffic light' system to show how proposed works to these listed buildings would be categorised by the Planning Authority (Green, Amber and Red). It uses plain English to ensure all stakeholders have access to easily understandable and concise information.

The guidance document was informed by feedback from a carefully targeted and coordinated public consultation process involving flat owners, resident groups, local members and external organisations including Historic Environment Scotland, coupled with advice from an in-house team within MDC with professional experience of dealing with Listed Buildings.

In February 2022, following an appeal to The Scottish Government Planning and Environmental Appeals Division by Aberdeen City Council as the main owner, three of these blocks were removed from the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest and the interior of the remaining 5 blocks were also excluded from the listing description.

Subsequently, the guidance document was updated to reflect these changes and formally adopted by the Council in May 2022.

Goals:

The guidance provides clear advice on what is covered in the listing to assist officers in providing consistent advice. It also provides a user-friendly document with answers to commonly expected questions that homeowners and other stakeholders may have regarding the need for planning consents for works to these listed modern buildings.

Outcomes:

Producing this guidance document ensures consistency in decision making regarding works to the newly listed buildings and consistent, readily accessible and comprehensible advice to property owners.

Name of key officers:

Sepideh Hajisoltani (MDC Planner)
Ross Wilson (MDC Senior Planner)



Office workspace

1.3 Governance

Local Development Plan Moving Staff Within Strategic Place Planning

Volunteers from across the Strategic Place Planning service were asked to support the Local Development Plan team to summarise redacted responses to the Proposed Aberdeen Local Development Plan 2020 consultation (PM12). This was identified as a priority area, where extra resource was required. Six staff members completed virtual training, a “how to” manual was produced, and a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel was established to answer question posed, share experiences, and facilitate consistency between staff members when summarising. A member of the Local Development Plan team monitored the channel during working hours to answers questions in a timely manner. After each officer had completed five summaries feedback was given to ensure the summary was competent. Staff members helped the summary to be completed within the project timeframe and allowed non-Local Development Plan staff the opportunity to learn more about the Development Plan process and summarising of representations.

Local Development Plan Staff Development and Training

Two members of the Local Development Plan team presented two virtual training sessions to members of the Technical Team. The Technical Team are the initial point of contact for the planning service. It is paramount they have an awareness of the role of the Local Development Plan to be able to forward enquiries in a timely manner. The training session explained the function of the Local Development Plan and outlined the makeup of Strategic and Local Developments Plans, their review processes and how they influenced development in Aberdeen. The first session used the point of view of a Technical Team member and based the explanation of the Local Development Plan on the planning documents. Technical Team members are most use to dealing with planning applications. By connecting to Technical Team members existing knowledge, and by using examples of determined planning applications to link the Development Plans to planning applications through land allocations, opportunity sites and policies has enabled for greater understanding. The second session focussed on the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and highlighted the changes to the system arising from the new Act. The session allowed for a greater understanding of where the differing elements of planning fit together, and how the Technical Team fit in with this.

The Local Development Plan team were invited by the Scottish Agricultural College to present a number of lectures on the relationship between Spatial Planning and Climate Change. The two-hour virtual lecture outlined the planning system in Scotland and focussed on the important links between both strategic and local development planning and the consideration of climate change. This was followed by an extensive question and answer session and an ongoing dialogue between academic staff, students and Council Officers.

A member of the Local Development Plan team was selected to take part in the Royal Town Planning Institute's pilot mentoring programme **NURTURE**. The programme, designed to support the professional development of chartered RTPI members in the UK and Ireland, provided structured, professional mentoring for 25 RTPI's members at a 'mid-career' point and hoping to advance their professional development. The Programme was completed over a 12 month period, and involved regular meetings with a focus on career development and practical advice on leadership and strategic decision making. The outcome of the mentoring led to growth for both the mentee and mentor. It gave the mentee dedicated time to speak to an experienced and respected Chief Officer who was focussed on the mentees career development and progression. The programme has led to success and career progression for a number of the mentees and will be run again in 2022/2023.

2020-2021 saw the continuation of conveyor of the local chapter of the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Grampian chapter, for a member of the planning team. Four further staff of the planning department are chapter members. The chapter is responsible for providing professional development opportunities to its members, and highlights example of projects from the North East. Chapter members take an active role in identifying, facilitating, and participating in these development opportunities.

Community Council Training

Community Council elections were held at the end of 2021. Specialist Community Council training was given on the planning system by members of the Local Development Plan and Development Management teams. Community Council members participated in a virtual session where an overview of the purpose of the planning system was discussed before the specialist functions of development plan and development management were outlined. The development plan presentation focused on the current local development plan content and hierarchy and the changes that are proposed for the future by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. Time sensitive questions were asked relating to the Examination in Public of the local development plan, and the role community councils will have within this.

The development management presentations outlined the various types of applications received and a step by step run through of the planning process from pre-application through to appeal/review and explained the different decision levels. Legal agreements were discussed and the importance of Developer Obligations on infrastructure and public services. Training on appeals and local review bodies and overview of planning enforcement followed. Community Council involvement and responsibilities were outlined. A number of questions were asked of the presenters, with the invitation of follow up sessions given. The training gave a comprehensive overview of the planning system in Aberdeen, to both experienced and new community council members.

Legacy Review Meetings

Regular scheduled internal Legacy Review Meetings with Senior Managers have continued during the reporting period (**PM14**). These have helped to expedite and resolve problem or longstanding cases (**PM4**). It has inevitably been more difficult to clear cases at a time when applicants' and agents' attention has been understandably focused elsewhere. Nevertheless, a total of 31 legacy cases were cleared during the reporting period leaving 16 outstanding legacy cases on April 1st 2022, 8 less than at the same point last year.



Enforcement prioritisation

The public consultation exercise carried out this year as part of the revisioning of the City Centre Masterplan identified that Union Street should function as the heart of the city as a top public priority. Furthermore, the upkeep of buildings along the street itself was the third most important public issue.

Union Street is Aberdeen's principal street and is the spine of the City Centre Conservation Area. There is extensive civic interest in the protection of its amenity and character and general recognition of its importance in terms of both townscape and history. This is coupled with ongoing public and civic concern regarding the function, vibrancy, character, and amenity of the street and, specifically the lack of building maintenance due to some neglectful/absentee landlords.

With this in mind the Development Management Team has embarked on a project to prioritise and target enforcement activity along Union Street with the aim of helping to restore and regenerate the historic buildings.

An Union Street Enforcement Strategy has been devised. This strategy sets out the steps that will be taken to establish contact with owners of vacant, underused, and defective buildings and engage with them to establish project viability and timescales to try to bring these buildings back into use or improve their current condition. This is ongoing work and, so far, eight 'quick wins' and six medium term enforcement investigations have been identified. Enforcement priorities include Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme, Heritage Trust and Building at Risk priority projects and other pre-existing enforcement cases on Union Street.

Collaboration, joint working and shared services

Collaborative working is an integral part of service delivery. Examples include regular scheduled liaison meetings between the development management team and the Council's housing project delivery assets, local development plan and legal teams and the environmental policy team. Weekly

drop-in sessions have been initiated for case officers with officers from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency following the cyber-attack on SEPA computer systems (PM3). The Environment team has started a new cross-service group with the Transport Strategy and Programmes team to ensure information sharing and collaborative working between these teams.

The shared service for provision of archaeological advice delivered by the Aberdeenshire Council archaeological team has continued to operate successfully.

Processing Agreements

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

Developer Obligations

Processes and procedures have been adapted to ensure that the Developer Obligations (DO) process has continued to run as efficiently as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic as it evolved over the course of 2021 with a managed return to hybrid working during the first months of 2022. This has continued the trend from 2020/21 towards a greater use of online communication and virtual meeting technology to ensure the continuation of high-quality service delivery.

The DO Officer has responded to 94 requests for comments on planning applications, pre-application enquiries and follow-up queries during the PPF year. This represents a reduction on the previous year's figure of 125 and is lower than pre-pandemic levels 136. This reflects fewer requests for DO input on applications, which in turn is a reflection of a smaller number of applications being received where DO is applicable under the policy framework. Consultation responses have all been issued within relevant statutory timeframes or within a timeframe otherwise agreed with the planning case officer.





Aberdeen skyline

The DO Working Group, which comprises of a series of Chief Officers within Aberdeen City Council, has continued to meet on a four-week cycle using Microsoft Teams. The group is updated on all DO Assessment Reports issued in respect of live planning applications to ensure corporate awareness of the contributions being sought from new developments. The Working Group also provides a forum for discussion and decisions on proposals to allocate and spend existing DO funds, as well as providing strategic oversight and direction on other DO matters. This has enabled continued governance of the DO process and strategic decision making over the course of the last year. In turn, this has allowed planning applications to progress to determination as normal and has also ensured that funds are efficiently and effectively allocated to projects allowing relevant Council services and external delivery partners to continue to draw down and utilise DO funding to deliver enhanced infrastructure capacity and improved services to local residents (PM15).

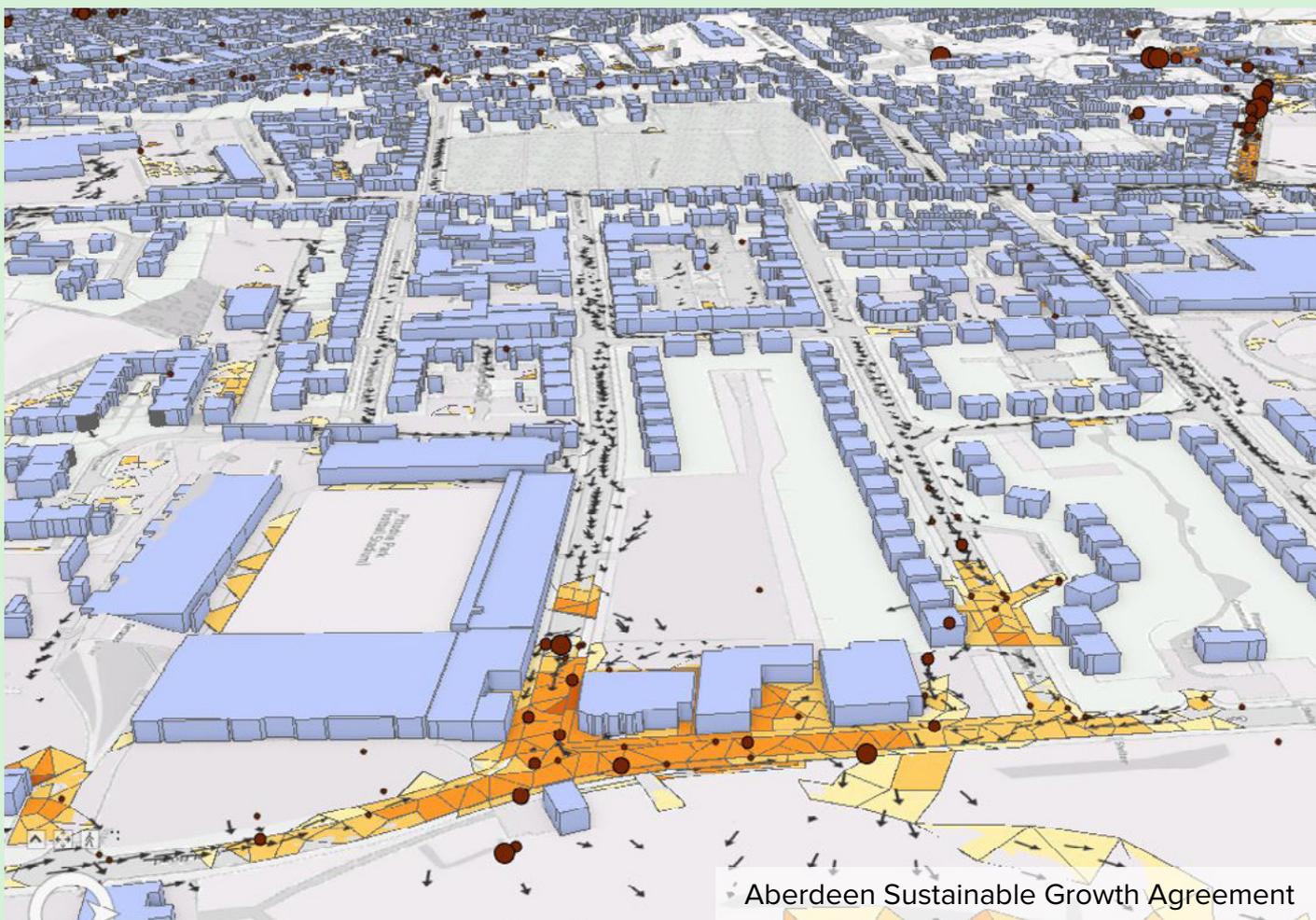
Participatory Budgeting – Environmental Projects:

Participatory Budgeting allows local people to decide how public money is spent in their communities. The Fairer Aberdeen Fund allotted £75,000 alongside £25,000 identified by the Environmental Policy team for health and wellbeing initiatives as well as other projects that aim to engage young people with nature and tackling climate change. Such projects contribute towards targets within the Council’s Local Outcome Improvement Plan whilst also supporting the aims of the Aberdeen Adapts Climate Adaptation Framework.

Environmental Implications:

In February 2022, an update to the general committee report template was approved for the addition of an Environmental Implications Section to the development management report template requiring report authors to state any positive or negative impacts on the environment arising from the report. Similarly, a section is also built into the Council’s Policy template and guidance to ensure effects on the environment are highlighted and considered when writing or refreshing a policy. A member of the Environmental Policy team sits on the Council’s internal policy group to help guide policy authors on this (PM12).

Case Study 7: Governance



Case Study Title:

Aberdeen Sustainable Growth Agreement (SGA)

Location and Dates:

City-wide. January 2021 – ongoing

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

- Governance

Performance Markers:

12

Key Areas of Work:

- Environment
- Greenspace
- Interdisciplinary Working
- Collaborative Working

Stakeholders Involved:

- Key Agencies
- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:

Over recent years there has been an increase in both the frequency and intensity of stormwater events across northeast Scotland and Aberdeen City in particular. Blue Green Infrastructure offers great potential in mitigating the impacts of such events. As a pilot project, the Local Development Plan team have been working alongside SEPA and Scottish Water as part of the 'Sustainable Growth Agreement' working group. The group focuses on:

- **The recovery of resources from wastewater**
- **Decision making to support sustainable investment decisions (One Planet Choices)**
- **Managing rainwater and wastewater drainage to help the social, economic and environmental wellbeing in adapting to changing climate**

The Local Development Plan team's role has been to offer guidance and input on what research should be undertaken, how to assess potential options, the governance mechanisms for the project and how the final outputs of the project should be used to inform future policy documents.

Goals:

The project's framing statement is:

"How can we sustainably manage the rainwater flowing to Aberdeen's drainage systems to help the city respond to climate change now and for future generations, while delivering wider benefits? And how can we work together innovatively to develop, trial and seek to deliver on this shared ambition?"

The Project's shared goals are to improve health and wellbeing, support growth, adapt to extreme rainfall improve water quality and reduce CO2 emissions. Actions are already being taken in response to the increase in extreme rainfall events and the project group will build on these actions, including flood warning and emergency response, individual property resilience and built Blue Green Infrastructure.

The collaboration has resulted in the development of a 2Di model which is an evolution from the current Integrated Catchment 1D/2D model. It models both above and below ground showing where water comes from and goes to and allows for assessment of Green Blue Infrastructure solutions. The new model allows for consideration of increased population, urban creep and increased rainfall. Modelling also allows for testing of the stormwater system to work out how much water needs to be stored in different rainfall events.

Mapping has been carried out to identify opportunities for implementing actions. Opportunities include:

- **Significant inflows in sewer network (e.g., watercourses, areas of separate sewer that connect to the combined sewer)**
- **Main / strategic overland flow paths in priority locations**
- **Blue Green Infrastructure opportunity map**
- **Sites allocated for development and masterplan sites (local development plan)**
- **Other planned work e.g. foot and cycle paths, roads projects, parks projects, etc**
- **Vacant and derelict land and urban diffuse pollution sources and impacts**

The development of options appraisals follows on from testing, opportunity mapping and identified priorities. These options will include different levels of intervention and criteria will be set out to assess the cost to benefit ratio for each option. A report will be made, and a preferred option chosen by leadership as to how it will be implemented. Implementation will need to further consider governance arrangements, resources and funding as well as how the strategy ties in with existing processes and how to support these in the design for stormwater management.

Names of key officer

Thomas Walsh (Local Development Plan)

Outcomes:



New housing at Grandhome

1.4 Culture of Continuous Improvement

This section details how the Service has progressed with the Service Improvement Commitments identified in PPF10 and highlights how we have worked to demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement over the last five years (**PM6**)

Local Development Plan Team

All members of the Local Development Plan team completed a 2 day RTPI Scotland Masterclass on “Implementing the new planning framework in Scotland”. The masterclass comprised of a review of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and focused learning on new elements and asks from the act. Attendees were asked to consider how to implement these changes, identify any areas of concern, areas of growth, and identify where additional training is needed to ensure the asks could be met. Discussion focussed on possible ways to combine asks of the Act and implement new technology to ensure staff time was managed well. Learning and best practice from the attendees was shared.

Development Management Applications Team

The Applications Team’s performance in terms of timescales for dealing with planning and other applications (**PM1**) has been affected adversely due to several factors. Most significantly the continued lack of staff capacity caused by 7.5 vacancies in the Applications Team meant high workloads for remaining case officers.

The retirement of the Planning Inspector and difficulty recruiting into the vacant post meant that all enforcement activity, posting site notices etc was taken on by the rest of the team and this additional burden was added to by a 56% increase in enforcement cases under investigation compared to the previous year.

Some officers were reallocated to deal with COVID-19 related priorities such as the Spaces for People Project and staffing the Council’s emergency business support grant helpline.

Finally, remote working has meant reduced ability for managers to actively supervise and manage staff workload and the need for more emphasis to be placed on ensuring staff wellbeing and positive morale, accommodating for those having to self-isolate and to understand the pressures of home-schooling and emergency childcare. All these factors have affected the team’s ability to deal with applications timeously with a consequent knock-on effect on determination times. Despite these difficulties the team has worked hard to minimise the impact.

The table below gives a comparative illustration of performance for the national headline indicators over the last 5 years. Whilst determination times for householder applications has slipped slightly this year, and that for non-householder applications slightly more so, performance in terms of major applications has improved. Timescales for determining major applications have been lengthened by the requirement for legal agreements, a short-staffed legal service, and delays on the applicants’ part. A benchmark comparison with the average 2021-22 timescales for all Scottish Local Authorities shows that the Council's speed of decision making is significantly better than average for major applications, slightly worse for local non-householder applications and almost identical for householder applications (see below).

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)						Scottish Average
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2021-22
Major Developments	23.1	19.9	28.1	31.4	27.6	44.6
Local Non- Householder Developments	10.2	8.1	8.6	10.6	14.9	12.2
Householder Developments	7.3	6.8	6.9	8.3	8.8	8.7

During the 2021-22 reporting year there were two major applications that took longer than a year to determine namely:

170353/PPP – Bon Accord Centre (mixed use city centre redevelopment)

201558/DPP – Leggart Brae (major residential development on Green Belt Land)

With regard to the to the Bon Accord Centre, the delay was down the length of time that the applicant took to conclude the required legal agreement. The planning service was patient in not moving to refusal on this basis given the potential significant city centre regeneration benefits of implementation. The applicant cited the difficulty of contacting all S75 signatories as a reason for the delay. This may well have been part of the explanation as the site encompasses a complex jigsaw of land ownerships. The collapse in the demand for city centre retail space, the closure of John Lewis store that lies at the heart of the development area and the COVID pandemic could also have been factors. In this context the applicant might have been quite content to delay issue of the decision document and the clock starting on the period for implementation given the slim or non-existent prospect of progressing the development in the short to medium term.

In relation to Leggart Brae, there were several lengthy periods of time during which the applicant was preparing revisions to the application to address concerns raised by the Planning Authority. These concerns were also raised at the pre-application stage but not reflected in changes in the submitted application. The proposal also straddled the Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City Council



Union Street

boundaries introducing delay when the applicant decided to adjust the proposal significantly during the process to account for potentially differing recommendations and decisions from the two Councils.

Twinning Partnership

This year Twinning meeting was with East Dunbartonshire Council and consisted of two meetings at the end of November and beginning of December, held over Microsoft Teams, with over 30 attendees. The topics discussed were extensive and included each Local Authorities views on the following:

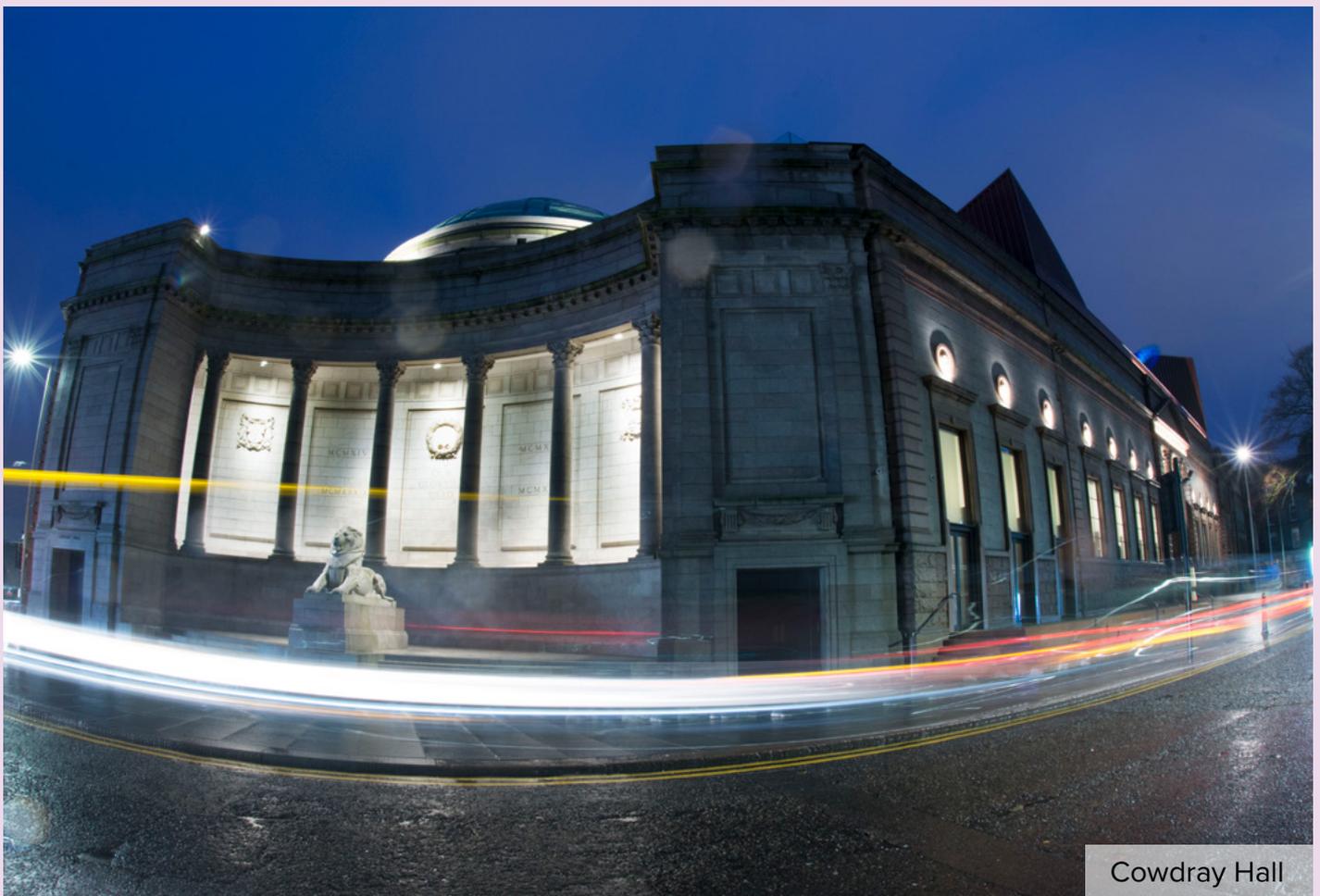
- EDC Climate Ready Clyde – adaption strategy for the region and how the risk information from this informs planning with an overview of the stakeholder conversations
- ACC Aberdeen Adapts Framework and learning from partnership working
- ACC emerging Net Zero route map, strategic infrastructure plan and energy transition
- How to work Climate Change/ Climate Adaption/ Net Zero into Planning effectively
- Food Growing Strategy/ vertical growing and integration into planning policy (including vacant land approach)
- Biodiversity enhancements (with Biodiversity Net Gain not coming in to Scotland how to seek best outcomes for biodiversity through planning)
- Major site monitoring discussion of East Dunbarton’s approach of tracking and generating a quarterly report to ensure compliance with all substantial conditions and developer obligations requirements on these applications by the specified trigger points
- Householder application issues in particular the approach to annexes (NN, site notices, validation failures, and using an Agent’s Forum as a consultation medium)
- Planning and legal agreement process and resource – (approach to legacy applications), use of a legal agreement template and issues with length of determination time
- Approach to Developer Obligations with dedicated resource in ACC which is not reflected in the same way in EDC

- Local Review Body Procedures, resource, briefing and planning board membership
- Planning Committee procedures (Scheme of delegation, motions against recommendation etc)
- Use of stop the clock, processing agreements and extensions of time
- Pre application advice procedures and charges (webform, guidance, charging for NMVs)
- LDP engagement techniques, planning guidance and look ahead to 2019 Act LSPs
- Historic Environment – ACC Draft City Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal and EDC Historic Environment Review
- Transport Policy – behaviour change, Spaces for People experiences, Active Travel Strategy
- Low and Zero Carbon Technologies and EV charging in new development – successes and challenges
- Technical Support – Use of Enterprise for internal and external reporting, workload monitoring and differences in structure and staffing levels

Environmental Policy Team

Environmental Policy Cross–Service Groups with Development Management and Local

Development Plan: the cross-service group with Development Management continues to run providing a forum for discussion on issues affecting both teams and allows possible solutions to be considered and worked on (**PM12**). Over the past year this forum has moved to virtual meetings, and this has allowed it to continue its work. During the last PPF year a similar cross-service group has been set-up with the Local Development Plan Team. Whilst working in the office the Environmental Policy and Local Development Plan Teams were physically located beside each other which naturally allowed for good information sharing and discussion on joint work between the teams. With the switch to working from home it was felt that setting up a cross-service group, meeting approximately every 6 weeks, would ensure this collaboration was not lost.



Cowdray Hall

CASE STUDY 8: CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



Team meeting

Case Study Title:

Planning Trainee to Planner Progression

Location and Dates:

Planning Service wide. September 2019 – ongoing

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

- Governance
- Culture of continuous improvement

Key Markers:

12, 13

Key Areas of Work:

- Staff Training
- Process Improvement

Stakeholders Involved:

- Authority Planning Staff

Overview:

A shortage of graduate planners in Scotland has created difficulties for recruitment and this is particularly problematic in Aberdeen which does not have a University graduate course in planning. It is a region which is remote from the central belt, which historically has been more accessible in recruiting planners from further

south in the UK, and where staff can more readily change authorities without relocating home and uprooting family.

In response to this issue, the planning service has structured its job profile and progression process to enable the service to “grow its own” staff in-house, from planning trainees to fully qualified and accredited planners.



South Silver Street and Golden Square

Goals:

To enable the planning service to tap directly into the pool of talent coming straight from university, all planner level posts within the service have been designated Planning Trainee/Planner with differing salary scales and job requirements applicable depending on the experience of the successful candidate. Upon attaining MRTPI status, trainees can progress to become Planners by way of a formal internal interview process and move onto the Planner salary scale.

Outcomes:

This approach minimises the need for iterations of the lengthy recruitment process and allows vacancies to be filled internally and at less cost in terms of salary and senior officer time. It encourages personal career development for the appointee (in progressing from 'planning trainee' role to a 'planner' role). The process is also beneficial for career development for Senior Planners who are given the opportunity to act in a "buddy" role for planning trainees, developing Senior Planners' supervisory and mentoring skills and contributing towards their own professional development.

This job structure allows the planning service to recruit from a wider and deeper pool of talent than would be the case if the search were restricted to the currently limited supply of MRTPI accredited planners. It enables appointment based on the specific experience and skills required at any point in time; acknowledging that an MRTPI qualified planner is not always required to deal competently and effectively with routine householder and less significant local applications.

The structure allows the Council to offer a varied experience to new members of staff joining the team after graduating University. During this time, they are given the opportunity to move between different planning teams within the service and encouraged to develop their skills and competencies. The foregoing, plus prospect of a salary rise upon gaining chartered membership of the RTPI, is considered effective in promoting staff retention, commitment and job satisfaction.

Name of key officers

Jemma Tasker, Daniel Lewis (Development Management)



Part 2: Supporting Evidence

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

Checklist for Part 2: Qualitative Narrative and Case Studies

The table below relates to issues covered by the 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	20, 26, 30	Interdisciplinary Working	17, 26, 30
Climate Change	42	Collaborative Working	20, 26, 33, 35, 42
Conservation	20, 35	Community Engagement	30, 35, 42
Biodiversity	42	Placemaking	30, 35, 42
Regeneration	26, 30, 35	Design Workshops/ Charrettes	26, 35, 42
Environment	17, 42	Place Standard	
Greenspace	42	Performance Monitoring	
Town Centres	17, 26, 35	Process Improvement	33, 48
Masterplanning	26, 30, 35	Project Management	26, 42
Local Development Plan & Supplementary Guidance	42	Skills Sharing	26, 48
Housing Supply		Staff Training	48
Affordable Housing		Online Systems	33
Economic Development	26	Data and Information	30, 33
Enforcement		Digital Practice	30, 33
Development Management Processes	33, 48	Transport	17
Planning Applications	26, 33, 35	Active Travel	
Other (Please Note)			

Part 3: Service Improvements

3.1 Service Improvements for 2021-22

This section summarises our progress in delivering planned Service Improvements identified in last year's PPF.

Planned Improvements	Complete
Service-Wide	
<p>Analyse and improve remote working resilience across the service as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID 19 forced many of us to change the way we worked and over the last 2 years we have learned a lot about how we can continue to deliver services, excellent customer experiences and how to make the best use of digital technology. Using the data from staff surveys, working group feedback, engagement with managers, consultation, benchmarking and research, it can be concluded that there is appetite across the organisation for greater flexibility in how work is delivered. SPP are now in a test and trial phase trying out different options of working flexibly building on our remote working resilience developed over the last 2 years, aiming to assess the impact of any changes on service delivery, customer experience, employee wellbeing and equality, diversity, and inclusion. 	Yes, and ongoing
<p>Maintain the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Accreditation Service-wide.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Place Planning (SPP) were delighted to retain the Customer Service Excellence accreditation. This year's audit was again carried out virtually. Overall, SPP have been given another two compliance plus scores moving from 14 up to 16. 	Yes
Local Development Plan Team	
<p>Undertake a lessons learned and reflection process into the successes, failures and limitations of the consultation of the Proposed Local Development Plan.</p> <p>Officers attended focused workshops to determine where improvements could improve service and efficiency. Neighbour notification letters were noted as causing confusion to the public. They were altered to differentiate from those that Development Management use to avoid ongoing issues. QR codes were added which linked directly to the relevant webpage which explained the LDP process, a storymap and consultation platform.</p> <p>The process for redaction of sensitive information and online publication of a large volume of consultation comments was deemed inefficient. In some cases combining large numbers of documents was required and these would later be separated again for submission to the Planning and Environmental Appeals Division. A number of solutions and areas for further investigation were considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don't publish redacted representations. Issues raised – external parties like reading over what others have submitted. Development Management case officers use the redacted files to see if any comments have come in on planning applications they were assessing. They cannot have access to the original as this is a breach of our GDPR. Publish the representations online, but separate them into the representation and the supporting documents. <p style="text-align: right;">Continued over/</p>	Yes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find another way to gather the representations or other system where personal info is already redacted or removed. Note: redaction exercise will still be required to ensure no other sensitive info put in the public domain – e.g. homes of protected species. • Further consideration will need to be given to the volume of representations we may receive under the new Planning Act. Only sites and local policies will be required. Should the consultation and the reporting of representations be spatially mapped and presented in that format? • There is a national programme for digital transformation – where does the national system sit, how will it help up with our next local development plan consultation. 	
<p>Establish an opensource platform on the Council’s website for planning datasets to be downloaded.</p> <p>Work on this project is still at the development stage. An officer from the team has been collating information relating to sites allocated in the Local Development Plan, sites within the Vacant and Derelict Land Survey, sites within the Housing Land Audit and sites within the Brownfield Urban Capacity Study. Staff training is due to commence this year with regards to using ArcGIS mapping systems.</p>	Ongoing
<p>Establish a post examination Storymap for the adopted Local Development Plan to improve accessibility to information for interested parties.</p> <p>As we are not in the post examination period this has yet to be actioned.</p>	Carried forward
Development Management Applications Teams	
<p>Progress the alignment of the Planning and Roads construction consenting process within the framework of Scottish Government Policy ‘Designing Streets’.</p> <p>The transfer of the Roads Development Management and Roads Construction Consent Teams from Strategic Place Planning into the Operations Directorate has yet to be fully implemented and the team does not yet have a manager to coordinate any service improvements. With that in mind it has not been possible to progress this service action due to factors outside the control of the planning service. This will be progressed, if made possible by the road service reconfiguration, in 2022-23.</p>	No
<p>Introduce any necessary changes to processes and procedures to accommodate the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019.</p> <p>No significant changes to process and procedures have been necessary this year.</p>	Yes
<p>Review the Pre-application Charging Procedure.</p> <p>As reported in last year’s PPF Charges for pre-application advice were introduced by the service in April 2021 and brought in fee income of £28,350 for the year A review of the pre-application advice service was carried out in October 2022 at which time it was decided that no significant changes were required.</p>	Yes
<p>Bring forward Elected Member training on high-quality placemaking, LRB, etc.</p> <p>In the light of Council elections in May 2022, it was decided that elected member training should wait until new members took their seats to avoid multiple training events, make sure new members were trained and avoid wasted effort in training members who were standing down. In mid-May 2022, prior to the first planning committee and local review body meetings of the new administration, a training event was held for all members in the planning process and a separate event was held for local review body processes. The LRB event was also followed by a training workshop on design and placemaking led by the Senior Planner (Urban Design). These actions fully meet the requirements of this service action.</p>	Yes

Masterplan design and Conservation Team	
<p>Offer place-based support to the post-pandemic recovery of Aberdeen City Centre.</p> <p>PPF 2020-21 outlined various place-based initiatives to balance physical distancing and maintain economic recovery. The Chief Planner's requirements for relaxations to permissions were maintained and a Governance Board continued to support applications for businesses out-door seating within the urban realm. The service coordinated the phased uplift of the parklets that were being used as extensions to enable trading and supported Aberdeen Inspired, the Business Improvement District, with quarterly briefings on progress on delivery of the City Centre Masterplan Refresh. Full Council approval was secured to proceed with the consolidation of an area of 'Café Culture' in Back Wynd, Little Belmont St and Belmont St to make permanent the out-door seating areas as well as balancing wider environmental needs. Officers continue to manage and support the progression of the City Centre regeneration to ensure that its place-based vision is maintained and that the methods of delivery are inclusive.</p>	Yes and ongoing
<p>Offer place-based support to the reimagining of Aberdeen Beachfront.</p> <p>The Beach area is one of the city's most diverse and well-used open spaces and came to the fore during the pandemic. The reimagining of the Beach area as a leisure destination including the potential for a new stadium for Aberdeen Football Club is a key part of the City Centre Masterplan refresh. A draft Development Framework has been prepared for June 2022 Full Council to outline the vision and capacity for future uses that will augment and direct investment in this crucial place. This includes draft business case for the identified first tranche of projects and their roll out including comprehensive stakeholder engagement.</p>	Yes and ongoing
<p>Finalise internal technical planning advice on City Centre Conversions to support City Centre Masterplan objective of promoting city centre living.</p> <p>A technical advice procedure and checklist for the determination of city centre conversions is now in operation. This provides best-practice advice to case officers on the conversion and subdivision of historic property to create quality residential environments whilst respecting the built heritage. The document is supportive and complementary of the City Centre masterplan vision bringing residential use back into the city centre, creating a metropolitan outlook and a living city for everyone.</p>	Yes
Environmental Policy Team	
<p>Raise awareness throughout the wider Council of the Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) process i.e., why HRA may be required, how to complete a HRA and where assistance can be sought.</p> <p>This has not been progressed this past PPF year and will therefore be carried forward to next. It was felt that during the past year while we as a Council continued to work through the COVID-19 pandemic, that awareness raising efforts around HRA as planned may have become lost. Within the Planning Service (the main area of the Council likely to require the completion of HRAs) training, awareness raising, and the production of templates and guidance has already been carried out.</p>	Yes and ongoing
<p>Set up cross service group between Environmental Policy team and Transport Strategy & Programmes team to facilitate knowledge sharing and better collaborative working.</p> <p>This group has been established and has met twice already. It has allowed for information sharing and project updates on relevant workstreams between both teams. It has also allowed for sharing of CPD opportunities and flagging relevant consultations. It is intended to continue to run this group so that these benefits can continue to be realised.</p>	Yes

3.2 Service Improvements for 2022-23

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

Planned improvements

Service-Wide

- Conclude the test and trial phase and introduce new more flexible ways of working across the service.
- Maintain the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Accreditation Service-wide.

Local Development Plan Team

- Adopt the Local Development Plan 2022, and associated Aberdeen Planning Guidance.
- Digest, and begin forward planning the next local development plan in light of the publication of National Planning Framework 4.
- In preparation of the gate check of evidence for the next local development plan investigate and develop ways to streamline / digitise the process of data capture for audits.
- Investigate how to and produce a Child Friendly Version of the Local Development Plan 2022.

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 a HRA and where assistance can be sought.
- Update Aberdeen's Habitat Mapping so that up-to-date habitat/ biodiversity data is available to best inform the planning decision making process.

Development Management Applications Teams

- Review and reconfigure as necessary the development management related planning pages of the Councils website to improve customer access
- Review and refresh the protocol on planning between Aberdeen City Council and the Community Councils
- Set up a formal monitoring process and procedure for major and significant developments in line with the requirements of the Planning (Scotland) Act

Masterplan, Design and Conservation Team

- Seek Corporate Management Team approval for the adoption of the Urban Realm Manual
- Update the Conservation Areas Management Plan (2013)
- Finalise and start to implement the Union Street Enforcement Strategy

Part 4: National Headline Indicators

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

A: NHI Key outcomes – Development Planning:

Development Planning	2021-2022	2020-2021
Local and Strategic Development Planning:		
Age of local/strategic development plan(s) at end of reporting period	5 years and 3 months	4 years and 3 months
Will the local/strategic development plan(s) be replaced by their 5th anniversary according to the current development plan scheme?	No	Yes
Has the expected date of submission of the plan to Scottish Ministers in the development plan scheme changed over the past year?	No	Yes
Were development plan scheme engagement/consultation commitments met during the year?	Yes	Yes

Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs ¹	2021-2022	2020-2021
Established housing land supply	21,085 units	21,331 units
5-year effective housing land supply programming	11,405 (7,055) units	10,675 (6,542) units
5-year effective land supply total capacity	11,405 units	10,675 units
5-year housing supply target	8,800 units	7,509 units
5-year effective housing land supply (to one decimal place)	6.5 years	7.1 years

Figures are taken from the 2020 and 2021 Housing Land Audit

Housing approvals	948 units	887 units
Housing completions over the last 5 years	4,362 units	4,949 units
Marketable employment land supply	206 ha	210 ha
Employment land take-up during reporting year	4.5 ha	0 ha

Commentary

With regard to the housing land supply, the 5-year effective supply has continued to be robustly maintained. It is anticipated that the Examination of the Proposed Local Development Plan will be concluded in Q3 of 2022.

Employment land take up has increased from last year when nothing was built out, however it remains significantly lower than the 10-year average. An ongoing oil price downturn during the reporting year has affected demand. Diversification of the employment sector has softened this impact slightly. There has been a trend towards moving from smaller townhouse offices to take up of newer grade 'A' modern and energy efficient offices. For industrial floor space, demand appears to be towards newer, smaller sites. A number of existing sites are too large and at the end of their

life cycle. The next Employment Land Audit will show the impact on demand in relation to the subsequent rise in oil prices due to geopolitical events in 2022.

B: NHI Key outcomes – Development Management:

Development Management:	2021-2022	2020-2021
Project Planning		
Percentage and number of applications subject to pre-application advice*	124 (12.8%)	73 (12.65%)
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	5 (41.6%)	5 (61.5%)
Decision Making		
Application approval rate	91.1%	94.1%
Delegation rate	95.2%	98.6%
Validation	50.1%	58%
Decision-making Timescales		
Major Developments	27.6 weeks	31.4 weeks
Local developments (non-householder)	14.9 weeks	10.6 weeks
Householder developments	8.8 weeks	8.3 weeks
Legacy Cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	31	22
Number remaining	16	24

Commentary

A general commentary on the performance figures is given in the Culture of Continuous Improvement Section and other sections earlier in this report.

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

C: Enforcement Activity

	2019-2020	2020-2021
Time since enforcement charter published / reviewed	0 months	13 months
Complaints lodged and investigated	261	191
Breaches identified – no further action taken	116	103
Cases closed	193	139
Notices served	10	7
Direct Action	0	0
Reports to Procurator Fiscal	0	0
Prosecutions	0	0

Commentary

Throughout the 2021-22 reporting period, many enforcement cases have been resolved through negotiation and discussion, without recourse to the use of formal enforcement action. In most circumstances, particularly where householders (domestic properties) are concerned, the breaches are relatively minor and may have taken place because the parties were unaware of the requirement of the need for first obtaining planning permission. The increase in this type of cases may be related to more people being based at home due to the Covid pandemic. In many cases, the submission of a planning application and eventual grant of planning permission has resolved the situation.

Outdoor seating areas have been a relevant topic, following on from the establishment of such facilities at the time of social distancing measures and the relaxation of planning controls nationally. As we have moved on from that position, enforcement investigations have been necessary to ensure the removal of unauthorised seating areas and proper consideration of those seeking to remain through a planning application.

56% of enforcement cases have been resolved without recourse to formal action being taken. 15 historic cases are still under investigation. 10 enforcement notices were served, in circumstances where negotiation was not possible, or where unauthorised developments required to be removed rather than regularised through a grant of planning permission.

An amended and updated Enforcement Charter was adopted in June 2022 (**PM5**).

Part 5: Scottish Government Official Statistics

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

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

Timescales	2021-2022 Number or %	2021-2022 Average Weeks	2020-2021 Average Weeks
Overall			
Major developments	7	27.6	31.4
Local developments (non-householder)	238	14.9	10.6
Local: less than 2 months	60.9%	6.1	6.0
Local: more than 2 months	39.1%	28.6	21.2
Householder developments	382	8.8	8.3
Local: less than 2 months	81.7%	6.8	7.0
Local: more than 2 months	18.3%	17.6	14.5
Housing Developments			
Major	6	28.1	45.9
Local housing developments	34	30.6	15.2
Local: less than 2 months	41.2%	6.0	6.3
Local: more than 2 months	58.8%	47.8	25.8
Business and Industry			
Major	0	N/A	N/A
Local business and industry developments	N/A	N/A	27.1
Local: less than 2 months	N/A	N/A	N/A
Local: more than 2 months	N/A	N/A	27.1
EIA Developments	0	N/A	N/A
Other Consents	155	10.3	10.8
Planning/legal agreements			
Major: average time	4	34.6	37.1
Local: average time	11	63.1	36.3

B: Decision-Making: Local Reviews and Appeals

		Original decision upheld			
		2021-2022		2020-21	
Type	Total number of decisions	No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	25	5	20.0%	15	57.7%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	14	6	42.9%	5	55.6%

C: Context

A general commentary on the performance figures is given in the Culture of Continuous Improvement Section earlier in this report.

The Local Review Body reversed 20 (80%) of the 25 delegated decisions that it considered in 2021-22 – slipping back from a figure of 42.3% for 2020-21. 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. In line with the service actions proposed in last year’s PPF, the opportunity has been given to provide both procedural and focussed policy-related design training in relation to consideration of LRB cases for the elected members in the new administration. It is hoped that this will result in an improvement in the proportion of reviews being dismissed in line with officer decision in the coming year.

Part 6: Workforce Information

Workforce information is a snapshot of the authorities planning staff in position on the 31st of March 2021.

	Tier 1 Chief Executive	Tier 2 Director	Tier 3 Head of Service	Tier 4 Manager
Head of Planning Service	–	–	1 (Interim)	3+2 (Interim)

Staff Age Profile	Headcount	RTPI Chartered Staff	Headcount
Under 30	5	Chartered staff	21
30-39	19	IHBC Qualified Staff	Headcount
40-49	11	IHBC staff	4
50 and over	12		

RTPI – Royal Town Planning Institute

IHBC – Institute for Historic Building Conservation

Part 7: Planning Committee Information

Committee & Site Visits	Number per year
Full council meetings	7
Planning committees	10
Area committees	N/A
Committee site visits	1
Local Review Body	12
LRB site visits	3



Appendix 1: Scottish Government Performance Summary

Performance Markers Report 2020-2021

Performance Markers Report 2021-2022 In January 2022, the Scottish Government published its official feedback on Aberdeen City's planning performance for 2021-2022, as shown in the table below. This feedback included an assessment against performance markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action. 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). One more green marker was added to last years results for Stalled sites/legacy cases.

No.	Performance Marker	RAG Rating	Comments
1	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Amber	<p>Major Applications Your timescales of 31.4 weeks are slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 41.3 weeks. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your timescales of 10.6 weeks is slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 12.4 weeks. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Householder Applications Your timescales of 8.3 weeks are slower than the previous year, the Scottish average of 8.1 weeks and the statutory timescale. RAG = Red</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
2	Processing agreements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and availability publicised on website 	Green	<p>You promote the use of processing agreements to prospective applicants. RAG = Green</p> <p>You state that processing agreements are available on your website and provided a link. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
3	Early collaboration with applicants and consultees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and clear and proportionate requests for supporting information 	Green	<p>Pre-application service has been reviewed and amended; case study provided in PPF report. RAG = Green</p> <p>You are working on a project to record the value added by the planning team and this will include during pre-application discussions. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)	Green	Your timescales for concluding legal agreements are slower than last year but faster than the Scottish average. You have processes in place to monitor progress.
5	Enforcement charter updated / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Enforcement charter updated in 2020

<p>6 Continuous improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progress/improvement in relation to PPF National Headline Indicators; and • progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report 	<p>Amber</p>	<p>Although decision making timescales are slower than last year, LDP and Enforcement Charter are up to date and the number of legacy cases has decreased. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Last year's commitments completed or ongoing and a good range of commitments identified for 2021-22. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
<p>7 Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Your LDP is less than five years old and next LDP remains on track to meet adoption targets in DPS.</p>
<p>8 Development plan scheme – next LDP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on course for adoption within 5 years of current plan(s) adoption; and • project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale 	<p>Green</p>	<p>Your LDP is due to be replaced within the required timescale. RAG = Green</p> <p>It is clear from your report that LDP preparation remains on track despite challenging context. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
<p>9 Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Evidence of elected member engagement set out in PPF report.</p>
<p>10 Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year <i>*including industry, agencies and Scottish Government</i></p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Evidence of cross sector stakeholder engagement set out in PPF report. Approach detailed in Participation Statement accompanying DPS.</p>
<p>11 Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on information required to support applications</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Your LDP remains up to date and contains a suite of associated supplementary guidance providing a land use framework for the City. Various pieces of planning and technical guidance have been reviewed, updated and/or subject to consultation.</p>
<p>12 Corporate working across services to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Your PPF report provides a number of good examples of cross-service working to inform and improve planning services. Spaces for People project provides detailed case study.</p>
<p>13 Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>Your PPF report provides several example of how the Council has engaged in sharing good practice, skills and knowledge. Active participation in HoPS, including support for various subgroups. A team member sits on the RTPi Scottish Executive Committee and contribute to Scottish Young Planners network and RTPi Grampian Chapter. PPF report provides evidence of in-house CPD events and opportunities available to staff.</p>
<p>14 Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old</p>	<p>Green</p>	<p>You have cleared 22 cases during the reporting year -almost double the figure for last year. 18 cases remain to be determined which is a decrease on last year.</p>

<p>15 Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions 	<p>Green</p>	<p>Processes are in place to ensure that procedures for securing developer obligations are efficient; these have been adapted to ensure these can continue to operate during pandemic. You have a Developer Obligations Officer who has responded to 125 requests for comments on planning applications, pre-application enquiries and follow up queries. A developer obligations working group meets monthly, to provide monitoring and ensure corporate awareness.</p> <p>LDP and supplementary guidance set out expectations for developer contributions. RAG = Green</p> <p>Expectations for developer contributions are clarified through pre-application discussions by the Developer Obligations Officer. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
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Appendix 2: Performance Marker Checklist

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

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

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

October 2021	<p>City Centre Conversions ACC Planning Service Procedural Note</p> <p>LDP officer facilitation on the contents of the draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) for policy and development management planners across Scottish Councils. These workshops formed the basis for the Head of Planning Scotland (HoPs) detailed response to the draft NPF4.</p>
October 2021 onwards	Aberdeen Heritage Lectures – a series of five virtual lectures
October 2021	Seminar on Fairtrade
November 2021	<p>Tree Preservation Orders and conservation area regulations delivered to the Technical Team</p> <p>Guest lecture slot at Scotland’s Rural College on Environmental Planning in a local authority context</p>
December 2021	workshop on the climate change plan, biodiversity learning and workplace growing.
February 2022	<p>Fairtrade collaboration with others webinar with Aberdeenshire Council.</p> <p>Net Zero Aberdeen vision - staff webinar on route map and strategies</p> <p>Aberdeen University Lecture for GIS MSc students</p>
March 2022	<p>Local Development Plan function and makeup of Strategic and Local Development Plans seminar delivered to the Technical Team</p> <p>Scottish Agricultural College lectures on spatial planning and climate change</p> <p>Kings College Lecture Net Zero Aberdeen vision and Aberdeen adapts</p> <p>Climate week workshop</p>
April 2022	Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and changes coming forward seminar delivered to the Technical Team
2020-2024	URBANOME – Aberdeen is one of the 9 living labs with Robert Gordons University this is a 4-year Horizon 2020 project, focusing on research areas related to climate, the environment and their interaction with health and wellbeing in urban settings.

