



PLANNING AND ACCESS COMMITTEE

MEETING: Monday 28th October 2019

SUBMITTED BY:	Director of Rural Development and Planning
SUBJECT:	Planning Performance Framework 8 2018/2019

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1 SUMMARY AND REASON FOR PRESENTATION

1.1 This paper provides Members with an update on our 8th annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, which was submitted to the Scottish Government in July 2019. A copy of the document is included as an Appendix to this report.

2 RECOMMENDATION

That Members:

1. **Note** the content of this report and the Planning Performance Framework 8 document as appended.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Planning Performance Framework (PPF) document is produced in July each year by the planning authority covering the work of the planning teams in Development Management and Development Planning. Its purpose is to demonstrate the continuous improvement of our planning service in the National Park Authority and is a requirement for all planning authorities in Scotland, indeed it has become a statutory requirement in the new Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. The 'Framework' approach is provided by guidance from the Heads of Planning Scotland (HoPS), so that there is a consistency in format, layout and content included across planning authorities, with a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators.

- 3.2 Feedback on the submitted PPF 8 will be provided by the Scottish Government in due course and this will be reported to the Planning & Access Committee.

4 PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 8

- 4.1 There are four overall measures against which our performance is assessed in the PPF and the report is split into four sections covering these:

- Quality of outcomes – demonstrating the added value delivered by planning;
- Quality of service and engagement;
- Governance – ensuring that our structures and processes were proportionate, effective and fit for purpose; and
- Culture of continuous improvement.

- 4.2 Each year the guidance on what is to be included in the PPF is amended by HoPS, to be flexible and to evolve as experience grows. This year changes were relatively minor:

- The Key Markers were not changed
- Clearer guidance was issued on how to report staffing and roles

- 4.3 There are six case studies in the PPF which demonstrate how each of the performance measures has been achieved in the National Park (page 4). These include the High quality tourism development at Lochgoilhead, featured on the front cover; new affordable homes in Callander; Town Centre Enhancement at Balloch; How the planning system can help deliver environmental gains; Community Action Planning and Engagement; and Continuous Improvement – Staff Training.

- 4.4 At the March 2019 Planning and Access Committee the feedback from the Scottish Government on the previous PPF was reported, including 'RAG' ratings on each section. Whilst we received no 'red' ratings this highlighted our 'amber' ratings including:

- 1) Decision making timescales: although applications were determined more quickly, they still took longer than the Scottish average
- 2) Stalled sites/legacy cases: Legacy cases are live planning applications which remain undetermined after one year. 23 cases were awaiting conclusion.

We have taken on board this feedback in developing the Service Improvements in Part 3 of the report (page 28). Part 3 also provides a summary of progress we have made on the improvement areas which were targeted from April 2018 in PPF7. Whilst three of these were completed, two were partially complete and have been carried over – Legacy cases; and Reviewing and updating planning application procedures and templates with a Service Design approach. What the new Service Improvements are in PPF8 and why they have been developed is explained below:

- 4.5 Service Improvements:

- 1) Legacy Cases - This action is carried forward from the previous year as, although two cases were cleared, 23 were awaiting conclusion. In recognising that this is a relatively high number we have set one of our service improvement commitments to: *'Further develop mechanisms to target*

and reduce the number of legacy cases running at any one time’.

- 2) Procedures – *‘Review and update planning application procedures and templates with a Service Design approach from acknowledgement of applications through to decision and appeal/review, focusing on validation, handling representations and improved notifications for committee meetings.’* This has been carried forward from last year – which specifically focussed on updating EIA procedures. This is very much part of our continuous improvement approach – reviewing and updating procedures, ensuring compliance with emerging regulations and implementing streamlining measures where possible.
- 3) Performance – Taking on board feedback from the Scottish Government we are seeking *‘to target reduction in the determination times for householder and local planning applications through improved use of ICT applications to monitor performance, in order to align more closely to the Scottish Average determination times’.* Further detail on this is set out in section 4.6 below.
- 4) Engagement – *‘Set up a mechanism for improved communication and engagement with agents by the re-establishment of an agent’s forum’.* This is to create an opportunity for feedback and dialogue with developers, which can then feed into improved procedures (2) and performance (3).
- 5) Place Based Plans – *‘Develop and trial more locally place based plans to inform the next Local Development Plan. This will involve working with two local communities to prepare Local Place Plans and work with the Strathard community and other stakeholders to prepare an integrated Rural Development and Land use Framework for Strathard.’* This was included due to the new requirement set out in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 for the planning authority to prepare local place plans.
- 6) Complaint Handling – *‘Develop a system for logging frontline complaints to help identify improvements to processes and enhance customer service.’* Again this will create an opportunity to gain feedback from customers and identify any pattern to complaints (recurring issues) which may be addressed through amended procedures.

4.6 Development Management Performance

The PPF includes a table with ‘Key Outcomes’ for Development Management (page 31). This shows an increase in the decision-making timescales from the previous year and a consistently high number of legacy cases. The contextual statement overleaf (page 32) explains the background to these figures including the impact of a number of ‘major’ and controversial applications, discharge of conditions on the Cononish gold mine planning permission, complexity of casework and some turnover of staff. Since the PPF was submitted a number of measures have been put in place to address the lengthening determination timeframes:

- a) Recruitment – we have been able to recruit two new members to our team to fill in gaps from staff leaving and being promoted. One part-time member of staff is currently on maternity cover and her replacement is full-time, so overall there has been an increase in the number of planners in the Development Management (Implementation) team to 4.5 FTE (see page 38).

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- b) Ways of working – we have had internal training sessions to explore new or different approaches to assist staff with caseload management.
- c) Refusing unacceptable development – we have increased the number of applications either withdrawn (as refusal was the likely outcome) or refused, rather than entering into long drawn out negotiations to improve development proposals to the point where they were acceptable.
- d) Implementing efficiencies in procedures – we have developed a better way of recording ‘stop-the-clock’ events where an application cannot be progressed as further information or plans are required.

4.7 It should be noted that the development management teams operate within the sensitive National Park environment where consideration of the landscape and ecological impacts is much greater than in other planning authorities and this complexity must be factored in when considering determination times. It is important to recognise that we have a professional team of dedicated planners seeking to achieve the highest possible quality development on the ground as their first and foremost outcome where at all possible rather than approving or refusing applications simply to meet a timescale deadline. One of the purposes of the Planning Performance Framework document is to demonstrate these qualitative outcomes alongside the quantitative data.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 The PPF report is a useful record highlighting some of the work of the National Park Planning Authority. It demonstrates our ongoing commitment to progress the quality of our planning service and customer experience and sets out our target improvement areas for the year ahead. It is publicly available on the National Park website:

<https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Planning-Performance-Framework-2018-19-Loch-Lomond-and-the-Trossachs-final.pdf>

List of Appendices: Appendix 1 Planning Performance Framework 8 (2018 – 2019)