

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by the Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration****Planning Committee: 17th March 2021**

Subject: Planning Performance Framework 2019-20**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** To inform the Committee of the recent comments received from the Scottish Government regarding the Planning Performance Framework submitted by this Council for 2019-20.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** That the Committee notes the content of this report and the comments received from the Scottish Government.

3. Background

- 3.1** The annual Planning Performance Framework (PPF) was submitted to the Scottish Government at the end of July 2020 and feedback was received in December 2020. The Scottish Government have assessed the Planning Performance Framework against a set of performance markers and it is seen as a measure of continuous improvement. The Performance Markers give an indication of good performance, good practice and help to identify priority areas for improvement action. This year, no peer review of the reports was undertaken in the SOLACE Groups (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) due to the pandemic although two larger benchmarking meetings of the 4 SOLACE Groups is to take place by the end of March 2021.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The PPF report outlined our performance and demonstrated our achievements, actions and improvements in 2019-20 and is contained in Appendix 1. Planning Performance Framework also included a section of how the Planning Service had reacted to the pandemic situation. The general format of the report remained around defining and measuring a high quality planning service and it was assessed through quality of outcomes, quality of service and engagement, governance and culture of continuous improvement. The report again was based on case studies in order to showcase good performance, good practice and the use of innovative ideas.
- 4.2** The Minister for Local Government, Planning and Housing Mr Kevin Stewart in the feedback report thanked planning staff for continuing to operate during

the Covid – 19 pandemic in such a difficult year. He indicated it has demonstrated how valuable planning is from ensuring that businesses can operate flexibly to the contribution that it can make to the places that are so important to our communities in terms of having access to the services they need, to greenspace and other areas where families can walk, wheel and cycle safely. On a national level, the submitted Planning Performance Frameworks indicated that good progress continues to be made by planning authorities with an increase in the number of green ratings awarded this year, with a subsequent reduction in red ratings and he was particularly pleased to see improvements in the speed of determination of major planning applications.

- 4.3** The assessment of the annual Planning Performance Framework is based on performance markers which are rated green, amber or red. These ratings are based on the evidence provided within the Planning Performance Framework reports. Where no information or insufficient evidence has been provided a 'red' marking has been allocated. This Council received 8 green performance markers, 3 amber and 2 red markers which is the same split as last year. The feedback report is contained in Appendix 2. Green performance markers were received this year for processing agreements, early collaboration with applicants and consultees, legal agreements, enforcement charter, regular and proportionate policy advice, corporate working across services, developer contributions and sharing good practice, skills and knowledge. Three Amber markings were given for continuous improvement, development plan scheme and legacy cases. The amber markings were awarded, as the Local Development Plan was out of date and will not be replaced in the next reporting period, the timescales for dealing with major applications are faster than last year however local applications were slower since last year and there were still several legacy cases to be determined. A good range of service improvement commitments were identified for the 2020-21 reporting year.
- 4.4** The two red markers were for the Local Development Plan which is 10 years old at the end of the reporting period and for decision making. The timescales for major applications was 14.8 weeks which is faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 33.5 weeks. Householder applications timescales were 12.7 weeks slower than the previous year and slower than the Scottish average of 7.3 weeks. For local development the timescale was 16 weeks slower than the Scottish average of 10.9 weeks. The Development Management Team is a small team and there were staffing issues within the central administrative support leading to delays in applications being registered and validated within this reporting period. There were staff shortages including a Lead Planning Officer vacancies and a Planning Officer vacancy. The circumstances with administrative support and staffing together with a high volume of case work, contribute to delays in the determination of applications at householder and local level with resources at that time focused on the major and large regeneration applications. Administrative issues and staffing at Lead officer level were addressed by January 2020 so we are now seeing much better improvement in performance for local and householder development.

- 4.5** A peer review was to take place with East Dunbartonshire Council – the SOLACE Benchmarking partners identified this year. It has not been possible to arrange this peer review in the current circumstances but it is hoped that this review can be arranged later in the year.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no personnel issues associated with this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** None.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1** There are no risk issues.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1** It is not considered that the report or recommendations raise any equalities issues.

- 8.2** None.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** No consultation was necessary for the preparation of this report.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The content of this report fully supports the Council's Strategic Priorities.

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Date: 17th March 2021

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Appendices: Appendix 1: Planning Performance Framework 2019-20
Appendix 2: Performance Markers Report 2019-20

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All