

## **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **Report by the Executive Director of Infrastructure and Regeneration**

**Planning Committee: 26 February 2014**

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#### **Subject: Planning Performance Framework 2012/13**

#### **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 2012/13.

#### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Committee notes the content of this report and agrees the implementation of the improvement plan contained in Appendix 3.

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1** A new planning performance framework was introduced in 2012 by the Scottish Government. The framework was seen as a balanced measurement of the overall quality of the planning service which would be used as a vehicle to drive continuous improvement. The first Planning Performance Frameworks were submitted at the end of September 2012 by all planning authorities and a report was submitted to the August 2013 Planning Committee following feedback received from the Scottish Government. The feedback was very favourable on our first Planning Performance Framework, indicating that a very positive report was produced which showed a shift towards a planning reform and performance culture supported by evidence provided by customers. It welcomed the commitment made to continuous assessment and improvement. The format of the report was seen to make for a very clear read of how changing behaviours are influencing outcomes and service quality.

#### **4. Main Issues**

- 4.1** The Council's second Planning Performance Framework was submitted at the end of September 2013. It outlined our performance and demonstrated our achievements, actions and improvements in 2012/13. It also addresses the commitments and actions we agreed to address in the previous planning performance framework together with the service improvements proposed for 2013/14. The Planning Performance Framework is contained in Appendix 1. The Framework has again been centred around key themes such as national headline indicators, defining and measuring a high quality Planning Service, identifying high quality development on the ground, certainty and communications, engagement and customer service, efficient and effective

decision making, effective management structures, financial management and local governance and a culture of continuous improvement.

- 4.2** The National Headline Indicators addressed the age of the local development plan, and whether the development plan scheme was on track; an effective housing and employment land supply; the percentage of applications subject to pre-application advice; the number of major applications subject to processing agreements; the delegation and application approval rates; and timescales for decisions measured on average number of weeks to decision. The themes of the Planning Performance Framework are centred on identifying outcomes for each measure of a high quality service as an assessment of their effectiveness. Key initiatives and projects were identified to demonstrate a quality planning service such as the developers protocol, regular liaison meetings with the Roads Service, Asset Management and Regeneration Services, the review of legal obligations, the Planning and Building Standards website and benchmarking. The Lomondgate development, the new Council housing developments and the new Dumbarton Academy were given as examples of high quality development on the ground. This was supported by customer feedback from developers and other parties involved in the process.
- 4.3** The Scottish Government feedback again was favourable and indicated an informative, positive and well written report which provided a strong emphasis on collaborative working, customer service and efficiency. They believed that it supports a strong commitment to decision making timescales and the provision of an open for business culture envisaged through planning reform and the Planning Performance Framework. The inclusion of feedback from customers was particularly welcomed alongside useful examples and a thorough description of the actions and initiatives that have been taken forward in the reporting year. It indicated that it was important that our Local Development Plan is project managed and remains on course for adoption within the statutory 5 year timescale. The decision making timescales were again favourable when compared to national figures and good progress was being made to reduce the average timescales for major developments, and householder developments. The high approval rate provided evidence of a service that is committed to working with applicants to negotiate improvements and secure better outcomes. Although our delegation rate was below the national figure they noted that the scheme of delegation was to be updated, following legislative changes regarding Council interest applications.
- 4.4** The Scottish Government stated that the section of the report on defining and measuring a high quality planning service was again very well structured and provided a clear indication under each of the headings to support our commitment to a service culture and continuous improvement. The inclusion of informative descriptions of progress made during the reporting year and feedback from customers helps demonstrate how this has been put into practice. There was good evidence of a service that is committed to collaborative working with internal council services through regular internal meetings, protocols and pre-application engagement. It was also recognised that there were effective arrangements in place for efficient decision making

and this was supported by a close working relationship with elected members.

- 4.5** This year the feedback included a Performance Markers Report which assessed the submitted Performance Planning Framework against agreed markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action. The performance markers such as decision making, processing agreements, early collaboration, etc. were rated red, amber or green. In terms of the performance markers the majority of our rates were either green or amber (6 green and 6 amber) with only one red received for the Enforcement Charter as at the time of submitting the Planning Performance Framework it had not been agreed by the Planning Committee. Where areas have been suggested for further improvement or further work is required an improvement plan has been produced which is contained within Appendix 3 and it will be taken forward in the Planning Performance Framework for 2013/14.

**5. People Implications**

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

**6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1** None

**7. Risk Analysis**

- 7.1** There are no risks associated with this report.

**8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)**

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

**9. Consultation**

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

**10. Strategic Assessment**

- 10.1** The content of this report supports the Council strategic priorities.

**Richard Cairns**

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**Date: 5 February 2014**

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**Appendices:** Appendix 1: Planning Performance Framework 2012/13  
Appendix 2: Feedback Report from the Scottish  
Government  
Appendix 3: Improvement Plan

**Background Papers:** None

**Wards Affected:** All