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Joyce White
Chief Executive
West Dunbartonshire Council

14 December 2020

Dear Joyce,

PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK FEEDBACK 2019-20

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's ninth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, for the period April 2019 to March 2020.

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for enabling planning services to continue to operate during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been a difficult year for so many, and our planning system has a vital role to play in Scotland's green recovery. The impact which the pandemic has had, 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 for 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.

Turning to the 2019-20 PPF reporting year, I believe that good progress continues to be made by Scotland's planning authorities. Overall, there has been an increase in the number of green ratings awarded this year, with a subsequent reduction in red ratings, however, there remains some variation across some authorities and markers. I have been particularly pleased to see improvements in the speed of determination of major planning applications in some authorities.

When I wrote about performance reporting last year, I indicated that a consultation on Planning Performance and Fees was underway, including preparations for the new performance arrangements being introduced through the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019; with our intention at that time being that the proposed changes would be implemented in Summer 2020. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has required a rethink about the timing and a wider reprioritisation of our work programme.

I would like to reassure you that, while we have paused the changes to the fees and performance legislation, I am committed to ensuring that planning authorities are properly resourced and that planning fee levels are proportionate. We will pick this up again when the timing is more appropriate.



Finally, although the Covid-19 pandemic will have impacted on the tail end of the 2019-20 reporting year, I appreciate the impacts on service delivery will show through more in the 2020-21 reporting year. The Planning statistics for the first 6 months of the reporting year are due to be published in January, which will provide the first indications of how the pandemic has affected the ability of authorities to determine applications. I would like to reassure you that I will consider, in liaison with the High Level Group on Planning Performance, how next year's reports will be assessed, so that authorities are not unfairly criticised due to circumstances outwith their control. It could also provide an opportunity to recognise the vital actions taken by planning authorities to maintain the planning system and its contribution to recovery.

If you would like to discuss any of the markings awarded below, please email chief.planner@gov.scot and a member of the team will be happy to discuss these with you.

Yours sincerely



KEVIN STEWART

CC: Pamela Clifford

PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2019-20

Name of planning authority: **West Dunbartonshire Council**

The High Level Group on Performance agreed a set of performance markers. We have assessed your report against those markers to give an indication of priority areas for improvement action. The high level group will monitor and evaluate how the key markers have been reported and the value which they have added.

The Red, Amber, Green ratings are based on the evidence provided within the PPF reports. Where no information or insufficient evidence has been provided, a 'red' marking has been allocated.

No.	Performance Marker	RAG rating	Comments
1	Decision-making: continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Red	<p>Major Applications Your average timescale of 14.8 weeks is faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 33.5 weeks. RAG = Green</p> <p>Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your average timescale of 16.0 weeks is slower than the previous year and slower than the Scottish average of 10.9 weeks. RAG = Red</p> <p>Householder Applications Your average timescale of 12.7 weeks is slower than the previous year and slower than the Scottish average of 7.3 weeks. RAG = Red</p> <p>Overall RAG = Red</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>Processing agreements are offered for all applications for major development and important local development. RAG = Green</p> <p>Processing agreement information is available through your website. 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>You provide a pre-application advice service which is promoted through the website and have a protocol in place. RAG = Green</p> <p>You provide case study evidence to demonstrate how requests for supporting information are clear and proportionate to the applicant. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>
4	Legal agreements: conclude (or reconsider) applications after resolving to grant permission	Green	Your report states that no applications with legal agreements were determined during the reporting period. However, the

	reducing number of live applications more than 6 months after resolution to grant (from last reporting period)		annual statistics show that one application was determined in 27.4 weeks which is faster than the Scottish average.
5	Enforcement charter updated / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was 20 months old at the end of the reporting period.
6	Continuous improvement: <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 	Amber	<p>Your LDP is out of date and will not be replaced in the required timescale however, your enforcement charter is up to date. Timescales for dealing with major applications are faster than last year however, local applications have slowed since last year and you have only made limited progress with legacy cases.</p> <p>RAG = Red</p> <p>You have completed 5 out of 21 of your improvement commitments with the majority remaining to be completed over the next reporting year. You have identified a range of commitments for the next reporting year.</p> <p>RAG = Amber</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
7	Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption	Red	Your LDP was 10 years old at the end of the reporting period. It is noted that you have commenced preparation of a new plan.
8	Development plan scheme – next LDP: <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 	Amber	<p>Your next LDP is not on track for adoption within the five year cycle.</p> <p>RAG = Red</p> <p>Your report states that your LDP was being submitted to the planning committee for adoption in August 2020.</p> <p>RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i>	N/A	
10	Cross sector stakeholders* engaged early (pre-MIR) in development plan preparation – <i>if plan has been at pre-MIR stage during reporting year</i> <i>*including industry, agencies and Scottish Government</i>	N/A	
11	Regular and proportionate policy advice produced on information required to support applications.	Green	You have commenced preparation of supplementary guidance with consultation expected on Creating Places and Green Networks and Infrastructure to be undertaken in Autumn 2020 with other consultation on SPG to follow.
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)	Green	Your report shows how several protocols have been written for customer facing aspects of development management. You have provided some good case studies to demonstrate how you work with other council services.
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge between authorities	Green	Your report identifies working with other local authorities through benchmarking groups and your case studies on the Antonine Wall project and the Community Led Action Plans/Local Place Plans Benchmarking Group

14	Stalled sites / legacy cases: conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Amber	You have cleared 4 cases during the reporting year, with 8 cases still awaiting conclusion. We note that you are in contact with the applicants and look forward to further progress.
15	Developer contributions: clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and • in pre-application discussions 	Green	<p>Developer contributions are set out in relation to green network. LDP2 contains policy which will be applied proportionately. RAG = Green</p> <p>Case studies demonstrate how requests are discussed early in the application process. RAG = Green</p> <p>Overall RAG = Green</p>

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL
Performance against Key Markers

Marker		12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20
1	Decision making timescales								
2	Processing agreements								
3	Early collaboration								
4	Legal agreements								
5	Enforcement charter								
6	Continuous improvement								
7	Local development plan								
8	Development plan scheme								
9	Elected members engaged early (pre-MIR)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A
10	Stakeholders engaged early (pre-MIR)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A			N/A	N/A
11	Regular and proportionate advice to support applications								
12	Corporate working across services								
13	Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge								
14	Stalled sites/legacy cases								
15	Developer contributions								

Overall Markings (total numbers for red, amber and green)

2012-13	1	6	6
2013-14	1	2	10
2014-15	2	2	9
2015-16	1	5	7
2016-17	1	4	10
2017-18	1	5	9
2018-19	2	3	8
2019-20	2	3	8

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)

	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	2019-20 Scottish Average
Major Development	19.2	32.4	19.8	24.6	23.4	18.3	28.5	14.8	33.5
Local (Non-Householder) Development	12.3	15.2	10.5	10.7	10.0	11.8	14.4	16.0	10.9
Householder Development	7.3	7.5	6.8	7.3	6.8	7.0	8.6	12.7	7.3