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Peter Hessett  
Chief Executive  
West Dunbartonshire Council

22 December 2022

Dear Peter Hessett

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's eleventh Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, for the period April 2021 to March 2022.

The reporting period which these reports cover has continued to present challenges for people working within planning, in the development sector and across Scotland's communities.

Ensuring the system is appropriately resourced is key to improving the performance of planning, which is why in April I implemented the biggest change to planning fees in 8 years, with fees for most types of development increasing by between 25% and 50%. At the time I said I would expect to see this additional money invested in delivering improvements in Planning Services. It is too early to know whether that has occurred, however, I have heard positive feedback from some authorities who have managed to recruit or retain staff as a result of the additional income. I also committed to working with Heads of Planning and COSLA to identify how we could move planning fees closer to covering the full cost of their determination. That work is ongoing and I expect to receive some conclusions/recommendations early in the new year.

I am also encouraged to see the fees for applications made under the Electricity Act also increasing on 13<sup>th</sup> December and the voluntary contribution of 50% of the fee, for certain types of application, being passed to planning authorities being maintained.

However, I recognise that resourcing is about more than just money and having a pipeline of knowledgeable and skilled planners is essential to delivering on our ambitions set out in NPF4. This is why I supported the RTP1 and Heads of Planning Scotland's Future Planners Project which looked at proposals to help increase the numbers of people entering the planning profession. We recognise the importance of delivering on this vision and the resourcing and skills challenges for planning authorities, which we are taking steps to address.

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Work is also progressing on

- the introduction of mandatory training for elected members in the planning system;
- the implementation of statutory annual reports by planning authorities; and
- the appointment of a Planning Improvement Coordinator for Scotland.

Turning to the 2021-22 PPF reporting year, although, as expected, there have been some minor changes overall in the markings awarded, the figures indicate that performance has remained relatively stable. This is a testament to the hard work and flexibility of authorities during challenging times and I believe that overall, good progress continues to be made by Scotland's planning authorities.

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



**TOM ARTHUR**

**CC: Pamela Clifford, Planning, Building Standards and Environmental Health Manager**

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## PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2021-22

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	<b>Decision-making:</b> continuous reduction of average timescales for all development categories [Q1 - Q4]	Green	<p><b>Major Applications</b> Your average timescale of 9.6 weeks is faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 44.6 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Local (Non-Householder) Applications</b> Your average timescale of 13.0 weeks is slower than the previous year but faster than the Scottish average of 13.5 weeks. <b>RAG = Amber</b></p> <p><b>Householder Applications</b> Your average timescale of 8.6 weeks is faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 8.7 weeks. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
2	<p><b>Processing agreements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>offer to all prospective applicants for major development planning applications; and</li> <li>availability publicised on website</li> </ul>	Green	<p>Processing agreements are offered for all applications for major development and important local development. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>Processing agreement information is available through your website. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
3	<p><b>Early collaboration</b> with applicants and consultees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>availability and promotion of pre-application discussions for all prospective applications; and</li> <li>clear and proportionate requests for supporting information</li> </ul>	Green	<p>You provide a pre-application advice service which is promoted through the website and have a protocol in place. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>You provide case study evidence to demonstrate how requests for supporting information are clear and proportionate to the applicant. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p><b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>
4	<b>Legal agreements:</b> 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 report states that no applications with legal agreements were determined during the reporting period.
5	<b>Enforcement charter</b> updated / re-published within last 2 years	Green	Your enforcement charter was 1 year and 6 months old at the end of the reporting period.

6	<b>Continuous improvement:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>progress ambitious and relevant service improvement commitments identified through PPF report</li> </ul>	Green	You have completed 5 out of your 23 improvement commitments with 17 ongoing and 2 still to progress. Although the majority of your commitments are still ongoing, you did set out a wide range. 21 of your improvement commitments with the majority remaining to be completed over the next reporting year. You have identified 10 commitments for the following year as well as outlined other projects that are continuing.
7	<b>Local development plan</b> less than 5 years since adoption	Red	Your LDP was 12 years old at the end of the reporting period. It is noted that you have commenced preparation of a new plan.
8	<b>Development plan scheme</b> – next LDP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>project planned and expected to be delivered to planned timescale</li> </ul>	Green	Your report states that your LDP is meeting the timescales as set out in your most recent Development Plan Scheme which was approved by committee in September 2020. The Council is waiting for the publication of the finalised Guidance on LDP before publishing.
9 & 10	<b>LDP Engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>stakeholders including Elected Members, industry, agencies, the public and Scottish Government are engaged appropriately through all key stages of development plan preparation.</li> </ul>	Green	During the preparation of the LDP, all stakeholders were engaged throughout the process
11	<b>Policy Advice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Production of relevant and up to date policy advice</li> </ul>	Green	You have adopted Supplementary Guidance on Green Network/Green Infrastructure as well as Creating Places Guidance during the reporting period.
12	<b>Corporate working across services</b> to improve outputs and services for customer benefit (for example: protocols; joined-up services; single contact arrangements; joint pre-application advice)	Green	You have provided some good case studies to demonstrate how you work with other council services including the Cross-Service group (Planning, Regeneration and Asset Management) being re-established which aims to discuss regularly progress and issues relating to the Councils regeneration priorities in town centres and along the waterfront. Other examples included working closely with housing colleagues and setting Levelling Up Project Board.
13	<b>Sharing good practice, skills and knowledge</b> between authorities	Green	Your report identifies working with other local authorities through benchmarking groups, ClydePlan and Glasgow and Clyde Valley Housing Market Partnership which cover the 8 local authorities within the Glasgow Region.
14	<b>Stalled sites / legacy cases:</b> conclusion or withdrawal of old planning applications and reducing number of live applications more than one year old	Green	You have cleared 5 cases during the reporting year, with 7 cases still awaiting conclusion. This is a slight decrease by 1 case from the previous year.
15	<b>Developer contributions:</b> clear and proportionate expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>set out in development plan (and/or emerging plan); and</li> <li>in pre-application discussions</li> </ul>	Green	<p>Developer contributions are set out in relation to green network. LDP2 contains policy which will be applied proportionately. <b>RAG = Green</b></p> <p>Case studies demonstrate how requests are discussed early in the application process. <b>RAG = Green</b> <b>Overall RAG = Green</b></p>

**WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**  
**Performance against Key Markers**

Marker		13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22
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)**

<b>2012-13</b>	1	6	6
<b>2013-14</b>	1	2	10
<b>2014-15</b>	2	2	9
<b>2015-16</b>	1	5	7
<b>2016-17</b>	1	4	10
<b>2017-18</b>	1	5	9
<b>2018-19</b>	2	3	8
<b>2019-20</b>	2	3	8
<b>2020-21</b>	1	3	9
<b>2021-22</b>	1	0	13

**Decision Making Timescales (weeks)**

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	2021-22 Scottish Average
Major Development	32.4	19.8	24.6	23.4	18.3	28.5	14.8	11.2	9.6	44.6
Local (Non-Householder) Development	15.2	10.5	10.7	10.0	11.8	14.4	16.0	12.6	13.0	13.5
Householder Development	7.5	6.8	7.3	6.8	7.0	8.6	12.7	9.6	8.6	8.7