

Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community
Wealth
Tom Arthur MSP



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Joyce White
West Dunbartonshire Council

29 November 2021

Dear Joyce White

I am pleased to enclose feedback on your authority's tenth Planning Performance Framework (PPF) Report, for the period April 2020 to March 2021.

This is the first time I have written to you individually in my capacity as Planning Minister since my appointment earlier this year. I am very grateful for the support and welcome I have received and look forward to working with you.

This year has continued to present challenges for people working within planning, in the development sector and across Scotland's communities. We know people are doing the best they can to engage and operate, sometimes in ways and circumstances that may not be ideal, and with many still predominantly working from home. I appreciate that many of you will have had to make difficult choices in what work is prioritised, in much the same way the Government and Planning and Architecture Division has had to. However, we should all be very proud of how planning has responded to the coronavirus pandemic, adjusting as necessary to keep going and supporting recovery. I want to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for all the work that has been done during the pandemic and to support our ongoing recovery.

When my predecessor wrote to you last year he indicated that the pandemic had required a rethink about the timing and prioritisation of our planning work programme. A number of our workstreams were paused or delayed as a result, including the review of the planning performance and fee regimes, which had been the subject of a detailed consultation that concluded in early 2020. However, in October 2021 we published a revised planning implementation programme (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/transforming-planning-practice-updated-planning->

[reform-implementation-programme/](#)). You will note that we have now recommenced our planning performance and fees review, which reflects the importance Scottish Government attaches to this work. We are currently finalising proposals and intend to lay regulations before the end of the year to introduce increased fees, providing a boost to planning authorities' resources. We also intend to commence the recruitment of the National Planning Improvement Coordinator early in 2022.

Turning to the 2020-21 PPF reporting year, although, as expected, there have been some small 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 these very difficult 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 and a member of the team will be happy to discuss these with you.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Arthur', written in a cursive style.

Tom Arthur

Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth

CC: Pamela Clifford

PERFORMANCE MARKERS REPORT 2020-21

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]	Amber	<p>Major Applications Your average timescale of 11.2 weeks is faster than the previous year and faster than the Scottish average of 41.3 weeks. RAG = Green</p> <p>Local (Non-Householder) Applications Your average timescale of 12.6 weeks is faster than the previous year but is slower than the Scottish average of 12.4 weeks. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Householder Applications Your average timescale of 9.6 weeks is faster than the previous year but is slower than the Scottish average of 8.1 weeks. RAG = Amber</p> <p>Overall RAG = Amber</p>
2	<p>Processing agreements:</p> <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	<p>Early collaboration with applicants and consultees</p> <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 Replaced in November 2020 meaning it was 4 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	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 all applications are faster than last year and you made some progress with legacy cases. RAG = Amber 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. RAG = Amber Overall RAG = Amber
7	Local development plan less than 5 years since adoption	Red	Your LDP was 11 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	Your next LDP is not on track for adoption within the five year cycle. RAG = Red Your report states that your LDP is meeting the timescales as set out in your Development Plan Scheme which was approved by committee in September 2020. Overall RAG = Green
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 2021 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	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, HOPS 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	Green	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	Developer contributions are set out in relation to green network. LDP2 contains policy which will be applied proportionately. RAG = Green Case studies demonstrate how requests are discussed early in the application process. RAG = Green Overall RAG = Green

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL
Performance against Key Markers

Marker		13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21
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
2020-21	1	3	9

Decision Making Timescales (weeks)

	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	2020-21 Scottish Average
Major Development	32.4	19.8	24.6	23.4	18.3	28.5	14.8	11.2	41.3
Local (Non-Householder) Development	15.2	10.5	10.7	10.0	11.8	14.4	16.0	12.6	12.4
Householder Development	7.5	6.8	7.3	6.8	7.0	8.6	12.7	9.6	8.1