

**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL**  
**Scrutiny and Performance Committee**

**11 December 2023**

**PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 12 (2022-23)**

**Report by Strategic Lead – Economy, Planning and Development**  
(Report No. 23/369)

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This report relates to the Perth and Kinross Planning Performance Framework 12 (2022-23) (PPF12). A PPF is required to be submitted to the Scottish Government annually. PPF12 (Appendix 1) provides an overview of performance statistics and evidence of continuous improvement for the Planning Service. The PPF was submitted in August 2023 and is published on the Heads of Planning Scotland website: [Planning Performance Framework – HOPS \(hopsotland.org.uk\)](https://www.hopsotland.org.uk). This may be the final PPF in the current format, with a new style of report under consideration by the Scottish Government, with more emphasis on qualitative outputs and outcomes.
- 1.2 Formal feedback on PPF12 was received from Joe Fitzpatrick, the Minister for Local Government Empowerment and Planning on 20 October 2023 (Appendix 2) - a summary of which is set out in paragraphs 4.2 - 4.3 below.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- i) Discusses and notes the appended Planning Performance Framework;
  - ii) Considers and makes suggestions in relation to service improvements to be included in PPF13, or its successor

**3. STRUCTURE OF REPORT**

- 3.1 This report is structured over the following sections:
- Section 4: Background/Main Issues
  - Section 5: Key Findings
  - Section 6: Conclusion
  - Appendices

**4. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES**

- 4.1 The purpose of the Planning Performance Framework (PPF) is to show how the Council as a Planning Authority is working to deliver a high-quality

planning service: how it has performed against nationally agreed key indicators, and what improvement actions will be taken. The PPF therefore looks back on the previous year's performance and forward in terms of future actions.

- 4.2 Ministerial performance feedback received on 20 October 2023 notes that resourcing the planning system remains a key priority for discussion with the High Level Group on Planning Performance. It highlights the importance of identifying solutions that work for all sectors and advises of the intention to bring different parties together to discuss a variety of issues, including: full cost recovery, the local setting of fees, charges for additional services and approaches which could enable authorities to access the skills and expertise at the time they require. It advises that a National Planning Improvement Champion was appointed in September and this role will play a pivotal role in supporting improvement and looking at how it will be measured, assessed and improved in the future. It is noted that overall, the level of performance across the country remains stable and that planning authorities continue to put in considerable efforts to ensure the planning system runs efficiently.
- 4.3 In terms of the Ministerial performance feedback related to Perth and Kinross, of the 15 performance indicators, rated on a Red/Amber/Green basis, one is marked Red, two are marked Amber, with the remaining twelve being Green. This significant level of green ratings (80%) against performance markers recognises the high level of performance within Perth and Kinross's Planning Services. The Red rating relates to the fact that the Enforcement Charter was not reviewed by January 2023 thus not within the required 2 year cycle. This was due to capacity constraints as highlighted in paras 5.5 & 5.6 below. This was a concipous choice, with efforts focused on statutory required functions and recognising that Enforcement is a discretionary power and also that the update to the Charter is unlikely to see any significant change in approach. However, this 'Red' marker will not carry forward to PPF13 or its equivalent, with the review programmed to be completed by the end of 2023. The first amber relates to planning application decision timelines, and notes that average decision making timescales were slower than the previous year, but both 'Householder' and 'Local' applications processed quicker than the Scottish average. However, due to the determination of a number of 'Major' applications which had been with us for well over 12 months, known as 'Legacy Cases' the average period for this application type has significantly increased and exceeds the Scottish average. It is anticipated that these figures, particularly in relation to '@major' applications is a short term blip in an overall improving picture.

The second amber relates to stalled sites/legacy cases and notes that 17 cases have been cleared during the reporting period, slightly less than the 20 cleared during the previous reporting period. The number of cases remaining has risen slightly from 20 to 21. The importance of clearing Legacy cases is recognised and significant efforts are being made to move to a decision on many of these, however the influencing factors are complex and also require collaboration and agreement on the approach from many parties – a very complex process. Regular review of Legacy cases is undertaken, with a

purpose of progressing by removing any blockages or agreeing an overall position – particularly where there is not an overall alignment across the interests.

## 5. KEY FINDINGS

- 5.1 PPF12 reflects on the period between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 and focuses on engagement and collaboration both internally and externally to improve procedures and outcomes. The case studies in Part 1 (pages 4-16) evidence this, providing examples of what has been achieved and the quality of outcomes.
- 5.2 This includes ongoing early engagement and evidence gathering for the next Local Development Plan, case studies reflecting on recent developments and monitoring the quality of outcomes on the ground.
- 5.3 The latter (Case Study 3) pilots a more comprehensive approach to looking at quality than previously used and has been included to highlight the benefit of sharing examples of good and not so good practice as suggested by members when considering the previous report (23/28 refers). A random sample of half of the housing developments identified as completed in the most recent available Housing Land Audit (2022) were assessed. The assessment used two deliberately simple questions designed to identify useful learning points. Due to the random nature of the sample, the developments show a range of quality, which is useful in informing changes to policy and practice. It is intended to develop this pilot approach to monitoring quality of outcomes on the ground further.
- 5.4 Part 2 provides information on progress against the previously identified longer term service improvements, brought together into a planning improvement programme under the themes of: Leadership & Management; Customers & Stakeholders; Digital; and Continuous Improvement; and sets out further actions for 2023/24. Key progress markers to highlight and actions for 2023/24 under these headings are set out in the table below: -

Table 1

Leadership and Management	
Progress	Action for 2023/24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A People Plan for the planning teams has been prepared, including a workforce profile and actions to build and retain skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The People Plan and its actions will be developed into refreshed Team Plans. This will align with the existing Corporate Plan 2022-27 and the emerging Corporate Workforce Plan 2023-26 and its themes of Building in Agility, Evolving our Talent, and Refreshing Our Employment Offer.</li> </ul>

Customers and Stakeholders	
Progress	Action for 2023/24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Webpages published to improve understanding of the different types of affordable housing we deliver.</li> <li>• Social media used in new ways to promote the Big Place Conversation engagement process.</li> <li>• In-person customer forum session held with housebuilders</li> <li>• Online self-build housing register form established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold customer forum sessions, including a follow-up with housebuilders, and re-establishing a Forum focused on other users of the planning system, such as local agents/Community Councils/Local Councillors/etc.</li> <li>• Develop our understanding of customer experience of our service, for example by carrying out customer feedback surveys.</li> </ul>
Digital	
Progress	Action for 2023/24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of an online service to report Planning enforcement breaches.</li> <li>• Introduction of a webpage providing advice on whether customers need planning permission for a short term let.</li> <li>• Continued to develop our use of spatial data and updated our technical post descriptions and requirements to reflect the importance of data skills in our teams.</li> <li>• Rationalising site visits through continued development of a blended approach to use of digital information, existing experience and physical site visits.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with colleagues and the Scottish Government to develop our data skills to be ready to implement the Council's data strategy and the national Digital Planning programme.</li> </ul>
Continuous Improvement	
Progress	Action for 2023/24
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Technician staff resource increased which has led to a significant improvement in how many applications receive a first review by the national benchmark of five working days.</li> <li>• This additional resource has also allowed for the review and update of some of the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run further validation workshops with local agents/developers to improve understanding of minimum requirements with a view to increasing the overall rate of valid applications and reducing validation times.</li> <li>• Progress actions on developer contributions and legal agreements previously identified,</li> </ul>

<p>submission guidance on our website.</p>	<p>coordinated with an update of the relevant Supplementary Guidance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue the process review for planning applications, to identify opportunities for streamlining and simplifying the steps each application goes through from end-to-end.</li> </ul>
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- 5.5 Part 3 & 4 of the document focuses on statistical information, evidencing our performance against the National Headline Indicators and the Scottish Government Official Statistics (pages 22-30). The Development Management team have seen significant staffing issues in recent years, with a large number of staff leaving and difficulties experienced in backfilling these vacancies.
- 5.6 In adapting and transforming the team to deal with both these staffing issues, clearance of 'legacy cases', additional duties and revised priorities, time and effort has been diverted away from day-to-day activities. This has seen impacts on reported performance, despite mitigating actions, particularly in relation to average time to make a decision. However, much of this is related to the small number of legacy cases and those with prolonged legal agreement activity – which have significant timescales and to an extent distort the overall average. This is most marked when looking at 'Major' decisions, which have increased from an average of 35.1 weeks to 48.3 weeks. Context explanations are set out in more detail within the PPF (pages 29-30) and a positive outlook is expected for the next reporting period.
- 5.7 The quality of decision making has been positively tested at both Local Review and Appeal, with the number of officer or Committee decisions being upheld increasing by 5% at Local Review and 66.4% at Appeal to Scottish Government. Part 5 (pages 31-33) provides a snapshot of the staffing situation on 31 March 2023 and Part 6 (page 34-45) provides information on Committee meetings.
- 5.8 Part 7 (pages 36-43) sets out the performance markers that are used by the Scottish Government to assess how the Council is meeting the required targets. It summarises the work being undertaken, makes linkages with the case studies and what improvements have been made in the last year. Finally, performance over the previous six years can be seen on page 44 and the appendix (page 45) contains statistics on complaints as suggested by members when considering the previous report (23/28 refers).
- 5.9 The Planning Performance Framework is designed to support improvement locally and nationally. The approach is consistent across all local authority areas. However, as previously agreed by the Scrutiny and Performance Committee, there may be local improvement actions which the Committee may wish to see delivered. As such the Committee may wish to offer advice on case studies and improvement actions, and to identify other measurable performance indicators.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Planning Performance Framework has been submitted to update the Committee on the performance of the Planning service for the period from April 2022 to March 2023. It provides members with statistical information and evidence of significant and continuous improvement.

### Author

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### Approved

Name	Designation	Date
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## APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Planning Performance Framework 2022-23

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## 1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Yes / None</b>
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	<b>Yes</b>
Corporate Plan	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Resource Implications</b>	
Financial	<b>None</b>
Workforce	<b>None</b>
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	<b>None</b>
<b>Assessments</b>	
Equality Impact Assessment	<b>None</b>
Strategic Environmental Assessment	<b>None</b>
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	<b>None</b>
Legal and Governance	<b>None</b>
Risk	<b>None</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	
Internal	<b>No</b>
External	<b>No</b>
<b>Communication</b>	
Communications Plan	<b>None</b>

### 1. Strategic Implications

#### Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

1.1 The Planning Performance Framework contributes to the following Perth & Kinross Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement priorities:

- (ii) *Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens*
- (iii) *Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy*
- (iv) *Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives*
- (v) *Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations*

#### Corporate Plan

1.2 The Development Plan contributes to the achievement of the following Council's Corporate Plan Priorities:

- (ii) *Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;*
- (iii) *Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;*
- (iv) *Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and*
- (v) *Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.*

## **2. Resource Implications**

### Financial

2.1 None.

### Workforce

2.2 None.

### Asset Management (land, property, IT)

2.3 None.

## **3. Assessments**

### Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 None.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment

3.2 None.

### Sustainability

3.3 None.

### Legal and Governance

3.4 None.

### Risk

3.5 None.

## **4. Consultation**

### Internal

4.1 The PPF is a collaborative document with input from throughout the Planning Department.

### External

4.2 None.



## **5. Communication**

5.1 None.

## **2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

2.1 The following background papers were referred to during the preparation of this report:

- Planning Performance Framework 12 (2022-23)