

Agenda Item	7
Report No	EDI/69/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Environment, Development and Infrastructure

Date: 7 November 2019

Report Title: Planning Performance Framework - Quarter 2 Performance Review

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report advises Members on the delivery and performance of the Planning and Environment Service (Development Management, Building Standards, Development Planning, Transport Planning, Performance and Environment team) for the second Quarter of 2019/2020.

2. Recommendations

3.1 Members are asked to note the performance updates for the Planning and Environment Service.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource - the delivery of the services outlined within this report are contained within the overall Service budget.

3.2 Legal – none

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – none

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – none

3.5 Risk – none

3.6 Gaelic – none

4. Development Plans

4.1 In Q2, the team has achieved the following formal milestones: adoption of the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan; adoption of the Torvean and Ness-side Development Brief; the finalised Uig Development Brief has been submitted to

Scottish Government; and the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan Call for Sites and draft Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan Town Centre Strategy consultations have concluded.

- 4.2 Work also continues to progress on other policy topics including the preparation of new or revised guidance on Housing in the Countryside, Local Place Plans (including their relationship to wider place based policies and strategies), Residential Layout and Design, and Caravans. In line with our commitment to help deliver the plans we produce, another Fort William 2040 event has been held aimed at the place based coordination of public and private investment. Similarly, we've assisted with a site search report for a new waste transfer station site in Lochaber and helped Transport Scotland progress the implementation of the A9, A96 and East Link road
- 4.3 The Team is also starting work on emerging policy areas such as the Council's future input to National Planning Framework 4 / Scottish Planning Policy and other new functions introduced by the 2019 Planning Act."

5. Development Management – Appendix 1

- 5.1 During Q2, 69.5% of **all** local applications were dealt with within two months against a target of 70%. This represents a slight decrease on the previous quarter (71.8%). Local Householder applications for Q2 were 84.9%, a slight decrease on the previous quarter of 88.7% of all applications dealt with within 8 weeks against our target of 90%. The average timescale for the determination of Householder applications rose from 7.7 weeks for Q1 to 8.3 weeks in Q2/19; and for non-householder applications in Q2 was 13.5 weeks compared to 13.4 weeks for Q1. The performance figures have been generally robust however they reflect the continued pressures and challenges arising from staff changes and departures encountered and vacancy control measures over a sustained period of time.
- 5.2 Major applications: four applications were determined within this time period, three of which had a processing agreement in place.
- 5.3 With reference to enforcement, the level of activity remains high with 125 complaints received; 100 of which were taken up. In total, 11 notices were served during Q2, 5 cases were resolved formally although 59 cases were resolved informally.

6. Building Standards (Appendix 2)

- 6.1 Performance for responding to warrant applications and completion certificates has seen a slight drop, 78% and 83% respectively, and is below the 90% target. The dip reflects a number of issues: the changing emphasis of the team to site inspection, IT slowness issues, experienced particularly in Q2, and the annual School summer holidays. Performance will be kept under review. KPI outputs over the 6 internal indicators averaged 93%; consistent with last quarter. Target is 90%.
- The number of Building Warrant applications received was 754; a 14% drop on last quarter.
 - The number of warrants determined was 652; a 17% drop on last quarter, reflecting the lower number of warrants received.
 - Building warrant fee income for quarter was £826k; 3% above budget target.

6.2 Two new Graduate Apprentice Building Standards Surveyors have now joined the team, both are attending Napier University studying Building Surveying as part of their training schedule. This takes the GA count to three within the BS team.

6.3 The recent round of Focus Group sessions with customers was well received and attended; with the majority of customers welcoming an increased presence of surveyors on site; Customers acknowledged a drop in 'first response' performance is acceptable as a result of increased site visits.

7 Transport Planning

7.1 Transport Planning issued 205 planning consultation responses in Q2 (in comparison with 243 in Q2 2018/19). The team delivered over 70% of the local and major planning application responses within the requested timescales, meeting the local indicator. The number of single and small housing development consultations reviewed and responded to has remained at a relatively high level, with 44 issued in Q2 compared to 45 in the first quarter of this year.

7.2 Ongoing liaison with HITRANS and Transport Scotland across a range of strategic transport initiatives (e.g. A9 Dualling; A96 Dualling; A82 Road Safety interventions and Longman Interchange improvements). Coordination of the Council's response to the National Transport Strategy.

7.3 The interventions making up the Inverness City Active Travel Network are progressing with improvements to facilities for pedestrians and cyclists on the shared use path between Smithton Road and Culloden Avenue, including installation of a replacement bridge, now completed. A new online engagement website has been created to gather views and update local residents, business and stakeholders on key active travel improvements taking place on key corridors within the city. In addition a comprehensive package of measures to increase the number of young people travelling by bicycle to and from school has been initiated in the Inner Moray Firth area. The team continues to seek funding from Scottish Government to progress active travel schemes throughout the Highlands

8 Environment

8.1 **Planning and Advice** – See **Appendix 3**. In Q2 specialist planning advice has been provided in relation to:

- 332 Planning applications (relating to archaeology, forestry, building conservation and access) and consultations/decisions issued on 44 Listed Building Consent applications and 2 Conservation Area Consent applications. The figures represent the number of applications that can be assessed with the resources currently available, rather than the number of applications that would benefit from specialist input;
- 33 Tree Work Applications (works to trees, including felling, within Conservation Areas or covered by a Tree Preservation Order); and
- 2 Access Exemption Orders were granted for the Black Isle Show, Muir of Ord and Skeabost Rally, Isle of Skye.

8.2 Strategy, Policy and Guidance

8.2.1 A first internal draft of the Wick: Pulteneytown Conservation Area appraisal and management plan is being edited ready for the first round of public consultation.

- 8.2.2 Two Tree Preservation Orders have been served, both in Portree (Marmalade Hotel and Cuillin Hills).
- 8.2.3 The Caithness and Sutherland Core Path Plan has been lodged with the Scottish Government and is now with their Planning and Environmental Appeals Division because of outstanding objections. The formal consultation on proposed changes to West Highlands and Islands Core Paths Plan ended on 18 October 2019. We are getting some constructive comments and recommendations, and anticipate some strong objections. The call for changes to the Inner Moray Firth Core Paths Plan has attracted interest and enthusiastic submissions.
- 8.2.4 Work has begun on the new 5 year Highland Biodiversity Action Plan (2021-2026) with a series of workshops held at a recent Highland Environmental Forum. The HiBAP offers opportunities for the Council to demonstrate commitment and positive action with regard to the declared Climate Change and Ecological Emergency.

8.3 **Consultancy**

- 8.3.1 The Team is on profile to meet its 2019/2020 target of £61,259 with £26,193 of income generated in Q2. Additional Q2 income of £2,420 was generated through provision of archaeological advice to statutory undertakers and provision of data to commercial consultants
- 8.3.2 Ecological Clerk of Works services are being provided at Inverness Westlink 2, Whitebridge planting and the Smithton Flood Scheme. Ecological survey and protected species survey are currently underway at a variety of Council projects, including the Longman waste recycling plant, Peffery footbridge, Glenmore Bridge and Ashaig airfield. Ecologists are in high demand for licensed bat surveys, especially at schools and to support the Council's ongoing programme of roof repairs.
- 8.3.3 The Dutch Elm Disease pilot study is now underway in Dingwall. A cross-service Council-wide approach has been adopted involving land owned or managed by D&I, C&L, Housing, Roads and Amenity Services. It is intended that a single (multi-service) contract will be issued with housing agreeing to act as the lead Service, with costs being recharged accordingly. The survey and contract will be administered and supervised by EACT on behalf of all Services.

9 **Performance/Systems**

9.1 **IDOX System Re-procurement**

The Systems Team will be starting work on a re-procurement exercise in October.

9.2 **eDevelopment & Service Improvement Projects**

9.2.1 Online Submission rates via the [eDevelopment.scot Portal](https://eDevelopment.scot.nhs.uk/Portal) which encompasses the [ePlanning.scot Portal](https://ePlanning.scot.nhs.uk/Portal) and [eBuildingstandards.scot Portal](https://eBuildingstandards.scot.nhs.uk/Portal) continues to be high.

- [ePlanning.scot Portal](https://ePlanning.scot.nhs.uk/Portal) - We are the top Authority for most online submissions (Applications and follow- up info) at 2140 submissions.
- [eBuildingstandards.scot Portal](https://eBuildingstandards.scot.nhs.uk/Portal) – We are second (behind City of Edinburgh) for online submissions (Applications and follow-up info) at 3205 submissions

9.2.2 The Team has recently completed a couple of key service improvement projects such as the Review of Pre-application Advice (went live on 16th September) and

Satisfaction and discharge of conditions (went live on 3rd June) both of which are income-generating, value added services.

9.3 Developer Contributions

- 9.3.1 **Contributions Received** - £577,328.50 received in total between 01/07/19 and 30/09/19; 37 single-house applications have contributed £53,443 between 01/07/19 and 30/09/19
- 9.3.2 **Drawdown** - £890,777.17 drawn down between 01/07/19 and 30/09/19 (Mainly Education, £80,000 Community Services)
- 9.3.3 **New Pots** - 10 new pots created between 01/07/19 and 30/09/19 (Inverlochy Primary School, Lundavra Primary School, Craighill Primary School, Lochardil Primary School, Shieldaig Primary School, Dingwall Leisure Centre, TRO Ness Castle, Tain Dial-A-Bus Service, Carsegate Road Signalised Junction, TRO Carse Industrial Estate)
- 9.3.4 **Active Pots** - 167 "Active" pots currently being held (some with zero balance, awaiting future contributions).
- 9.3.5 Developer Contributions has (alongside 6 other submissions by the Service) recently been shortlisted for a Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning 2019. Developer Contributions has been entered in the Process Category which focuses on projects that demonstrate innovation in improving or simplifying any type of process.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 25 October 2019

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**Appendix 1
Performance Statistics**

**Highland
Quarter 2
2019/20**

Planning Applications			
Category	Total Number of Decisions	% Within Agreed Timescales	
Processing Agreements (Majors)	3	66.7	
	Total Number of Decisions	% within timescales*	Average Time (Weeks)
All Major Developments	4	50.00	53.5
All Local Developments	635		12.3
Local: less than 2 months	441	69.45	
Local: more than 2 months	194	30.55	
Local developments (non-householder)	441		13.5
Local: less than 2 months	301	68.25	
Local: more than 2 months	140	31.75	
Local developments (householder)	165		8.3
Local: less than 2 months	140	84.85	
Local: more than 2 months	25	15.15	
Other Consents	82		9.2
Other : Less than 2 months	67	81.71	
Enforcement Activity			
	Number		
Cases Taken Up	100		
Complaints Received	125		
Complaints Founded	20		
Complaints Not Founded	19		
Breaches Resolved Informally	59		
Breaches Resolved Formally	5		
Cases Outstanding	94		
Notices Served	11		
Direct Action	0		
Report to Procurator Fiscal	0		
Prosecutions	0		
Interdict	0		

Pre-Application Advice

Major Packs within 4 weeks	85.71
Local Packs within 6 weeks	48.72

* 4 months for major developments and 2 months for local developments and other consents

Appendix 2

Building Standards Performance 2019/20 Q2

	% Warrants responded to within 20 days	% of Warrants determined within 6 days	% Completion Certificates responded to within 10 days	% of Completion Certificates issued within 3 days	Target
2019/20 Q2	78	100	83.0	98.3	90
2019/20 Q1	88	100	85.1	98.6	90
2018/19 Q4	88	100	82	99.4	90
2018/19 Q3	90.2	100	78.2	97.8	90

Building Standards Volumes and Income (Last 4 Quarters)

	2018/19 Q3	2018/19 Q4	2019/20 Q1	2019/20 Q2
Warrants Decided	717	656	786	652
Compl. Certs	796	677	894	871
Income (£000)	737	815	711	826

Appendix 3

Environment Consultations 19/20 Q2

ENVIRONMENT TEAM PLANNING WORK	Planning Applications / PNOs	Listed Building Consent Applications	Conservation Area Consent Applications	Tree Work Applications	TOTAL
Archaeology	89	-	-	-	89
Forestry	135	-	-	33	168
Conservation	58	44	2	-	104
Access	50	-	-	-	50
TOTAL	332	44	2	33	411