

Agenda Item	8
Report No	EDI 24/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee

Date: 16 May 2019

Report Title: Planning, Performance Framework and Quarter 4 Performance Review

Report By: Director of Development and Infrastructure

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The 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 fourth Quarter of 2018/2019.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the performance updates for the Development Management, Building Standards, Development Plans, Transport Planning, Performance and Environment teams.

3 Development Management

- 3.1 During Q4 (see **Appendix 1**) 67 % of **all** local planning applications were dealt with within two months against a target of 70%, although a slight increase on the previous quarter (66%) it remains below the level of performance we would seek to provide. In relation to non-householder applications although performance was strong for Q1 and Q2 at 63% and 67% respectively, for Q3 and Q4 this was lower at 55% and 59% respectively. Local Householder applications however continue to see improvement with almost 91% of all applications dealt with within 8 weeks. Over the year, this was at 90% compared with 86% the previous financial year. The average timescale for the determination of Householder application rose slightly from 7.1 weeks for 2017/18 to 7.3 weeks in 2018/19. Whereas the non-householder applications showed a slight improvement from 13.7 weeks for 2017/18 to 13.5 weeks for 2018/19. For Q3 and Q 4 this rose to 13.9 and 15.6 weeks respectively.
- 3.2 The figures indicate that performance levels overall have been maintained, however it does highlight that, for the latter half of the financial year, there has been a slight dip in performance
- 3.3 The slippage reflects staff changes across the Service, the impact of vacancy control and a disproportionate amount of time staff have spent ensuring the large volume of renewable energy applications were determined before the feed in tariff cut-off date at the end of March 2019.
- 3.4 Major applications - 4 majors were determined in Q3, 3 of which had processing agreements in place.
- 3.5 With reference to enforcement, the level of activity remains high with 106 complaints received. 90 of which were taken up. 28 complaints were founded. In total 27 notices were served during Q4 although 42 cases were resolved informally.

4 Development Plans

- 4.1 In Q4 the Lochaber Committee approved the outputs from a series of consultation events on the FW2040 Masterplan and Delivery Programme, with the final report being published in April. An innovative approach to ongoing engagement has been agreed where community representatives will be invited to work with the Lochaber Committee Members in helping steer future development decisions. A follow-up public exhibition is proposed to take place in September one year on from the main consultation event in 2018.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government Reporter's Report for the associated West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan is expected to be returned to the Council in late April.
- 4.3 The new Development Plan Scheme for 2019 was agreed by the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee in January which including the announcement to begin a review of the Inner Moray Firth Local Development.
- 4.4 As part of the modernisation of how monitoring activity is carried out and reported during Q4, Storymap software was used to publish Town Centre Healthchecks, the Business and Industrial Land Audit and a Housing Completions Dashboard.
- 4.5 Following adoption of the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) in August 2018 and, based on the Town Centre Healthchecks carried out recently, a draft CaSPlan Town Centre Strategy was prepared and will be subject to Committee consideration in Q1 2019/20.

- 4.6 The Housing Delivery Team continues to work towards the determination of a number of major housing planning applications, and work shadowing arrangements are contributing to the sharing of knowledge and skills and creating greater diversity and flexibility of workload across the service.
- 4.7 A public exhibition on an updated draft Development Brief for the Torvean area was held on 10th January, including workshops with local Primary School pupils.
- 4.8 The team is also supporting various regeneration and development masterplans including options for waste management, a development brief for Uig, a Local Place Plan for Applecross and is advising on regeneration opportunities in Portree and Broadford. The team has played an advisory role in the bid for World Heritage Site status to be granted to the Flow Country.

5 Building Standards

- 5.1 Performance for responding to warrant applications remains high at 88%; though just below target (90%). The festive holiday period is the reason performance has dipped.
- 5.2 Performance in respect of responding to completion certificate submissions is currently sitting at 82%. This is an improvement on the last quarter.
- 5.3 KPI outputs over the 6 internal indicators averaged at 95%. Target is 90%.
- 5.4 The number of Building Warrant applications received was 822; an 11% increase on last year. The number of warrants determined was 656; this is comparable to last year (636) but slightly less than last Q (717).
- 5.5 The Building Standards team has generated £815k over Q4 and £3.106m over F/Y18-19, an improvement on the previous quarter and last financial year.
- 5.6 The Service is moving towards the appointment of two new Graduate Apprentice Building Standards Surveyors and work is ongoing with the Building Standards Management Team (BSMT) to finalise an Improvement Actions Progress Summary, to be submitted to Scottish Government Building Standards Division (BSD) by June 2019.

6 Performance/Systems

- 6.1 **Mobile Working (ICT Refresh and Tablets)** – The Service continues to trial 5, sim-enabled, laptops across the areas as proof of concept. This trial is proving successful, with case officers having the ability to transfer and upload photos to the back office and update Uniform while out on-site, immediately after doing site visits. The aim is that, post-refresh, case officers will have a sim-enabled laptop and tablet with inter-changeable sim.
- 6.2 **IDOX System Re-procurement** – The original five year contract ended on 31 March 2019. Due to a national project currently underway by the Scottish Government's Digital Planning Team, the Service has decided to take up a one year extension to the existing contract for the IDOX Hosted Platform based on existing contract terms, to the end of March 2020.
- 6.3 **Web page Improvements** – The Service has been working with the Service Centre and Digital Services' staff as part of a phased approach to improve the Planning and Environment web pages as set out in last year's Planning Performance Framework Submission for 17/18. This piece of work has involved collecting information from Planning and Building Standards duty officers, and Service Centre staff themselves, to better inform the layout of our web pages, so that commonly requested information is more

easily accessible for customers, Service Centre staff and duty officers alike. So far, based on this engagement and data recorded by these staff, some immediate improvements have been made, such as ensuring Pre-application advice pages and service to request copies of planning and building standards case documents are more easily found / accessible and improvements to location and information on the Environment pages.

7 Transport Planning

- 7.1 The Transport Planning Team provides transportation advice and planning consultation responses to the Council's Development Management and Development Plans Teams and the Cairngorm National Park Authority on behalf of the Council as Roads Authority. The Team also issues approvals for the construction of new roads. These roads are designed and built by developers but, once completed, are normally adopted with the Council taking over responsibility for their maintenance.
- 7.2 Transport Planning issued 235 planning consultation responses in Q4 and 925 Planning Consultation responses last year, an increase of more than 21% compared to 2017/18. 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 increased slightly to 182 from 172 the previous year.
- 7.3 Ongoing liaison with HITRANS and Transport Scotland across a range of strategic transport initiatives (e.g. A9 Dualling; A96 Dualling; Longman Interchange improvements; Far North Line Review; West Highland Lines Review; Skye Air Services; Fort William STAG). Current management of a series of externally funded active travel initiatives, including infrastructure enhancements and feasibility studies. Updates are regularly provided to the relevant ward Members. A number of feasibility and design studies for active travel schemes were completed providing detailed design to enable construction when funding becomes available.

8 Environment

- 8.1 **Planning and Advice** – See **Appendix 3**. In Q4 specialist planning advice has been provided in relation to:
- 285 Planning applications (relating to archaeology, forestry, building conservation and access) and 15 Listed Building Consent applications, slightly more than Q3. 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.
 - 29 Tree Work Applications. The number of Tree Work Applications is known to fluctuate. Q4 saw a rise in number from the previous quarter. and
 - 1 Access Exemption Order was granted for the Snowman Rally.
- 8.2 **Strategy, Policy and Guidance**
- 8.2.1 The Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy has been cleared by Scottish Ministers and is now Statutory Supplementary Guidance.
- 8.2.2 Grantown-on-Spey Conservation Area Appraisal is being reported on this agenda. Tenders have been received and evaluated to undertake the Wick: Pulteneytown Conservation Area appraisal and management plan in 2019/20.
- 8.2.3 The Caithness and Sutherland Core Path Plan (amended and modified) will be subject to a final public consultation from 22 April for 4 weeks, before submission to Scottish Government. The West Highland and Islands Core Path Plan (amended) was presented

to the Ross and Cromarty, Isle of Skye and Raasay ,and Lochaber Area Committees in January and February. Landowners are currently being identified and formally notified. The intention is to release the Plan for statutory 12 week public consultation in May.

8.3 **Consultancy**

- 8.3.1 The Team met its £51,259 annual target with £63,906 of income generated by the end of Q4. The target has now increased by £10k and will continue to do so until 2021/22.
- 8.3.2 In Q4, Archaeology dealt with 13 utility consultations which is significantly down on previous quarters. Utilities are often not as active in Q4 so the drop may not be reflective of a longer term trend. Commercial companies seeking archaeological information and advice rose with 10 chargeable enquiries responded to this quarter.
- 8.3.3 The team is involved in a number of Council infrastructure and housing projects including West Link Phase 1 and 2, Torvean golf course and the Smithton and Culloden Flood Scheme. There continues to be high demand for the ecological advice service which has limited capacity at the present time. Demand for ecological/tree advice is set to increase as new infrastructure projects come on line and other pressures, including Dutch Elm disease, come to the fore.
- 8.3.4 Negotiations are currently underway with Transport Scotland to provide chargeable archaeological curatorial services in respect of the A9 and A96 infrastructure projects.
- 8.3.5 The West Highland Way user report has been submitted and shows an increase of c.10,000 users to 47,101. This brings an estimated economic benefit to the Glencoe, Kinlochleven and Fort William areas of around £4.22m.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 15 April 2019

Author: Nicole Wallace, Acting Head of Planning and Environment

**Appendix1 Performance Statistics
Quarter 4 2018/19**

Planning Applications			
Category	Total Number of Decisions	% Within Agreed Timescales	
Processing Agreements (Majors)			
Major Applications	3.00	66.66	
Local Applications			
EIA developments			
Other Applications			
	Total Number of Decisions	% within timescales*	Average Time (Weeks)
All Major Developments	4	75.00	51.7
All Local Developments			
	583		14.1
Local: less than 2 months	393	67.41	
Local: more than 2 months	190	32.59	
Local developments (non-householder)			
	433		15.6
Local: less than 2 months	257	59.35	
Local: more than 2 months	176	40.65	
Local developments (householder)			
	150		8.1
Local: less than 2 months	136	90.67	
Local: more than 2 months	14	9.33	
Other Consents			
Other: Less than 2 months	66		10.5
	50	75.76	
Enforcement Activity			
	Number		
Cases Taken Up	90		
Complaints Received	106		
Complaints Founded	28		
Complaints Not Founded	16		
Breaches Resolved Informally	42		
Breaches Resolved Formally	0		
Cases Outstanding	88		
Notices Served	27		
Direct Action	0		
Report to Procurator Fiscal	0		
Prosecutions	0		
Interdict	0		
Pre-Application Advice			
Major Packs within 4 weeks	100.00	%	
Local Packs within 6 weeks	51.49	%	

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

Appendix 2
Building Standards Performance 2018/19 Quarter 4

	% 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
2018/19 Q4	88	100	82	99.4	90
2018/19 Q3	90.2	100	78.2	97.8	90
2018/19 Q2	94.1	100	88.5	99.2	90
2018/19 Q1	92.8	99	87	99	90

Building Standards Volumes and Income (Last 4 Quarters)

	2018/19 Q1	2018/19 Q2	2018/19 Q3	2018/19 Q4
Warrants Decided	826	709	717	656
Completion Certs	784	1,186	796	677
Income (£000)	786	768	737	815

Appendix 3
Q4 Environment Consultations

ENVIRONMENT TEAM PLANNING WORK

	Planning Applications / PNOs	Listed Building Consent Applications	Conservation Area Consent Applications	Tree Work Applications	TOTAL
Archaeology	81	0	0	-	81
Forestry	136	-	-	29	165
Conservation	40	15	0	-	55
Access	28	-	-	-	28
TOTAL	285	15	0	29	329