

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

PLANNING SERVICES

2011 -2012



SHEIRBHEISEAN PLANAIDH IS RIAGHLAIDH

PLANA LEASACHAIDH



PLANNING SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

April 2011

1. Introduction

The Scottish Government's programme of Delivering Planning Reform includes the commitment that planning authorities will produce a Service Improvement Plan (SIP) on an annual basis. Planning authorities are required to identify areas for service improvement and how best they be tackled. This is Argyll and Bute's 3rd SIP and will reflect on our performance against our goals over the past 12 months as well as looking forward to 2011 -2012.

2. Delivering Priorities

The Planning System is pivotal in delivering sustainable development for Argyll and Bute's communities, visitors, natural and built environment as well as assisting our businesses in these economically challenging times.

This SIP is delivered by the Development Management and Development Policy services of the Council.

Development Management – facilitating the delivery of the place shaping vision for the community, environment and economy as set out in the Development Plan through the processing of planning applications and related submissions.

Development Policy – preparation, monitoring, review and implementation of the Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan together with all associated strategies including the Local Biodiversity Action Plan; Woodland and Forestry Strategy; Integrated Coastal Zone Management Plans and the access function under the Land Reform Act.

The core principles of our Planning Service are engrained within a hierarchy of plans and strategies that give focus and direction to delivery. The Council's aim of **"Realising Our Potential Together"** is a key value for us along with the priorities of:-

LEVEL	DOCUMENT / STRATEGY
International	EU Directives & Law
	Climate Change Agenda
National	UK / Scottish Directives & Law
	Scottish National Planning Framework
Local	ABC Corporate Plan
	ABC Single Outcome Agreement
	ABC Economic Development Action Plan
	ABC Renewable Energy Action Plan
	Local Area Partnerships
	ABC Local Plan
	Planning & Regulatory Services – Service Plan

3. Planning Resources

STAFF	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT	22	22	23
POLICY	7	7	7
BUDGET	2009	2010	2011
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT	550,808	606,806	637,739
POLICY	372,187	374,143	372,633
TOTAL	922,995	980,949	1,010,372

4. Continuous Improvement

The Planning Service is committed to continuous improvement and in addition to this SIP we also publish / monitor performance on a quarterly basis and are assessed against the Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF). The Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) is an evidence-based self-assessment tool designed to drive continuous improvement in local authorities and other public sector organisations. The self-assessment is an honest and critical evaluation undertaken by employees, drawing on their knowledge and expertise of working within the service. The results of the self-assessment enable services to identify strengths and areas for improvement and plan how to tackle these.



Planning Services were one of the first departments in Argyll and Bute Council to pilot PSIF and one of pioneering Planning Authorities in Scotland to use the model. Recommendations from PSIF shall be reinforced through this SIP and its implementation. PSIF for Planning and Regulatory Services shall be delivered in November 2011.

5. Outcomes from SIP 2010 /2011

The 2010/2011 SIP identified 5 areas for improvement with definable tasks and timescales attributed to each. These were:-

1. Developing Skills
2. Improving Performance and Outcomes on the Ground
3. Effective and Efficient Business Processes
4. Better and More Effective Public Engagement

5. Proportionate and Practical Planning Policies and Advice.

The majority of these Areas for Improvement have been achieved in the course of the past 12 months as highlighted in **Appendix A**.

Notable achievements have included:-

- Pilot of Community Settlement Plan for Craginish Peninsula
- Customer Care Training delivered to Development Management and Policy Staff
- Joint Working Arrangements arranged with Historic Scotland and Authorities who deal with Aquaculture Applications
- Refinement of governance arrangements following 12month review of new planning act
- Publication of Development Policy Newsletter
- Member endorsement of Main Issues Report
- Implementation of e-consultation and e-correspondence in Development Management
- Commencement of Online Local Plan

6.Headline Performance & Targets

INDICATOR	2009/10	CURRENT	Target 2011/12
ALL APPLICATIONS DETERMINED WITHIN TIMESCALE	59%	72%	68%
HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION DETERMINED IN 2MONTHS	78%	90%	90%
APPROVAL RATE	95%	97%	97%
SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS ONLINE	<1%	31%	35%
CUSTOMER SATISFACTION	67%	75%	90%
% OF POPULATION COVERED BY UP TO DATE LOCAL PLAN	100%	100%	100%

Performance has significantly improved in the past year with the Council now recording some of the strongest statistics for Development Management within their rural peer group. This is complemented by increased customer satisfaction and increasing use of e-planning.



7. Customer Engagement & Feedback

Planning is a 'frontline service' that engages with a variety of customers and stakeholders including members of the public, businesses, elected Members, key agencies, other Council departments and Government bodies.

Development Management held 13 User Forums, Focus Groups and Community Council Training Evenings throughout Argyll and Bute in 2010/11 to engage with customers and obtain feedback on key aspects of service delivery. In addition, an Elected Member Seminar took place in August 2010 to gauge opinions on all aspects of the new planning system. Structured discussions and minutes were taken at all these events along with distribution of response questionnaires.

Every decision notice is also accompanied by a 'Service Questionnaire' which shows 75% of respondents were 'satisfied' or better.

Internal engagement is delivered through weekly team meeting, quarterly management

meetings and through electronic news bulletins across Council called 'Cascade'.

The policy service continues to engage with its customers through stakeholder meetings, newsletters, use of the web and through advisory groups that inform the development of strategic documents from the outset.

8. Aims & Future Challenges for 2011/12

The Aims of the Planning Service for 2011/12 are as follows:-

- To increase speed and certainty of decision making
- Improve efficiency of processing applications and pre-applications
- Facilitate greater and easier access to information about planning applications and how decisions are reached
- Complete a formal Service Review and deliver at least 20% efficiency savings in the context of a new business service delivery model
- Improve the quality and consistency of decision making particularly focussing on better design to ensure a vibrant built and natural environment
- Be more proactive and positive in our relationship with developers and businesses
- Introduce a comprehensive document management system for the policy service
- Improve commercial awareness
- Publish Proposed Local Development Plan

To achieve these aims we have identified a number of actions for this SIP grouped into the 5 Improvement Areas and themes from last year of:-

1. Developing Skills
2. Improving Performance and Outcomes on the Ground
3. Effective and Efficient Business Processes
4. Better and More Effective Public Engagement
5. Proportionate and Practical Planning Policies and Advice.

These themes and actions must be viewed in context with new 2011/12 challenges such as a minimum 20% budget reduction (as part of Council Service Review process), reduced planning fee income, reduced funding for delivering affordable homes and greater aspirations for better quality of design and the need to adapt and mitigate against the impacts of climate change. There is also a greater expectation for increasing public and community involvement in the planning and pre-application process.

The following table highlights our Improvement Actions which shall be monitored.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2011/12

IMPROVEMENT ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE
IMPROVEMENT AREA 1 – DEVELOPING SKILLS		
1. Annual performance development review (PDR) for all staff aligned to continuous professional development training programmes to ensure planning officers have relevant skills for job	May 2011	Angus Gilmour, Head of Service
2. Implement “Grow Our Own” policy to enable administrative and technical staff to gain relevant qualifications to participate in career grade progression which is part of our succession planning strategy	Ongoing – Continuous	Angus Gilmour, Head of Service)
3. Reinforce/reinvigorate Community Council + Elected Member training on working/implications of new planning regulations, Planning Policy Issues (PDAs, Design and Landscape Capacity) Local Review Bodies, Council governance arrangements and scheme of delegation. Training to include both PPSL and Non PPSL elected Members.	October – Nov 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
4. Develop a robust scheme of job satisfaction monitoring and staff feedback / engagement	March 2012	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager and Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
5. Deliver staff training workshops in partnership with Historic Scotland and Built Heritage Officer for DM and Policy Staff. Also use forum to emphasise customer care, design quality and assisting development process in economically difficult times.	Summer 2011	Fergus Murray, Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
6. Use / Continue Staff Engagement Group (developed for Service Review) to liaise with staff and obtain feedback and utilise as a	March 2012	Fergus Murray, Development Policy

IMPROVEMENT ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE
focus group for ongoing service improvement / feedback.		Manager and Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
IMPROVEMENT AREA 2 – IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES ON THE GROUND		
7. Implement new enforcement reporting mechanism and charter	August 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
8. Work with Historic Scotland and new Built Heritage Officer to increase delegation of listed building applications	September 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
9. Develop new monitoring and performance regime which records ‘added value’ and quality not simply speed of determination of applications. Also seeks more meaningful customer satisfaction returns	March 2012	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
10. Hold the Argyll and Bute sustainable design awards to help recognise the use of good design; Launch new guidance on credit crunch design.	October 2011	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager
11. Set up Tree Protection Order Group with focus on training, awareness and staff specialism in dealing with TPO’s and partners such as Forestry Commission, Council Horticulture and Biodiversity Officer.	October 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
IMPROVEMENT AREA 3 – EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT BUSINESS PROCESSES		
12. Undertake a full Service Review and identify optimum service delivery model taking cognisance of all ‘future challenges’ and requirement to make at least 20% efficiency savings.	September 2011	Angus Gilmour, Head of Service); Fergus Murray (Project Manager)
13. Develop a pro-forma and registration system for dealing with pre-application enquiries	May 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager,
14. Update and standardise model planning conditions and Section 75 legal agreements	June – July 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
15. Update and standardise planning forms and guidance notes aligning with Scottish Government Forms	June – July 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager

IMPROVEMENT ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE
16. Revise Consultation requirements for internal and external consultees	October – Nov 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
17. Establish a Development Management Focus Group to examine Validation Requirement	August 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
18. Implement quarterly reporting for all Local Review Boards, Appeals and enforcement for Councillors	August 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
19. Update Departmental Business Contingency Plans	July 2011	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager and Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
20. Development Management to work with and Building Standards and Environmental Health to establish 'Customer Care / Issues – Protocol'. ie Issues from each department that need to be clarified at early stage	October 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
21. Update and standardise Report of Handling to dovetail with Uniform back office system	October 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 – BETTER AND MORE EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT		
22. Further develop Planning Web pages and Online Local Development Plan to increase / improve customer experience. Examine potential for web links to Pyramid – performance management tool	October 2011	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager and Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
23. Promotion of Development Management User Forums – encourage better quality planning submissions, better communication of issues between planning authority and stakeholders	April 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
24. Publication of newsletters, website development, review guidance notes to have better informed stakeholders	Ongoing	Fergus Murray, Development Policy

IMPROVEMENT ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE
		Manager
25. Examine potential use of blog / twitter / facebook / Online TV for providing information about Major applications and applications of public interest	August 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 – PROPORTIONATE AND PRACTICAL PLANNING POLICIES AND ADVICE		
26. Review and update Charter Statements	March 2012	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager and Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager
27. Update Service Handbook in context of new Planning and Regulatory Services dept post Service Review	April 2012	Angus Gilmour, Head of Service
28. Production of Local Development Plan Main Issues Report	May 2011	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager
29. Production of proposed Local Development Plan (LDP)	March 2012	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager
30. Complete landscape capacity study for on shore wind developments and produce effective design guidance on smaller scale wind turbines	October 2011	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager
31. Complete Coastal Development Strategy to help prioritise investment on Argyll and Bute's extensive coastline	November 2011	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager
32. Publish a booklet of advice and training for Members on Planning, Protective Services and Licensing (PPSL) Committee	October 2011	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager

APPENDIX A – OUTCOMES FROM LAST YEARS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

IMPROVEMENT ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE	WAS IT ACHIEVED	CARRIED FORWARD
IMPROVEMENT AREA 1 – DEVELOPING SKILLS				
1. Annual performance development review (PDR) for all staff aligned to continuous professional development training programmes to ensure planning officers have relevant skills for job	May 2010	Angus Gilmour, Head of Service	✓	
2. Undertake officer training on customer care to ensure that service is customer centric and responsive to customer needs	November 2010	Angus Gilmour, Head of Service	✓	
3. Implement “Grow Our Own” policy to enable administrative and technical staff to gain relevant qualifications to participate in career grade progression which is part of our succession planning strategy	Ongoing – Continuous	Angus Gilmour, Head of Service)	✓	
4. Reinforce/reinvigorate Community Council/Elected Member training on working/implications of new planning regulations, Local Review Bodies, Council governance arrangements and scheme of delegation.	Ongoing – July 2010	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager	✓	
5. Undertake Development Policy Officer training on on-line development plan with links to GIS software	ongoing – continuous	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager	✓	
6. Publication of a regular newsletter informing	ongoing –	ongoing –	✓	

IMPROVEMENT ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE	WAS IT ACHIEVED	CARRIED FORWARD
stakeholders of the Local Development Plan Process	continuous	continuous		
IMPROVEMENT AREA 2 – IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES ON THE GROUND				
7. Implement joint working agreement with aquaculture industry to improve efficiency of processing aquaculture applications and to realise sustainable development opportunities	September 2010	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager	✓	
8. Implement Historic Scotland Joint Working Agreement	September 2010	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager	✓	
IMPROVEMENT AREA 3 – EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT BUSINESS PROCESSES				
9. Undertake a full Service Improvement Project for Development Management in partnership with Performance and Business Improvement Manager	March 2010	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager, Lesley Sweetman, Performance and Business Improvement Manager	✓	
10. Develop a pro-forma and registration system for dealing with pre-application enquiries	May 2010	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager,		✓
11. Update and standardise model planning conditions and Section 75 legal agreements	August 2010	Ross McLaughlin,		✓

IMPROVEMENT ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE	WAS IT ACHIEVED	CARRIED FORWARD
		Development Manager		
12. Update and standardise planning forms and guidance notes aligning with Scottish Government Forms	August 2010	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager		✓
13. Implement e-planning consultation and on-line interactive local plans	August 2010	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager, Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager	✓	
IMPROVEMENT AREA 4 – BETTER AND MORE EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT				
14. Hold strategic and local level workshops with stakeholders on Local Development Plan	May 2010	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager	✓	
15. Promotion of Development Management User Forums – encourage better quality planning submissions, better communication of issues between planning authority and stakeholders	Ongoing	Ross McLaughlin, Development Manager	✓	
16. Publication of newsletters, website development, review guidance notes to have better informed stakeholders	Ongoing	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager		✓
IMPROVEMENT AREA 5 – PROPORTIONATE AND PRACTICAL PLANNING POLICIES AND ADVICE				
17. Review and update Charter Statements	November 2010	Ross McLaughlin, Development		✓

IMPROVEMENT ACTION	TIMESCALE	RESPONSIBLE	WAS IT ACHIEVED	CARRIED FORWARD
		Manager		
18. Update Service Handbook in context of Council's modernisation programme	December 2010	Angus Gilmour, Head of Service		✓
19. Production of Local Development Plan Main Issues Report	December 2010	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager		✓
20. Production of sash and case window construction advice leaflet for ABC in association with Historic Scotland	August 2010	Fergus Murray, Development Policy Manager		✓