

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Renfrewshire Council

Performance Assessment 2023/2024

Cohort 1

KEY CONTACT

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SCORING MATRIX

<input type="checkbox"/>	1	Making excellent progress	Consolidate Share learning with others
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	Making good progress	Build upon Increase ambition in targets Share learning with others
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	Making fair progress	Develop Increase ambition in targets Review and improve implementation
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	Making limited progress	Review Review ambition Review approach taken Inform NPI Learn from others
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	No progress	Prioritise Prioritise fundamental review and revisit approach taken. Engage with NPI Learn from others

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INTRODUCTION

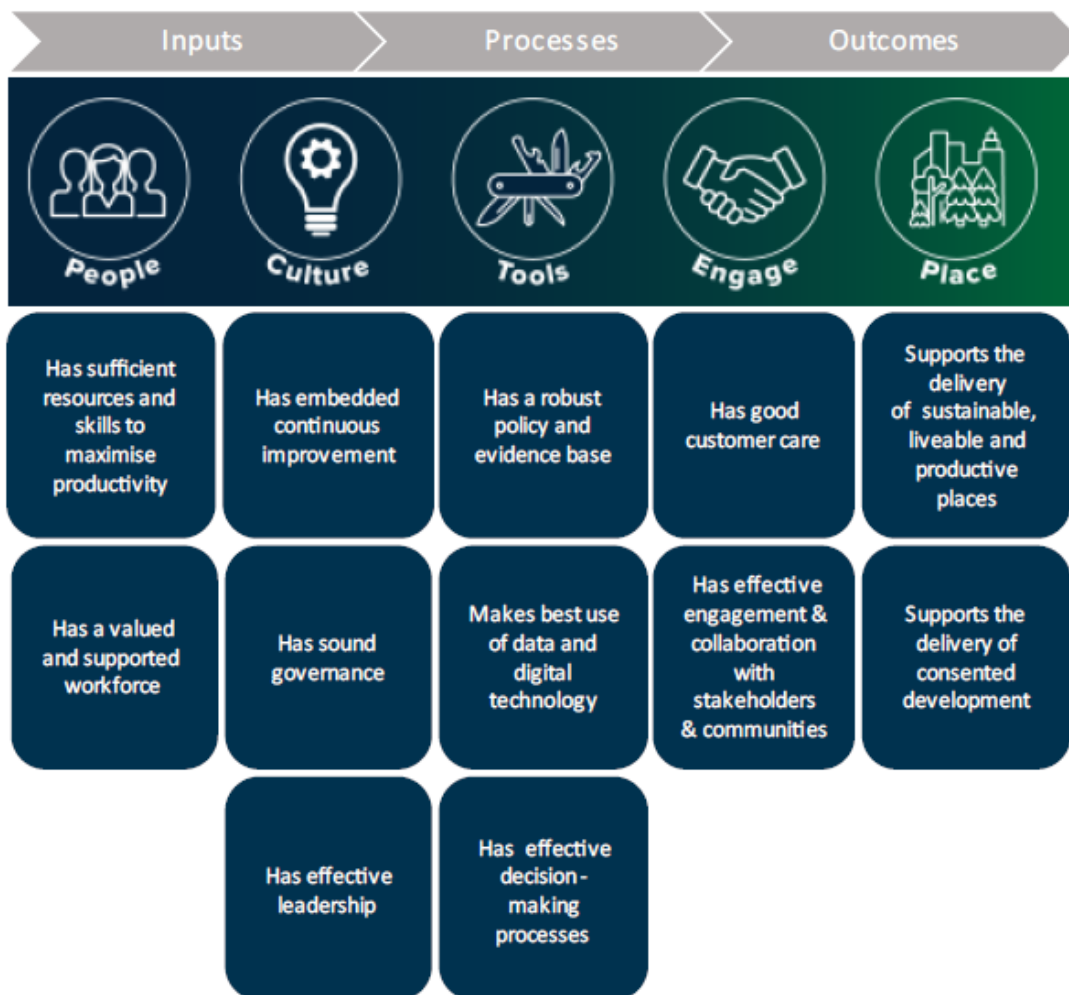
The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 introduced a new approach to measuring the performance of planning authorities and made it mandatory for authorities to prepare a report on their performance after the end of each financial year.

The National Planning Improvement Framework has been developed by the National Planning Improvement Champion and aims to support a planning authority to assess their performance, identify areas of improvement and ascertain how best to action these to maximise their effectiveness and efficiency.

The National Planning Improvement Framework aims to support the purpose of planning to manage the development and use of land in the long term public interest through ensuring that:

- The planning system enables the delivery of sustainable, liveable, and productive places.
- Planning services are equipped to work effectively and efficiently, embedding continuous improvement.
- Users are able to engage constructively with the planning system and planning service.

A self-assessment tool has been developed and focuses on the attributes of a high performing planning authority. The attributes are grouped into five themes as detailed below:



Renfrewshire Council are part of the first cohort of planning authorities who are participating in the pilot project.

As part of this the Planning Service has undertaken a performance assessment against the themes and attributes noted above. Each attribute has been considered in turn and a detailed response prepared.



A high performing planning authority needs to have the right number of people to do the work expected of it with the rights skills set. It also needs to have a strategy to ensure that it retains and recruits the right staff in the future. It supports staff to upskill and to be prepared for changes in policy, legislation, and new circumstances.

ATTRIBUTE 1: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SUFFICIENT RESOURCES AND SKILLS TO MAXIMISE PRODUCTIVITY

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have the sufficient level of staff to carry out all activities within the required timeframes?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current budget?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to carry out all activities within the required timeframes with its current income?
- Does the planning authority received responses from consultees within the prescribed timescale when assessing planning applications?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to access the appropriate advice, expertise, evidence and data it requires?

Narrative

The Planning Service is split into two distinct teams:

- Development Management (with responsibility for processing planning and other applications and the consideration of reports of potential breaches in planning control);
- Strategy and Place (with responsibility for preparing the Local Development Plan, associated guidance etc).

In addition to the above, the service is supported by a Business Support Team which consists of four members of staff. The Business Support Team offers administration support to both Planning and Building Standards, while a Uniform Co-Ordinator leads on business improvements within the Uniform, DMS and workflow systems.

Following a period where our planning teams have been carrying a number of vacancies, we are pleased to report that we now have a full complement of staff within both our Development Management Team and our Strategy and Place Team. A full complement of staff will assist in helping deal with the demands of processing planning applications and preparing the local

development plan and associated guidance. In terms of numbers of employees, we currently benefit from the following staff count:

RTPI Qualified Staff	Headcount	FTE
Head of Service, Chief Planning Officer, Other Managers etc	2	2
Development Management	9	8.2
Development Planning	5	4.6
Enforcement	0	1
Specialists	0	
Other (including non RTPI)	2(Roads), 3(Housing), 1 (Uniform Co-Ordinator); 4(Business Support)	10

It is hoped that a full complement of staff will help aid the processing of the workload experienced within Renfrewshire. In addition, a full complement of staff will help improve key performance indicators, including those related to the processing of planning applications. It is noted that performance has not recently met the required expectations as a result of workload levels and not having the benefit of a full complement of staff. Like other authorities, additional staff could assist in helping to achieve greater levels performance albeit we are cognisant of the wider financial pressures in which we are currently operating within.

In terms of Planning Enforcement, additional budget has been made available to recruit a Planning and Enforcement Officer for a temporary period of two years. The successful candidate will be responsible for leading investigations into potential breaches in planning enforcement and also taking a lead role in monitoring major developments.

As a planning authority we do have the benefit of a number of specialists including roads and housing officers who sit within our respective teams. In addition, we benefit from Contaminated Land Officers who are based within Environment, Housing and Infrastructure. Unfortunately, we do not have the benefit of a in house specialist in respect of flooding and drainage and we currently rely on advice provided by external consultants. In addition, as a result of an increase in the number of applications concerning solar farms and battery storage facilities, we have identified the need to procure external advice in relation to such matters. We are currently reliant upon external consultants to provide advice in relation to issues which include decommissioning, landscape and visual impact, and glint and glare.

Internally we are aware of additional expertise within the Council which may be able to assist in the consideration and determination of planning applications including in relation to matters concerning tree protection and biodiversity and as such we wish to investigate the possibilities which may exist internally.

Consultees play a significant role in the processing of planning applications and we are pleased that responses are largely received within the timeframe provided. On some occasions we have experienced some delay in receiving responses from consultees, however we are mindful of the

limited resources available to some of our consultees, for example the pressures currently experienced by our colleagues in Environmental Health.

ATTRIBUTE 2: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A VALUED AND SUPPORTED WORKFORCE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have a workforce planning strategy in place?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to support staff development and upskilling and send staff on relevant courses?
- Does the planning authority have a deliverable commitment to support staff health and wellbeing?

Narrative

Renfrewshire Council is aware of the challenges and problems which are faced when recruiting within the planning field. Our recent experience has noted some improvement in the number of qualified applicants putting themselves forward for a planning position at Renfrewshire, however prior to our most recent experience, qualified and suitable candidates were limited. In light of our experiences we have sought to adopt a 'grow our own' model which would result in a suitably qualified school leaver gaining employment with ourselves while at the same time working towards and completing a graduate apprenticeship provided by the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). We have been in regular touch with UWS as they develop their course and we are working towards being in a position to recruit in advance of the course commencing in September 2025, subject to budget being identified. It is hoped that our grow our own model will enable the individual to develop skills across all our planning and related teams while helping generate a commitment and loyalty from the individuals concerned.

Notwithstanding the above, in recent years we have been pleased to welcome a student from Glasgow Caledonian University to our Strategy and Place Team. The students from the Environmental Management Course have undertaken a 16 week placement and as such we consider such opportunities to be beneficial to both ourselves and the students. We hope to continue offering such opportunities in future years.

In considering improvements to our recruitment strategy, there may be some benefit in aligning the job descriptions associated with the posts of assistant planners across the teams. In addition, greater engagement across the planning and regeneration teams especially in relation to major planning applications may be beneficial.

Our workforce strategy is not solely focused on recruiting new members of staff and completing formal training, it also includes looking after our existing staff both from a professional and personal point of view and considering matters such as succession planning. Our current planning workforce can be profiled as follows:

Age Profile	Headcount
Under 30	4
30-39	5

40-49	8
50 and over	9

On a professional level, although restricted finances may limit some opportunities, we are committed to enhancing the skills, talents and confidence of staff through attendance at relevant and suitable training and development courses which include those hosted by the RTPi, relevant chapter events, HOPS and the Improvement Service and other such providers. Most recently three members of staff attended the RTPi Scotland Young Planners Conference in April 2024. In addition, Renfrewshire Council has a corporate commitment to developing and looking after staff and has a range of online iLearn courses on a wide variety of subjects.

In light of the above, the Planning Authority are committed to creating a formal workforce strategy document, which will complement the Council’s corporate plans, over the next 12 months. In addition, formal staff development plans are being re-established following a period of review and it is the intention for all staff within the Planning Authority to have an agreed development plan in the next year. In addition, a staff survey will assist in identifying skills gaps and training needs for all members of staff.

Health and wellbeing is also corporately managed with the council adopting a commitment to taking care of the wellbeing of all employees. The care extends to helping to improve financial wellbeing, looking after mental health and keeping physically active and healthy. In addition, occupational health also aids the health and wellbeing of staff through offering appropriate support and assistance in instances where it is required.

Improvement Action Plan (People theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
1. The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	3
2. The planning authority has a value and supported workforce	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Prepare a formal workforce strategy document detailing the adopted approaching of 'grow our own'	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium	Engagement with finance partners to agree potential budget availability to support graduate apprenticeship position.
Re-introduction of Professional Development Plans of all staff	All Managers	Medium	Short	Engagement with HR to consider PDP process etc.
Introduction of Staff Survey to determine training needs and other matters	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Short	Engagement with HR and OD.



A high performing planning authority has a positive culture through ensuring it has sound governance, effective leadership and a commitment to continuous improvement. The authority has an identified chief planner, who is supported by a strong leadership group to advise on decision-making, policy and operational management.

ATTRIBUTE 3: THIS PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EMBEDDED CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT.

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Has the planning authority undertaken an annual assessment of its performance and acted upon areas previously identified as in need of improvement?
- Has the planning authority achieved recognition at relevant awards or through performance accreditation frameworks?
- Has the planning authority engaged in peer review, good practice exchange or improvement activities?
- Has the planning authority addressed any complaints upheld by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman and have evidence of this and that it has learned from valid cases?

Narrative

The Planning Performance Framework 2022/2023 set out a number of improvements points which would provide focus for the year ahead, many of which continue to evolve while also have resulted in engagement with other local authorities.

The employment of a Uniform Co-Ordinator has enabled us to make significant improvements in how our Uniform and Workflow systems are maintained and operated. Although Uniform has been operational for several years, the Uniform Co-Ordinator post has allowed us to fully explore the capabilities of the software. In turn, this has afforded us the opportunity to undertake a wider review of workflows and procedures in respect of recent legislative and policy changes as well as best practices observed in other Local Authorities. A number of efficiencies have been achieved within development management over the past year as a result.

The new workflow system now generates specific tasks for individual officers in respect of their caseload. New tasks created include triggers for officers to publish consultation responses and representations

online, helping to achieve greater transparency in the progress of applications and how decisions are reached. In addition, new report templates have been produced with much of the report now populated from information entered into Uniform as the case progresses towards determination.

The Uniform system continues to evolve and we are currently working towards an improved weekly list which is more user friendly, standardised planning conditions to improve efficiency and improvements to the public portal that will further improve openness and public understanding of decision-making.

A similar process will also be undertaken with the enforcement module once the Planning and Enforcement Officer post has been filled. It is intended that a separate workflow system will be created to allow enforcement cases to be monitored and responded to more effectively.

The Uniform Co-Ordinator post highlights the benefits of having specialist officers within the department to help improve performance. This is true both in that the individual's specialist skillset enables them to complete tasks quickly and that it frees up planners' time to focus on their workload.

Over the course of the past year, we have engaged with a number of other local authorities to share experiences, knowledge and working practices. We have met with representatives of West Lothian Council, Fife Council and Falkirk Council to discuss their approach to developer contributions and how such schemes are administered and managed. In addition we have also met with Stirling Council to discuss resources and structure while we have plans to engage with other local authorities to continue with such learning and sharing opportunities.

Our Planning Performance Framework 2022/2023 also identified the need to provide certainty in respect of developer contributions and S75 agreements. In this regard, draft guidance in respect of developer contributions in relation to education was considered at the Planning and Climate Change Policy Board in March 2024. Unfortunately due to a number of factors, the draft guidance has not yet been published for public consultation however it is intended that it will be published in the coming months following the receipt of updated school projections.

A clear requirement of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and the National Planning Framework 4 is that there is clear communication strategy between all stakeholders and there is a culture of continuous improvement and learning. In this regard, ongoing training has been provided to all Elected Members with sessions in the past year focusing on the following topics:

- National Planning Framework 4
- Local Development Plan 3 and Local Place Plans
- Scheme of Delegation and types of planning applications
- Developer Contributions

Further sessions are planned in the coming months on other topics including planning appeals , planning enforcement, trees and tree preservations orders and energy generation and storage.

In addition, engagement with local communities has been ongoing with sessions delivered to community councils and community groups to highlight the opportunity to prepare a Local Place Plan. Officers have also visited a number of community councils where a request has been received to discuss the requirements of Local Place Plans in greater detail. As a result of workload pressures it has not been possible to host a developers forum or a community council conference however it is intended that such events will come forward in the coming year.

The Council operates a two stage complaints process with the opportunity for complaints to be reported to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman should the complainant now be happy with the outcome of the stage 2 complaint. Over the past year no decision report has been issued however we have responded to a number of enquiries from the SPSO.

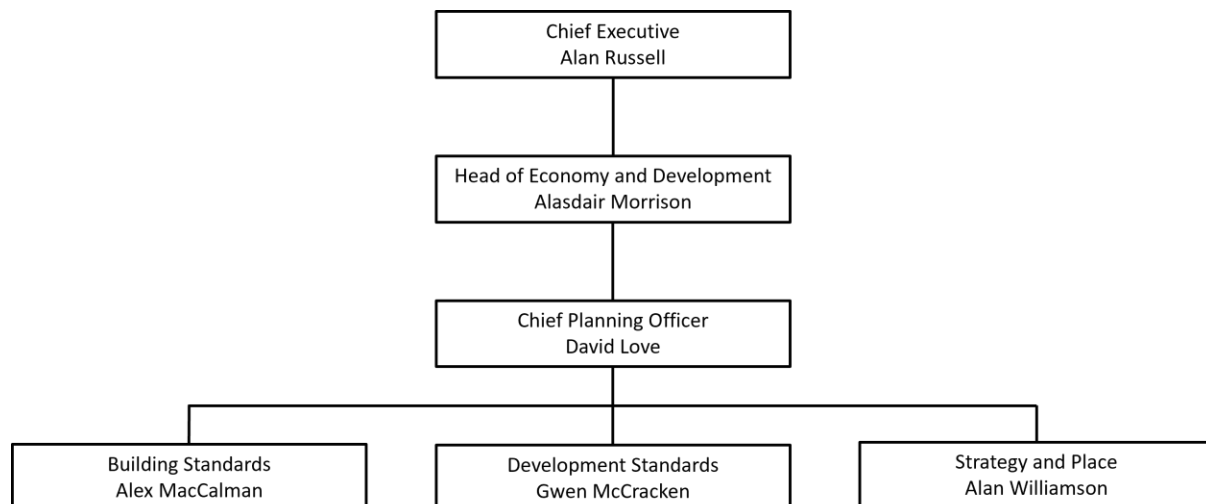
ATTRIBUTE 4: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS SOUND GOVERNANCE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have an effective scheme of delegation in place?
- Have all councillors who exercise a planning function undergone statutory training and is there evidence of ongoing training for members?
- Have more than x % of officer recommendations have been overturned by councillors at committee or Local Review Body.

Narrative

The Planning Authority sits within the Chief Executive's Service within Economy and Development. The structure is noted as follows:



The decision-making ability of the Planning Authority is set out within the adopted Scheme of Delegation. The adopted scheme details the circumstances whereby planning applications are required to be considered and determined by the Planning and Climate Change Policy Board. The scheme of delegation was most recently adopted in January 2023 and is regularly reviewed. It is our intention to review the scheme of delegation from a planning perspective to clarify a number of points including those related to approval of matters specified in conditions and S42 applications. The review of the scheme of delegation will seek to provide greater clarity on the applications where delegated authority is provided to officers especially in relation to S42 applications or applications concerning the approval of matters specified in conditions.

Mandatory training for elected members was included in the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and seeks to ensure that mandatory training is implemented for all elected members who are

involved in any decisions involving planning matters. The need for mandatory training has not yet been implemented however training is offered to all elected members on a regular basis. In the past 12 months training has been provided in relation to NPF4, the Local Development and Local Place Plans, Developer Contributions, while we hope to hold further sessions in the coming year in respect of Planning Appeals, Planning Enforcement and Trees/Tree Preservation Orders. Notwithstanding the above, it is considered that the introduction of mandatory training for elected members is significant and it is understood that the Scottish Government are currently progressing this matter. It is hoped that the mandatory training will be introduced in early course.

The Planning and Climate Change Policy Board is the decision making board which determines planning applications where delegation authority is not provided to officers. The Board meets on 5 occasions throughout the year and considers recommendations put forward by officers. In the past 12 months, 95% of applications considered by Board were decided in line with the recommendations put forward by officers. A site visit was undertaken by members of the Planning and Climate Change Board in relation to one application.

ATTRIBUTE 5: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have an identified Chief Planning Officer in place?
- Does the Chief Planning Officer advise on corporate decision making and policy within the broader organisation?
- Is the planning authority's Chief Planning Officer a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute?
- Does the Chief Planning Officer advise and support external bodies through engagement in organisations' committees, advisory groups or working groups?
- Does the planning authority have a strong leadership team that supports a culture of continuous improvement?

Narrative

Renfrewshire Council appointed a Chief Planning Officer in April 2021, in advance of the statutory requirement being put in place by the Scottish Government. The officer in question is a Chartered Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and is the head of the profession within the Council.

The Chief Planning Officer provides advice throughout the Council to other departments and services, other Senior Managers, Elected Members and members of the public in relation to planning matters. The Chief Planning Officer sits on a number of internal bodies to provide such advice including Learning Estates Project Board, the Sustainable Communities Fund and the Data Advisory Board. In addition the Chief Planning Officer also attends the Glasgow City Region Regional Spatial Planning Sub-Committee. The Chief Planning Officer also attends external groups for example the Bishopston Community Liaison Group while also attending meetings of Community Councils when invited etc.

The leadership team is made up of the Chief Planning Officer, the Development Standards Manager and the Strategy and Place Manager. The leadership team are working towards ensuring that a culture of continuous improvement is embedded within the team. Recent improvements relating to our use of the Uniform case management system has resulted in greater efficiencies within the Development Standards team, however it is considered that the staff engagement with such improvements demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement. Members of staff are now aware of the potential of the system and how it works and have started to make linkages between different tasks and requirements.

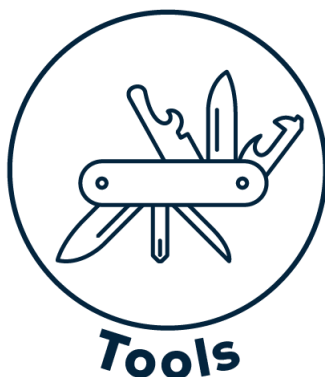
Improvement Action Plan (Culture theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
3. This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	3
4. This Planning Authority has sound governance	3
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Review scheme of delegation as it relates to planning matters and make changes as required	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium	In partnership with legal colleagues following consultation with Elected Members.
Review Board timetables and operation of the board including introduction of hearings and the policy relating to site visits.	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium	In partnership with legal colleagues following consultation with Elected Members.

Training programme for elected members	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium	Preparation of training programme while also considering statutory requirements when legislation is enacted.
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A high performing planning authority needs to have an effective local development plan and other strategies in place to provide a vision for the future of the area. It needs to be able to set and deliver on policy ambitions and priorities by clearly informing decision making and providing certainty and predictability for communities, developers and investment. The authority's development management systems need to be effective in making the right decisions about development and be efficient as possible in doing this. The planning authority makes best use of digital technology and how it manages and uses data.

ATTRIBUTE 6: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS A ROBUST POLICY AND EVIDENCE BASE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have an up to date Local Development Plan in place and/ or is on track to adoption?
- Does the planning authority have an up to date Regional Spatial Strategy in place/ or on track to adoption?
- Has the planning authority's Local Development Plan Evidence Report been approved by the Department of Planning and Environmental Appeals and/ or on track for approval?
- Have the application of the Local Development Plan's policies been found to be deficient at appeal or judicial review?

Narrative

Renfrewshire Council's development plan consists of the Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (LDP2), which was adopted in August 2021 and the Fourth National Planning Framework (NPF4), adopted in February 2023. Together these provide an up-to-date development plan covering Renfrewshire. The local development plan is supplemented by statutory New Development Supplementary Guidance (2021) and various non-statutory planning guidance documents.

Whilst work on a Regional Spatial Strategy will not commence until relevant Regulations are published, the Council continues to work with its Clydeplan planning authority colleagues on matters of shared interest, including the development of a shared evidence base for local development plans.

Preparation of a new local development plan for Renfrewshire (LDP3) has commenced, with adoption anticipated in Quarter 4 of 2027. Submission of the Evidence Report to the Directorate of Planning and Environmental Appeals is scheduled for December 2024. Owing to the scale of the task and vacancies/staff changes since the original timetable was set, there could be some slippage in the submission of the Evidence Report but with the team at full strength as of May 2024, every effort is being made to avoid this.

ATTRIBUTE 7: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY MAKES BEST USE OF DATA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Has the planning authority encouraged and promoted planning applications to be submitted through the e-development portal?
- Does the planning authority have a data governance strategy in place for the management of planning data?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to use interactive web-mapping, GIS and spatial data?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to use digital approaches to engagement, including website, social media and other platforms?

Narrative

The Council's website promotes the submission of planning applications via the eDevelopment portal. In 2023/24, 99.4% of all applications were submitted electronically.

The planning authority does not have a stand-alone data governance strategy in place for the management of planning data. With the Evidence Report compilation under way, this is recognised as an issue as not only is planning data important for this, but it has highlighted the corporate importance of planning-related data. There is a corporate data strategy framework, and a Data Advisory Group that the Planning Service is not currently involved with. Work is underway to create a series of 'Place Profiles' using ArcGIS StoryMaps to present useful data for each town and village in Renfrewshire, for the benefit of the Evidence Report process, but also to inform Local Place Plan processes and to make planning-related data available to communities for general interest.

Renfrewshire Council makes use of the ESRI ArcGIS platform. Usage, user access and ability levels vary throughout the planning team, with a substantive amount of the team's GIS workload requirements undertaken by staff within the corporate GIS team. This has implications for Strategy and Place work programme timeframes and places pressure on the workload capacity of the corporate GIS team.

The Council makes use of digital approaches to engagement. Comments on planning applications can be made through the eDevelopment portal, where all relevant planning application documents can also be viewed. Engagement on the new local development plan (LDP3) is being undertaken digitally with an early stage 'Have you say on Renfrewshire's Places' (based on the Place Standard) and a 'Call for Ideas', both based on the Survey123 digital engagement software. This platform allows people to identify on a digital map the place they are responding on and provide narrative around this. The surveys have been promoted via the Council's website, by

email to all registered LDP participants and on social media (X, LinkedIn and Facebook, including a paid-for Facebook advert).

In addition to the above, the Renfrewshire Council website has a number of pages dedicated to various aspects of planning. We are aware of the need to refresh the content of the pages to ensure they are up to date, reflect current standards and are easily understandable to all. In this regard we are committed in the coming years, as the new Renfrewshire Council website is rolled out, to review and refresh all our webpages.

ATTRIBUTE 8: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT DECISION MAKING PROCESSES

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have the ability to make decisions on planning applications within the required timeframes?
- Are less than x% of planning decisions overturned at appeal or judicial review?
- Does the planning authority have an up to date Enforcement Charter in place?
- Does the planning authority have the ability to resolve enforcement cases?

Narrative

Decision-making timescales: As set out in the Council's Planning Performance Statistics Annual Scottish Government Return, Renfrewshire Council has improved its decision-making timescales in a number of categories of development. This has been in challenging circumstances given ongoing vacancies within the team and has impacted the team's ability to meet statutory targets. Recruitment drives have taken place over the previous 12 months; however, internal promotions have led to a period of continual vacancy within the team. This has meant that the capacity to deal with the backlog of work generated through vacancy and increased workload has hampered the teams' ability to meet statutory targets. As a consequence, it is recognised that there are a number of legacy applications that require to be targeted in the coming year. The Council has appointed a temporary UNIFORM co-ordinator for a 2 year period. The post was filled last year and this officer supports the delivery of enhancing the existing UNIFORM workflow process which in turn will deliver efficiencies in timescale for the processing of planning applications.

Decision-making, local reviews and appeals: There has been a slight increase in the number of local review cases (from 3 to 4) and a reduction in the number of appeals to the Scottish Ministers (from 8 to 5). Overall, the numbers are low. The percentage of cases where the original decision was upheld, reduced for Planning Local Review Board cases from 100% to 75% (one case was granted) and increased for appeals to Scottish Ministers from 12.5% to 60%.

Enforcement: The Council's Planning Enforcement Charter requires to be reviewed every two years. Renfrewshire's Enforcement Charter was reviewed and refreshed in May 2024. This year 89 enforcement cases were submitted to the Planning Service for investigation, a 44% increase from the number received last year.

Enforcement, resolution: Budget for 2024 has been made available for a Planning Enforcement Officer post for the next two years. One of the primary responsibilities of the new postholder will

be to implement the new Enforcement Charter. Planning enforcement is a discretionary power and each case is considered in terms of the nature of the planning breach and the wider public interest. The Enforcement Charter outlines what issues will be prioritized. Of the enforcement cases received in 23/24, 43% of these have been closed. Nearly half (46%) of these cases when investigated were not in breach of legislation. Where there was a breach, 18% of the cases were resolved. 36% of the cases closed were not taken to formal enforcement action, as it was not in the wider public interest and the complainant was advised of this in accordance with the Council's Enforcement Charter.

Decision-making: local reviews and appeals

Original decision upheld				
Type	2022 – 2023		2023 – 2024	
	No.	%	No.	%
Local reviews	2	100%	4	100%
Appeals to Scottish Ministers	1	0.0%	5	60%

Development Management	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Project planning		
Percentage and number of major applications subject to processing agreement	0	1
Decision making		
Application approval rate	96.3%	96.3%
Delegation rate	97.7%	97.5%
Validation	76%	65.6%
Decision-making timescales		
Major developments	40.1 weeks	34.1 weeks
Local developments (non-householder)	15.2 weeks	13 weeks
Householder developments	12.3 weeks	9.6 weeks
Legacy cases		
Number cleared during reporting period	-	13
Number remaining	-	35

Improvement Action Plan (Tools theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
6. The planning authority has a robust policy and evidence base	2
7. The planning authority makes best use of data and digital technology	3
8. The planning authority has effective and efficient decision making processes	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Increase capability within the Strategy & Place team to undertake more GIS work	Strategy & Place Manager	High	Short term	
Commence preparation of a data strategy for the planning service and identify planning representative to engage with corporate Data Advisory Group.	Chief Planning Officer	High	Short-term	

Put in place designated Enforcement Officer	Chief Planning Officer and Development Standards Manager	High	Short	Budget allocation to fund post temporary for 2 years
Review Uniform workflow processes/letters and templates	Uniform co-ordinator and Development Standards Manager	High	Medium	Budget allocation to fund post temporary for 2 years
Review of Board and LRB procedures	Development Standards Manager with Legal and Committee Services	Medium	Medium	Engagement with Legal and Committee Services to agree procedures
Review and refresh all planning webpages on the Renfrewshire Council Website	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Long	Engagement with corporate Comms team.



A high performing planning authority should ensure a wide range of people are involved in shaping their future places. Engagement should be fair and inclusive, early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate and should include difficult to reach groups. The authority should engage with a wide range of partners at a national, regional and local level to ensure a joined-up approach and that links are made across policies and programmes. The planning authority should demonstrate good customer care, transparency and effective communication.

ATTRIBUTE 9: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS GOOD CUSTOMER CARE

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have the ability to offer pre-application advice where it is requested?
- Has the planning authority held regular engagement events with developers and communities?
- Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that customers are satisfied with the service offer by the planning authority?

Narrative

Pre-application advice: Renfrewshire Council promotes early and open negotiations between prospective applicants and developers and other parties in advance of a formal planning application.

Pre-application discussions are intended to add value at the start of the development management process by improving the quality of the proposal and allowing applicants the opportunity to amend their emerging proposals. This will ensure that all parties are clear on the process that leads to the decision. The Planning Service provides free pre-application advice and now offers a pre-application consultation form for these enquiries. All enquiries and responses issued are now logged in Uniform. This ensures these types of enquiries are clearly linked to any application that comes forward for the site.

Engagement: The Planning Service has not held a regular engagement event with developers and communities. An event will be held in the upcoming year to understand how the Planning

Authority can ensure stakeholders and customers have a positive experience when dealing with the Planning Authority and where improvements can be made. The Planning Authority are committed to holding a Developers Forum in the forthcoming year while we will aim to visit each Community Council over the next three years. This along with the engagement strategy for Local Development Plan 3 will help inform how the Planning Authority can deliver a customer journey that is clear and efficient.

Customer satisfaction: The council has the facility for customers to make comments and complaints using an on-line form. The majority of the complaints received, are generally related to a failure to respond timeously to a customer's enquiry or complaint rather than any failing in the process or service standard. 2023/24 was a challenging year due to vacancies within the team. In order to provide greater understanding of customer experiences it is the intention to undertake a customer and stakeholder survey to help shape our improvement programme in future.

ATTRIBUTE 10: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY HAS EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS AND COMMUNITIES

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Does the planning authority have a community engagement strategy and infrastructure in place to ensure engagement is early, collaborative, meaningful and proportionate?
- Has the planning authority undertaken community engagement, for example consistent and effective use of the Place Standard Tool, to inform decision-making processes? Has the planning authority encouraged and promoted planning applications to be submitted through the e-development portal?
- Has the planning authority engaged with a good representation of the community including young people, gypsies and travellers, people with protected characteristics, including disability, race, age, sex and sexual orientation, and including people from a range of socio-economic backgrounds?
- Has the planning authority supported the production of Local Place Plans when requested?
- Do the results from the customer and stakeholder survey show that stakeholders are satisfied with their collaboration with the planning authority?

Narrative

Renfrewshire Council has an up-to-date Participation Statement (published August 2023) and is currently undertaking early-stage engagement with a variety of stakeholders with regard to its new local development plan (LDP3). This has included the use of a Place Standard inspired 'Have your say on Renfrewshire's places' survey, which is available to complete online, with paper copies also distributed to libraries. This survey is complemented by a 'Call for ideas' digital survey, allowing stakeholders to suggest ideas and proposals for specific sites in Renfrewshire. The 'Have your say on Renfrewshire's places' survey includes an equalities questionnaire, which will allow analysis of where gaps in responses may exist with regard to certain places and groups with protected characteristics.

The Planning Service has established good links with the Council's Youth Services/Community Learning and Development teams to develop a programme of engagement with children and young people with regard to the new local development plan through the summer and autumn of 2024.

The Council issued its invitation to prepare local place plans to community council and community development trusts in May 2023. In March 2024, information sessions were held for community council and community development trusts regarding the preparation of local place

plans, with the details of the Council assistance available provided. As at May 2024, 13 community organisations have indicated an interest in preparing a local place plan, with two organisations having had individual start up meetings, and other organisations understood to have commenced their local place plan process.

Improvement Action Plan (Engage theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
9. This planning authority has good customer care	3
10. The planning authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities.	2

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Introduce a customer service survey measuring satisfaction with the level of collaboration in the preparation of the local development plan/local place plans.	Strategy & Place Manager	Medium	1 year	Online survey
Identify gaps in responses to the 'Have your say' survey from places and groups and run targeted consultations to address this.	Strategy & Place Manager	High	1 year	

<p>Regular engagement events with stakeholders and customers to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developers Forum - Community Council Visitations 	<p>Chief Planner and Development Standards Manager</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Short</p>	<p>Review of Uniform system to identify key agents/developers along with stakeholders and arrange events.</p>
<p>Investigate use of customer questionnaire on issue of decision notice, taking account of any national survey implemented by NPI.</p>	<p>Development Standards Manager</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Review other services procedures and systems for capturing comments</p>
<p>Investigate charging for pre-application advice</p>	<p>Chief Planner and Development Standards Manager</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Review other local authorities' practices and procedures</p>



A high performing planning authority should demonstrate place leadership by taking a collaborative place-based approach in line with the Place Principle. It should use the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes in decision-making processes, to achieve the three spatial principles outlined in NPF4: Sustainable places, where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity; Liveable places, where we can all live better, healthier lives; and Productive places, where we have a greener, fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy. The planning authority should seek to ensure that there are no impediments to delivering agreed development.

ATTRIBUTE 11: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF SUSTAINABLE, LIVEABLE AND PRODUCTIVE PLACES

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Is the planning authority aware of the [Place and Wellbeing Outcomes](#), the evidence that sits behind them and is it using them in decision-making processes?
- Has the planning authority identified tools and approaches to delivering sustainable, liveable and productive places and is implementing them?

Narrative

There is a mixed level of awareness of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes amongst planning authority staff and uncertainty over whether and how these should be used in decision-making processes. Part of the issue for the Council is what is the materiality and what weight should be given to the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes be given in decision-making.

Although, not used directly, many of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes align with policy requirements set out in the local development plan (including New Development Supplementary Guidance) and NPF4. These are the main tools that the Council is using to deliver sustainable, liveable, and productive places.

The Council has centre strategies for each of its centres and is beginning the process of refreshing these, with the Johnstone Town Centre Vision Framework approved in May 2024.

ATTRIBUTE 12: THE PLANNING AUTHORITY SUPPORTS THE DELIVERY OF CONSENTED DEVELOPMENT

Please consider the following when thinking about this attribute and how you have performed over the last year:

- Has the planning authority provided clear and proportionate expectations of Section 75 agreements and set these out in the LDP and pre-application discussions and they are concluded within 6 months of resolution to grant?
- Does the planning authority take a proportionate approach to imposing conditions?
- Does the planning authority have an ambitious local housing land requirement that exceeds the Minimum All Tenure Housing land requirements in NPF4 and is it on track to support delivery?
- Are the number of processing agreements the planning authority has agreed with applicants increasing?
- Does the planning authority have an effective delivery programme in place that supports the delivery of development on the ground?

Narrative

Proportionate decision making: The Planning Service through pre-application discussions and advice issued seeks to ensure that in the submission of planning applications lodged relevant information required in the assessment of the planning application is provided upfront. This allows mitigation to be agreed and approved prior to the issue of decisions and this in turn reduces the need to attach planning conditions. Limited resources means some consultees have to prioritise live applications over pre-application enquires which in turn leads to the request to attach planning conditions in order to make timely decisions. The Council also does not have a Flooding Officer at this time to seek specialist advice and the Planning Service in order to ensure appropriate action is taken to mitigate development in terms of flooding and drainage applies appropriate planning conditions to control this matter. In respect of Section 75 agreements it is recognised that delays can be encountered when seeking to secure planning obligations and in this regard we are considering ways in which to improve this process including the introduction of a S75 model template. In addition, it is understood that Heads of Planning Scotland are also working on a similar template and we will seek to engage in this process and potentially become part of the working group.

Housing land: Work is progressing to set a Local Housing Land Requirement (LHLR) as part of the emerging LDP3 Evidence Report. The LHLR will be informed by the Renfrewshire HNDA study which was prepared to support the Council's Local Housing Strategy 2023. The Renfrewshire HNDA study builds on the evidence which was submitted by the Council to inform the Minimum

All Tenure Housing Land Requirement (MATHLR) set in NPF4. The LHLR will be considered through the LDP Gatecheck process and once set the planning authority will seek to identify a housing land supply to meet the LHLR in LDP3. The annual housing land audit will monitor delivery and progression towards meeting the LHLR.

Processing agreements: The number of processing agreements being used is not increasing. This service is promoted through the Council's website and is offered where appropriate during the assessment of planning applications but there has been limited uptake from applicants. It is expected that in the upcoming year there may be more uptake from applicants as legacy applications are targeted.

Improvement Action Plan (People theme)

Attribute	Score (1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)
11. The planning authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places	3
12. This planning authority supports the delivery of appropriate development	3

Based on the grading above, outline any areas of improvement that are required and by whom and their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short/ medium/ long term).

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Seek discussion/ training session with Improvement Service to provide planning staff with more knowledge of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and how these can be used in decision-making.	Strategy & Place Manager	Medium	Short	
Preparation of model template for legal agreement and engagement with HoPS working group.	Chief Planner and Development Standards Manager	Medium	Medium	Liaison with Legal Services to agree preparation of template

Publication of guidance relating to Education contributions	Head of Economy and Development/Chief Planner	High	High	Issue guidance in next six months
Flooding Officer	Chief Planner and Development Standards Manager	High	Long	Investigate availability of budget to deliver role within the Council or use of term consultants

ACTION PLAN

Improvement Action What action will you take? What will the outcome be?	Owner	Importance High Medium Low	Timescale Short term – 1 year Medium term – 3 years Long term – 3+ years	Resources
Prepare a formal workforce strategy document detailing the adopted approaching of 'grow our own'	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium	Engagement with finance partners to agree potential budget availability to support graduate apprenticeship position.
Re-introduction of Professional Development Plans of all staff	All Managers	Medium	Short	Engagement with HR to consider PDP process etc.
Introduction of Staff Survey to determine training needs and other matters	Chief Planning Officer	Low	Medium	Engagement with HR and OD.
Review scheme of delegation as it relates to planning matters and make changes as required	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium	In partnership with legal colleagues following consultation with Elected Members.
Review Board timetables and operation of the board including introduction of hearings and the policy relating to site visits.	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Medium	In partnership with legal colleagues following consultation with Elected Members.

Increase capability within the Strategy & Place team to undertake more GIS work	Alan Williamson	High	Short term	
Commence preparation of a data strategy for the planning service and identify planning representative to engage with corporate Data Advisory Group.	David Love	High	Short-term	
Put in place designated Enforcement Officer	Chief Planning Officer and Development Standards Manager	High	Short	Budget allocation to fund post temporary for 2 years
Review Uniform workflow processes/letters and templates	Uniform co-ordinator and Development Standards Manager	High	Medium	Budget allocation to fund post temporary for 2 years
Review of Board and LRB procedures	Development Standards Manager with Legal and Committee Services	Medium	Medium	Engagement with Legal and Committee Services to agree procedures
Review and refresh all planning webpages on the Renfrewshire Council Website	Chief Planning Officer	Medium	Long	Engagement with corporate Comms team.

Introduce a customer service survey measuring satisfaction with the level of collaboration in the preparation of the local development plan/local place plans.	Alan Williamson	Medium	1 year	Online survey
Identify gaps in responses to the 'Have your say' survey from places and groups and run targeted consultations to address this.	Alan Williamson	High	1 year	
Engagement event with stakeholders and customers	Chief Planner and Development Standards Manager	Medium	Short	Review of Uniform system to identify key agents/developers along with stakeholders and arrange event
Investigate use of customer questionnaire on issue of decision notice	Development Standards Manager	Medium	Medium	Review other services procedures and systems for capturing comments

Investigate charging for pre-application advice	Chief Planner and Development Standards Manager	Medium	Medium	Review other local authorities' practices and procedures
Seek discussion/ training session with Improvement Service to provide planning staff with more knowledge of the Place and Wellbeing Outcomes and how these can be used in decision-making.	Strategy & Place Manager	Medium	Short	
Preparation of model template for legal agreement	Chief Planner and Development Standards Manager	Medium	Medium	Liaison with Legal Services to agree preparation of template
Publication of guidance relating to Education Development Contributions	Head of Service and Chief Planner	High	High	Issue guidance in next six months
Investigate the possibility of securing a Flooding Officer to help support with the work of the Planning Authority and wider Council	Chief Planner and Development Standards Manager	High	Long	Investigate availability of budget to deliver role within the Council or use of term consultants

Case Study 1: Johnstone Vision

Which attributes of a high level planning authority does this relate to:

- Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
 - Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
 - Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
 - Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
 - Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
 - Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
 - Attribute 7: This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
 - Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
 - Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
 - Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
 - Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
 - Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development
-

Title: Johnstone Vision

Context

The project involved the preparation of a new transformational vision framework for Johnstone town centre. Development of the vision sits within the wider context of an emerging post pandemic environment, with challenges around changing retail trends, commuting patterns and climate resilience which impact upon our centres. At the same time, strong demand exists for town centres as '20 minute neighbourhoods' which support local living and reduce the need to travel.

In this context, the vision provides the basis for reimagining the role and function of the centre and ensuring that it evolves as a diverse, sustainable and thriving place which serves both the local community and settlements across West Renfrewshire. The vision offers an opportunity to shape a Johnstone town centre which is fit for the future – a town centre which is vibrant, sustainable, connected, green and resilient.

What happened?

The vision was developed in partnership with the local community through a series of consultation events over late 2023. This included online engagement, a staffed ‘drop in’ event, visits to schools and meetings with local stakeholders and community organisations, with over 1800 responses informing the series of principles and key actions identified in the plan. Council officers were supported by a multi-disciplinary consultant team in the preparation of the vision.

Areas of collaboration

The project was led by the Council’s Regeneration and Place team, with a strong emphasis on co-production throughout. This initially involved meetings and workshops with internal Council services including housing, environment and infrastructure, roads and the Council’s leisure partner OneRen, to ensure a joined up approach in both the identification of key issues, current projects and future aspirations. This approach also sought to ensure that all Council services had ownership of the plan, supporting future delivery.

Co-production and partnership with the local community was a crucial element of the vision and briefings were held with the local Elected Members, supporting further meetings with local key stakeholder groups such as Johnstone Community Council, Johnstone Business Consortium, Johnstone History Society and local group Active Communities ahead of consultation events, to better understand local aspirations for the area and again to embed ownership of the vision.

Sessions with Johnstone High School also took place and were led by the Council’s consultant team to capture the aspirations of young people.

A staffed ‘drop in’ exhibition in a vacant retail unit in the heart of the town centre provided the opportunity for local people to speak directly to Council officers and give their views, augmented by an online survey which sought to capture views.

The principles and actions within the plan are directly informed by the outcomes of consultation and provide the basis for delivery on a collaborative basis with the local community – for example Council officers are now working with Johnstone History Society on the potential development of a heritage trail within the town.

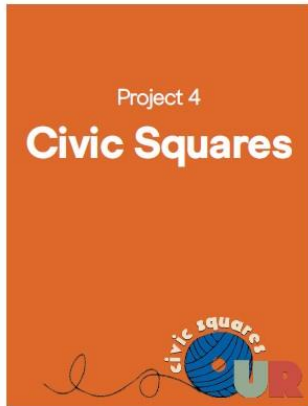
The vision was approved by the Council’s Economy and Regeneration Board of 28 May 2024 as a basis for future delivery.

What was the overall result?

The framework sets out a vision for Johnstone Town Centre as a vibrant and distinctive place, supporting residents to live well locally while recognising the role of the centre as a hub for those across West Renfrewshire. It imagines the town centre as a well connected place which offers a mix of spaces, uses and activities – from retail and culture to business and housing – and a place which celebrates its heritage but looks forward to a positive future. It sets a long-term vision with a range of actions to introduce new uses, encourage town centre living, enhance public spaces, support community activities and improve pedestrian and traffic movement.

Five principles of **identity, movement, economy and prosperity, heritage and culture and people and community** underpin the vision, supported by 10 key projects which drive delivery. These include:

- Movement – Developing a ‘people friendly’ approach to movement in the town centre by creating wider pavements, improved crossings and connections with existing path and cycle routes;
- Town Hall – Considering new uses and activities for the Town Hall which align with the aspirations of the local community, supporting the building to evolve and continue as the civic heart of the town;
- Civic Squares – Enhancements to the squares to reinforce their key roles, with Houston Square as a hub for retail, culture and events and Ludovic Square as the reflective green space. This could include restoration of heritage features, infrastructure for events and opportunities to enhance biodiversity and greenspace.



Project Summary



The Civic Squares play a key role in defining the character and identity of Johnstone and together with the Town Hall are the heart of the social and cultural offer of the town. They are important spaces which encourage people to visit, gather and spend time, supporting local businesses and a range of activities which contribute to the feel of Johnstone as a vibrant and social place.

There is an opportunity to introduce enhancements to the squares to reinforce their key role. This could include restoration of heritage features such as the bandstand, considering how the squares could be improved for events, opportunities for play and increasing biodiversity through more diverse planting.

The key diagram and illustrations show potential improvements to the squares – enhancing Houston Square as a hub for retail, culture and events, with Ludovic Square as a reflective green space at the heart of the town.



Artists impression of Houston Square with connections beyond to the transport Interchange and Town Hall to Ludovic Square.

- Transport Interchange – Relocating the existing bus layover at High Street to help address traffic congestion and enhance the setting of Houston Square;
- Town Centre Living – Supporting redevelopment of vacant sites and considering future redevelopment or refurbishment of homes to increase the residential population of the town centre, creating demand for local services and supporting the local economy;
- Town Centre Heritage – Developing opportunities to celebrate and embed the heritage of the town to support its future, such as development of heritage trails and working with property owners to consider enhancements to listed buildings within the town.

The vision is a high-level framework which captures the priorities of local people while being flexible in response to changing circumstances, funding opportunities and available support. The framework provides a guide for action and decisions over initiatives and partnerships within the town centre over the next five to ten years.

Key Projects Diagram

- Project 1. Movement
- Project 2. Transport Interchange
- Project 3. Town Hall
- Project 4. Civic Squares
- Project 5. Town Centre Living
- Project 6. Commercial uses
- Project 7. Public Realm
- Project 8. Events and Activities
- Project 9. Town Centre Heritage
- Project 10. Blue & Green Infrastructure



Lessons learned

The development of the vision was based on a successful template for other area based regeneration initiatives undertaken within the local authority area in recent years, although this had not been used in a town centre setting. Broadly the approach worked well, with positive and enthusiastic engagement from a range of key local stakeholders and age groups which has established ownership of the plan to support future delivery.

What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

Please tick all the below outcomes that this example worked towards:

NPF4

- Sustainable places
- Climate change and nature crisis
- Climate mitigate and adaptation
- Biodiversity

- Natural Places
- Soils
- Forestry, woodland and trees
- Historic assets and places
- Green belts
- Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- Coast development
- Energy
- Zero waste
- Sustainable transport

Liveable places

- Design, quality and place
- Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- Quality homes
- Rural homes
- Infrastructure first
- Heat and cooling
- Blue and green infrastructure
- Play, recreation and sport
- Flood risk and water management
- Health and safety
- Digital Infrastructure

Productive places

- Community Wealth Building
- Business and industry
- City, town, local and commercial centres
- Retail
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Culture and creativity
- Aquaculture

Minerals

Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

Movement

Spaces

Resources

Civic

Stewardship

Case Study 2: LDP Early Engagement

Which attributes of a high level planning authority does this relate to:

- Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
- Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
- Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
- Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
- Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
- Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
- Attribute 7: This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
- Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
- Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
- Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
- Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
- Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development

Title: Local Development Plan (LDP3) early engagement

Context

There are three key expectation of new style local development plans, and one of these is for local development plans to be 'people-centred'. Engagement is an important part of this, and it is expected to be undertaken early, and be collaborative, meaningful and proportionate.

What happened?

The main elements of early engagement undertaken include:

'Have you say on Renfrewshire's places' survey – this survey is based on the Place Standard tool and offers the opportunity for people to score and comment on 14 different aspects of places in Renfrewshire covering issues such as moving around, natural space, and feeling safe. The survey was made available online, and promoted via social media and email, and hard copies of the survey were also made available in libraries. Survey responses provide a rich source of information about specific places in Renfrewshire and will be used to inform the local development plans and local place plans.

'Call for ideas' survey – this survey offered the opportunity for individuals and organisations to suggest ideas and proposals for specific sites in Renfrewshire. It provided an opportunity for the development industry to identify their area of interest, giving the Council an idea of areas of developer interest and pressure. It also provided an opportunity for members of the community to identify small and medium scale sites and projects, which would enhance local areas. The 'call for ideas' results will be used to inform the local development plan process and local place plans.

Young person engagement – the Planning Service has established good links with the Council's Youth Services and Community Learning and Development teams in order to progress engagement in the local development plan process with children and young people. After a few meetings at officer level, a meeting was held with Renfrewshire Youth Voice, a representative group of young people to discuss ideas for children and young person engagement. The children and young person versions of the place standard tool were shared with the group and it was agreed that an adapted version of the survey would be a good way to engage. The group advised, however, that an online version of the survey would be unlikely to deliver many responses, and that workshops with young people would be a better way to progress. Contact was made with Renfrewshire's secondary schools and a session plan developed in collaboration with Youth Services for delivery in the schools. Workshops were then held in May and June. The session was broken down into 4 parts: a short icebreaker, to get the participants comfortable speaking in the group; group work with a map of the school catchment where participants could mark places they liked and didn't like; group discussions around the place standard questions, with comments recorded on flipchart and post-its; and individual completion of the place standard wheel.

Local Place Plans – after issuing an invitation to prepare local place plans in May 2023, information sessions were held for community councils and community development trusts in March 2024, at which information on how to prepare a local place plan and the support available

from the Council was presented. There have been subsequent 1-2-1 with some community organisations, and a number have commenced preparation of local place plans.

Areas of collaboration

Lead officer: alan.williamson@renfrewshire.gov.uk

Collaboration: Renfrewshire Council Youth Services and Community Learning and Development; Renfrewshire Youth Voice; Renfrewshire secondary schools; community councils; development trusts; development industry.

What was the overall result?

Engagement on the local development plan is an ongoing process. However, engagement to date has provided:

232 responses to the 'Have your say on Renfrewshire's places' survey

89 'Call for ideas' survey responses

7 secondary school workshops, engaging with approximately 100 pupils. Fifty-two students completed the feedback questionnaire rating the session 4.42 out of 5. 64% of participants believe they could make a positive change in their community after taking part in the session (an additional 31% believed they maybe could).

12 organisations attended the local place plan information sessions, with 5 additional one-to-one sessions held with community organisations on the local development plan/local place plans.

The engagement responses will inform the local development plan and local place plans, and will be useful for other services within the Council.

Lessons learned

'Have your say...' survey – the lesson learned here is that an online version of the survey promoted through Council social media has not provided a sufficient level of response across all areas within the Council. The survey is detailed and takes a bit of time to complete, and it is expected that many people may have started it but not completed/submitted it. There are

geographic and demographic gaps in responses. The online survey will need to be supplemented with workshop sessions to increase the response level.

Young person engagement – working with Youth Services has proven beneficial. It has created links between Planning and Youth Services that can be built upon, and has provided connections into schools that Planning might not have achieved by itself. Having Youth Services staff who are used to engaging with young people has proven important, for example using a simple, fun icebreaker to start the meeting and helping the young people find their voice was helpful, as was having a clear session plan indicating how much time to spend on each activity.

‘Call for Ideas’ survey – it has proven helpful to run this at an early stage so as to have an early indication of the extent and location of developer interest. Although no decisions of development site allocations will be made at this stage, having awareness of where development pressure is likely allows for early thinking with regard to, for example, infrastructure first. A ‘call for ideas’ rather than a call for sites has also enabled a number of proposals to be submitted by the community for smaller sites.

What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

NPF4

Sustainable places

- Climate change and nature crisis
- Climate mitigate and adaptation
- Biodiversity
- Natural Places
- Soils
- Forestry, woodland and trees
- Historic assets and places
- Green belts
- Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- Coast development
- Energy

- Zero waste
- Sustainable transport

Liveable places

- Design, quality and place
- Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- Quality homes
- Rural homes
- Infrastructure first
- Heat and cooling
- Blue and green infrastructure
- Play, recreation and sport
- Flood risk and water management
- Health and safety
- Digital Infrastructure

Productive places

- Community Wealth Building
- Business and industry
- City, town, local and commercial centres
- Retail
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Culture and creativity
- Aquaculture
- Minerals

Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- Movement

Spaces

Resources

Civic

Stewardship

Case Study 3: Uniform Case Management Optimisation

Which attributes of a high level planning authority does this relate to:

- Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
 - Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
 - Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
 - Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
 - Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
 - Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
 - Attribute 7: This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
 - Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
 - Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
 - Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
 - Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
 - Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development
-

Title: Uniform Case Management Optimisation

Context

In recent years efforts have been made nationally to improve the digital capabilities of the planning system in Scotland with a view to improving efficiency and inclusiveness. Simultaneously, Renfrewshire Council is attempting to make better use of digital technologies, both internally and externally when engaging with the public and other stakeholders.

What happened?

Development management started using the Uniform case management system in April 2021. However, the inability of staff to meet for in-person training during the pandemic and a lack of resources meant the software's capabilities were not fully realised. Staff were unsure of how to use the software and we remained too reliant on internal emails and spreadsheets. Furthermore, many processes within the department had not changed in years, with existing ways of working imported into Uniform regardless of whether they were still efficient.

The appointment of a Uniform Co-Ordinator in September 2023 has provided the resource to optimise how development management uses the software and undertake a wider review of processes and procedures.

A group of officers met with the Uniform Co-Ordinator to map the journey applications take through the department and the tasks that need to be undertaken at each step. While allowing officers to make faster decisions was at the forefront of the process, consideration was also given to how Uniform could be used to improve public understanding of the decision-making process. More effective ways of completing tasks such as producing the weekly list and collating performance figures were also identified.

Areas of collaboration

Despite being a project that related solely to development management, many of the benefits have only been possible because of collaborative working with others.

Renfrewshire was the last planning department in Scotland to start using Uniform. In this instance, being a late adopter was beneficial as it enabled us to observe best practice in other Planning Authorities and adopt ways of working that had been proven to work elsewhere. The Knowledge Hub and links staff members have with other authorities have been key in the transfer of knowledge.

Although the Uniform upgrades have been led by officers in the planning department, other members of staff within the Council have assisted. Staff within the Council's GIS team have helped develop processes to extract and sort the data from Uniform that is required to monitor performance. The links forged with the GIS team will hopefully prove beneficial in the future given the benefits easily accessible spatial data and enhanced spatial analysis can bring to planning.

What was the overall result?

The optimisation of Uniform has helped the planning system in Renfrewshire become more efficient, transparent and robust.

Publishing consultee comments online has allowed the public to read what consultees are saying in full rather than relying on the summary provided in the report of handling. As well as improving the public's understanding of how we reach decisions, this has also reduced the number of emails from agents asking to see comments as they are now available to view within a day or two of the response being received.

Similarly, a spreadsheet was previously used to review reports as well as prepare, review and issue decision notices. This process – itself a workaround from when the pandemic meant the previous paper based process could not be used – was slow and there was a risk that the spreadsheet could be accidentally deleted. A series of tasks have been created, with each task instantly appearing in the relevant officer's work queue as soon as the previous step has been completed. As well as allowing decisions to be issued more quickly, the system is now more robust in that issuing decisions is no longer reliant on a spreadsheet that can be edited by everyone.

New procedures for creating reports of handling have also been implemented in conjunction with new report templates that better comply with legislation. Where previously reports were created using word documents, they are now generated from information officers populate into Uniform as the application progresses towards determination. Standardised wording for sections of the report have also been created to avoid individual officers writing unique pieces of text for similar applications. This has made writing and generating reports of handling faster and more consistent.

Although only processes and procedures within development management have been examined so far, given the benefits it is intended that how enforcement cases are handled within Uniform will be reviewed to obtain similar efficiencies. Likewise, as the capabilities of Uniform are now better understood it is intended that we will start using the software to process street naming and numbering requests as well as handle Road Construction Consents.

Lessons learned

While the optimisation of Uniform has helped improve how the department operates, it is important not to understate how difficult the process has been.

The employment of a Uniform Co-Ordinator has made a big difference, with their specialist skillset and ability to focus solely on the project improving the speed at which change occurred. As further attempts are made to improve the digital capabilities of the department – for example, making better use of GIS – it will be important to remember that additional resources are sometimes needed. While costly in the short term, the longer term benefits a digital first approach can bring in terms of increased transparency, quicker decision making and better outcomes for communities all justify the investment in the long run.

What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

Please tick all the below outcomes that this example worked towards:

NPF4

Sustainable places

Climate change and nature crisis

Climate mitigate and adaptation

Biodiversity

Natural Places

Soils

Forestry, woodland and trees

Historic assets and places

Green belts

Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings

Coast development

Energy

Zero waste

Sustainable transport

Liveable places

Design, quality and place

Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods

Quality homes

Rural homes

Infrastructure first

- Heat and cooling
- Blue and green infrastructure
- Play, recreation and sport
- Flood risk and water management
- Health and safety
- Digital Infrastructure

Productive places

- Community Wealth Building
- Business and industry
- City, town, local and commercial centres
- Retail
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Culture and creativity
- Aquaculture
- Minerals

Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- Movement
 - Spaces
 - Resources
 - Civic
 - Stewardship
-

Case Study 3: Cultural Heritage Programme

Which attributes of a high level planning authority does this relate to:

- Attribute 1: The Planning Authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity
 - Attribute 2: The Planning Authority has a valued and supported workforce
 - Attribute 3: This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement
 - Attribute 4: This Planning Authority has sound governance
 - Attribute 5: This Planning Authority has effective leadership
 - Attribute 6: This Planning Authority has a robust policy and evidence base
 - Attribute 7: This Planning Authority makes best use of data and digital technology
 - Attribute 8: This Planning Authority has effective and efficient decision making processes
 - Attribute 9: This Planning Authority has good customer care
 - Attribute 10: This Planning Authority has effective engagement and collaboration with stakeholders and communities
 - Attribute 11: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of sustainable, liveable and productive places
 - Attribute 12: This Planning Authority supports the delivery of consented development
-

Title: Cultural Heritage Applications

Context

Planning and listed building applications were submitted for the development and refurbishment of key historic listed buildings within Paisley Town Centre. The proposals included the extension and refurbishment of Paisley Museum and the refurbishment of Paisley Town Hall, both category A listed buildings and key flagship visitor attractions within Paisley Town Centre.

The works to these culturally significant buildings are part of a wider investment in Paisley Town Centre aimed at using Paisley's unique and internationally-significant cultural heritage assets.



What happened?

Both projects were subject to extensive pre-application discussions prior to the submission of applications and on-going discussions throughout the application process. The details of all the development elements were discussed comprehensively as the proposals evolved.

Areas of collaboration

Discussions were undertaken with Historic Environment Scotland, Renfrewshire Council Planning, the applicant and the applicant's architects.

Paisley Museum

Pre-Planning Activities:

Review of Enabling Works

Pre-Enabling Works Museum Site Visit

Pre-Planning Presentation

Following the aforementioned pre-application activities, feedback was given by Planning and HES on various aspects of the proposal which resulted in a rigorous review of the design including an assessment of alternatives.

Paisley Townhall

Pre-Planning Activities:

Pre-Planning Presentation and Town Hall Site Visit

Feedback given by Planning and HES which resulted in clarification of various aspects of the proposal including proposed materials and functionality of the building.

What was the overall result?

Extensive consultation with regards to the heritage assets that provide the context for the proposals through the design and development stages helped to balance the cultural heritage aspect of the developments with the functionality of the building.

Paisley Museum Outcomes

- The creation of a more visible entrance;
- Review of new building heights with specific regard to the relationship with levels and historic Honeyman Buildings;
- Reduction of the dominance of courtyard retaining wall;
- Creation of a more respectful relationship with historic Aspe;
- Reduction of balcony demolition/removal;
- Retention of more historic fabric for records; improved balcony balustrade design to mitigate loss of historic character;
- Minimising loss of fabric/symmetry to historic Museum Hall.

Paisley Town Hall Outcomes

- Reduction in stone cleaning;
- Staining mitigation;
- Consideration on materials and design for external balcony;
- Retention and re-use of entrance gates;
- Key consideration given to refurbishment of stage and auditorium to ensure retention of historic fabric whilst taking account of functionality.

Lessons learned

Early discussions with key stakeholders ensured that key issues within the proposals were identified at an early stage and assisted the applicants in preparing the applications for submission.

Within the submission, pre-application advice from Historic Environment Scotland and the Council had been taken on board with significant changes made to reflect the cultural importance of the listed buildings involved and their status within the Paisley Town Centre Conservation Area. The developments contribute to the vitality and viability of Paisley Town Centre and attention to detail was paramount in ensuring efficiency in the planning process and resulting in a key cultural destination developments for Paisley and Renfrewshire.

What contribution did it make towards delivering outcomes?

Please tick all the below outcomes that this example worked towards:

NPF4

Sustainable places

- Climate change and nature crisis
- Climate mitigate and adaptation
- Biodiversity
- Natural Places
- Soils
- Forestry, woodland and trees
- Historic assets and places
- Green belts
- Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings
- Coast development
- Energy
- Zero waste
- Sustainable transport

Liveable places

- Design, quality and place
- Local living and 20 minute neighbourhoods
- Quality homes
- Rural homes
- Infrastructure first
- Heat and cooling
- Blue and green infrastructure
- Play, recreation and sport
- Flood risk and water management
- Health and safety
- Digital Infrastructure

Productive places

- Community Wealth Building
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- Retail
- Rural development
- Tourism
- Culture and creativity
- Aquaculture
- Minerals

Place and Wellbeing Outcomes

- Movement
- Spaces
- Resources
- Civic
- Stewardship