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improvement service
NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT

NATIONAL PLANNING IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

Improvement Action Progress Update 2026

Dundee City Council



Dundee City NPIF Annual Report (Year Three - 2026)

Foreword

This foreword presents Dundee City Council Planning Service's Year 3 update on the Improvement Action Plan. It summarises progress across the five key themes of the Improvement Framework: People, Culture, Tools, Engage and Place, and reflects the ongoing commitment to service improvement.

The Planning Service has made good progress on a broad range of improvement actions identified through the Improvement Framework. Several actions have been fully implemented and embedded within normal service delivery, whilst others continue to progress as part of longer-term work programmes linked to the Local Development Plan and wider service improvements.

People

Significant progress has been made in strengthening workforce development and succession planning. The appointment of a Planning Training Coordinator has helped establish a more structured approach to identifying and addressing training needs across the service. This complements the ongoing use of Quality Conversations, which continue to support staff development, identify skills gaps and encourage broader experience across different planning functions. Alongside this, successful recruitment activity has resulted in all vacant posts being filled at the time of writing, strengthening service capacity and supporting succession planning. The successful student placement programme with the University of Dundee has also helped promote planning as a career and strengthen links with future planning professionals.

Culture

Several actions have moved from initial development into established practice. Councillor training and briefing sessions have enhanced understanding of planning issues and supported informed decision-making. This will continue to be done through mandatory training (when implemented) as well as additional training on relevant matters when necessary. More broadly, the continued emphasis on cross-service working, particularly between Planning and Environment colleagues, has strengthened communication, improved problem solving and fostered a positive culture of collaboration.

Tools

Progress demonstrates the increasing use of evidence-based and digital approaches to support planning activities. The completion of the Open Space Audit has provided a robust evidence base for the preparation of the forthcoming Open Space Strategy, which remains a key priority moving forward. GIS technologies, including Survey123, Dashboards and StoryMaps, continue to play an important role in supporting engagement, consultation and evidence gathering, improving both accessibility and transparency of planning information.



Improvements to application processing times have also been supported through service reviews and targeted improvement work.

Engage

Improvements to the planning webpages have enhanced access to pre-application advice. Community engagement continues to be embedded within Local Development Plan preparation through the Development Plan Scheme, although further work remains in relation to customer feedback and customer satisfaction processes as part of a wider programme of customer service improvements.

Place

The Council has successfully progressed several strategic planning initiatives. The City Centre Strategic Investment Plan has been approved and embedded as a material consideration, providing a clearer framework for future investment and regeneration. Work on the Eastern Quarter Masterplan continues to support these ambitions. The Delivery Programme has also been established as an important mechanism for coordinating development priorities and partnership working across the city, with implementation and monitoring now forming part of ongoing business activity.

Conclusion

Overall, most actions identified through self-assessment and peer review are now completed, demonstrating substantial progress against the Improvement Framework. Several actions have become embedded within routine service delivery, while a smaller number remain ongoing where they support longer-term strategic objectives. Collectively, these improvements have strengthened governance, staff development, customer engagement, partnership working and service performance, contributing to a more effective, resilient and forward-looking Planning Service.

Introduction

The National Planning Improvement Framework (NPIF) provides an approach to supporting improvement across Scotland's planning authorities. In 2026, planning authorities were asked to report on the progress made in implementing their Improvement Action Plans and outline their next steps. Actions previously reported as Completed or Not Feasible are not included in this year's update, while the original action numbering has been retained to support tracking over time.

Each improvement action plan sets out:

- What the planning authority has agreed as its priority activities
- Whether these have short-, medium- or long-term timescales
- The owner of the actions
- The resources needed



Link to Previous Improvement Action Plans and Performance Assessments.

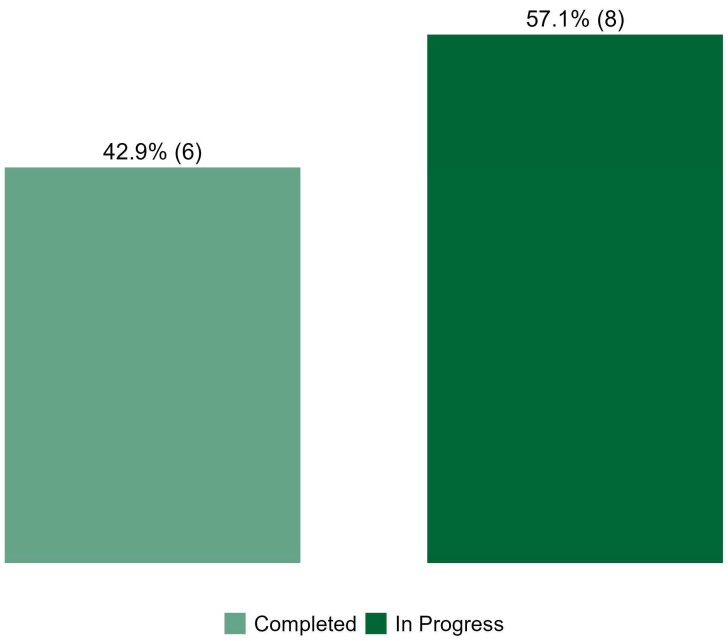
In 2026 the planning authorities are to update on their progress with the improvement actions. This report sets out the progress Dundee City has made, detailing any updates to actions, any further actions and plans for further collaboration with peer partners.

Planning Improvement Actions Progress Update

This section details each of the improvement actions and the progress the planning authority has made, excluding actions reported as Completed or Not Feasible in 2024-25.

This report updates on 14 improvement actions that remained active for reporting purposes in 2026.

The status of the actions is shown below:



Action 2: Undertake a review of the discretionary charging framework to enable service investment and support cost recovery. This will be monitored to ensure that the level of discretionary charging is regularly reviewed to ensure an effective service for customers.

Completed

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Following publication of the revised fee regulations, a review of discretionary charging was undertaken and implemented during 2025. The revised charging arrangements were successfully introduced and embedded within service operations. Ongoing monitoring arrangements are now in place to ensure charging levels remain appropriate and support effective service delivery.

Action 3: The creation of a Planning Training Coordinator role, enabling upskilling of members of the team.

Completed

What was the outcome of completing this action?

A Planning Training Coordinator was appointed and work commenced to identify training needs across the Planning Service. Training requirements were assessed, opportunities for both internal and external training were identified and promoted, and a more coordinated approach to staff development was established. The action has strengthened workforce skills and supported continuous professional development across the service.

Action 6: Training to community groups on planning matters.

In Progress

Progress against this action: During 2025, the Planning Service, Communities Team and Planning Aid Scotland worked collaboratively to develop training opportunities on planning matters for community councils and neighbourhood representative structures. Training needs and areas of interest were identified through engagement with community groups, helping to strengthen understanding of the planning system and improve participation in planning matters.

The following next steps are proposed: The Planning Service will continue to work with the Communities Team to review the effectiveness of training and engagement activities and identify any further support requirements. Engagement with community councils and community groups continues through a range of formal and informal channels, including on specific planning issues and local priorities as they arise. This action remains ongoing to support effective communication, participation and engagement with communities, with activities continuing to evolve in response to emerging needs and priorities.

The Communities Team have confirmed that community councils were offered bespoke planning training through Planning Aid Scotland as part of Dundee City Council's community council training programme during early 2026. Dundee City Council also intends to offer further training for community councils in 2027, delivered by the Community Empowerment Team, which will include elements relating to planning, community empowerment, and the role and responsibilities of community councillors.



Action 7: Review Scheme of Delegation, where it relates to planning, and suggest changes as required.

Completed

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Council Officers undertook a review of the Scheme of Delegation and prepared revised arrangements for consideration through the Council's governance processes. The updated Scheme of Delegation was subsequently approved, published and implemented, providing greater clarity regarding decision-making responsibilities and procedures.

Action 9: Joint working to produce an Open Space Strategy to support the progression of the review of the LDP.

In Progress

Progress against this action: An Open Space Audit was completed in partnership with Ironside Farrar to assess and map the quantity, quality and accessibility of open spaces across the city. This work has provided the evidence base for the preparation of a new Open Space Strategy, which is currently being drafted.

The following next steps are proposed: The Planning Service will continue to support Environment colleagues in finalising the draft Open Space Strategy. The Strategy will provide a framework for the development, maintenance and use of green infrastructure across the city and help inform the ongoing review of the Local Development Plan. Consultation on the draft Strategy is anticipated in 2027.

Action 10: Utilise key GIS tools such as Survey123, StoryMaps, and Dashboards in Local Development Plan (LDP) consultation processes, especially the Place Standard Tool and Play Sufficiency Survey.

In Progress

Progress against this action: GIS tools continue to be used to support evidence gathering and engagement activities associated with the preparation of the Local Development Plan. The use of GIS mapping, Survey123, StoryMaps and Dashboards has enabled information to be presented in an accessible and user-friendly format and has supported consultation and data collection activities across the city. Most recently, a StoryMap was used to present the Business Land Audit.

The following next steps are proposed: As the Local Development Plan progresses, GIS tools will continue to be used to present information visually and support future consultation and engagement activities. A case study highlighting the benefits of these approaches may also be developed as part of future reporting.



Action 12: Address resource issues on Enforcement.

Completed

What was the outcome of completing this action?

Agreement was reached on the business case for resourcing the Planning Enforcement function and recruitment arrangements were progressed. A full-time Planning Enforcement Officer was successfully appointed during 2025/26, strengthening the service's capacity to investigate and address planning enforcement matters and improving responsiveness to cases.

Action 13: Review the customer feedback procedure.

In Progress

Progress against this action: Initial consideration has been given to this action as part of a wider review of customer service improvements within the Planning Service. Opportunities to enhance customer interactions and strengthen customer focus are currently being explored.

The following next steps are proposed: The Planning Service will continue to review customer service arrangements, including how customer feedback is received, monitored and acted upon, to identify opportunities for improvement and enhance the customer experience.

Action 14: Develop a process to allow objections/representations to planning applications to be visible on the planning portal.

In Progress

Progress against this action: The Planning Service has explored options to ensure sensitive personal information contained within representations can be appropriately protected when published online. This included reviewing redaction tools, procedures and resource implications to enable representations to be published whilst ensuring compliance with data protection requirements. A suitable process has now been identified.

The following next steps are proposed: The agreed process will be implemented later in 2026. Following implementation, the Planning Service will monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements and identify any further refinements required.

Action 16: Improve and encourage active participation in the customer satisfaction surveys.

In Progress

Progress against this action: This action is being considered as part of the wider programme of customer service improvements across the Planning Service. Initial work has focused on



identifying opportunities to enhance customer interactions and strengthen customer focus within service delivery.

The following next steps are proposed: Further review will be undertaken to identify measures that improve engagement with customers and increase participation in customer satisfaction surveys, supporting ongoing service improvement.

Action 17: Review and enhance an approach to collaborative engagement with Community Groups.

In Progress

Progress against this action: Community engagement has remained a key element of the Local Development Plan process, guided by the Participation Statement within the Development Plan Scheme. The Planning Service has continued to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including community groups, community councils and the Council's Communities Team, ensuring meaningful opportunities for participation throughout plan preparation. Community engagement is an integral part of the Local Development Plan review process and has supported engagement on both strategic and local planning matters.

The following next steps are proposed: The Planning Service continues to work collaboratively with community groups, community councils and the Communities Team as part of the ongoing review of the Local Development Plan. Engagement has taken place through a range of channels, including targeted discussions with community councils on specific planning matters and wider community engagement activities. Effective community participation remains an integral part of the Local Development Plan review process and is being undertaken in accordance with statutory consultation requirements and Scottish Government guidance. This action will remain open while the Local Development Plan review progresses, with further discussions to be held with the Communities Team to identify additional opportunities for engagement and participation.

Action 18: Implement the actions of the City Centre Strategic Investment Plan.

In Progress

Progress against this action: The City Centre Strategic Investment Plan has been agreed by the Council and is now a material planning consideration in the assessment of relevant planning applications. Priority regeneration initiatives continue to progress, including work associated with the Eastern Quarter and a range of city centre improvement projects. Progress has also been made in developing supporting projects and initiatives relating to the city centre. The Strategic Investment Plan represents a long-term delivery framework rather than a discrete project.

The following next steps are proposed: The Planning Service will continue to support the delivery of the City Centre Strategic Investment Plan and associated city centre regeneration initiatives. As a long term 30-year plan, progress has continued through ongoing work on key projects, including the Eastern Quarter Masterplan, Union Street, public realm



improvements, transport initiatives, and the development of parking and lighting strategies. Given the long-term nature of the Strategic Investment Plan and the evolving priorities associated with city centre regeneration, this action remains ongoing. While individual projects and milestones will be completed over time, the Planning Service will continue to support and contribute to future phases of work as new priorities and opportunities emerge. As such, this action should remain open, reflecting its role as a continuing area of activity rather than a time-limited project.

Action 19: Implementation and monitoring of Local Development Plan Action Programme.

Completed

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The Council has continued to work with a range of partners to progress actions within the LDP Delivery Programme (formerly LDP Action Programme), supporting strategic developments including the Eden Project, Waterfront office development and Michelin Scotland Innovation Parc. The Delivery Programme is now embedded within normal business processes and will continue to be reviewed and updated as required, including a formal review programmed for 2027.

Action 20: Undertake an audit of the Section 75 process.

Completed

What was the outcome of completing this action?

The Planning Service undertook a review of existing Section 75 procedures, supported by an external audit commissioned by Dundee City Council. The findings and recommendations informed improvements to working practices and helped support a more efficient and effective approach to managing legal agreements. The review has established a basis for ongoing monitoring and future service improvements where required.

New Proposed Planning Improvement Actions

The section below details further improvement actions added.

No additional improvement actions were added in this year's update.

Peer Collaborative Review Follow Up

In 2026, planning authorities were asked to provide an update on their check-in with their peer collaborative review group, including any follow-up meeting or progress update by email.

Status of the peer review follow-up meeting:



A summary progress update on delivery of the Improvement Action Plan will be shared with peer review partners by email.

