



National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 5: The planning authority has effective leadership



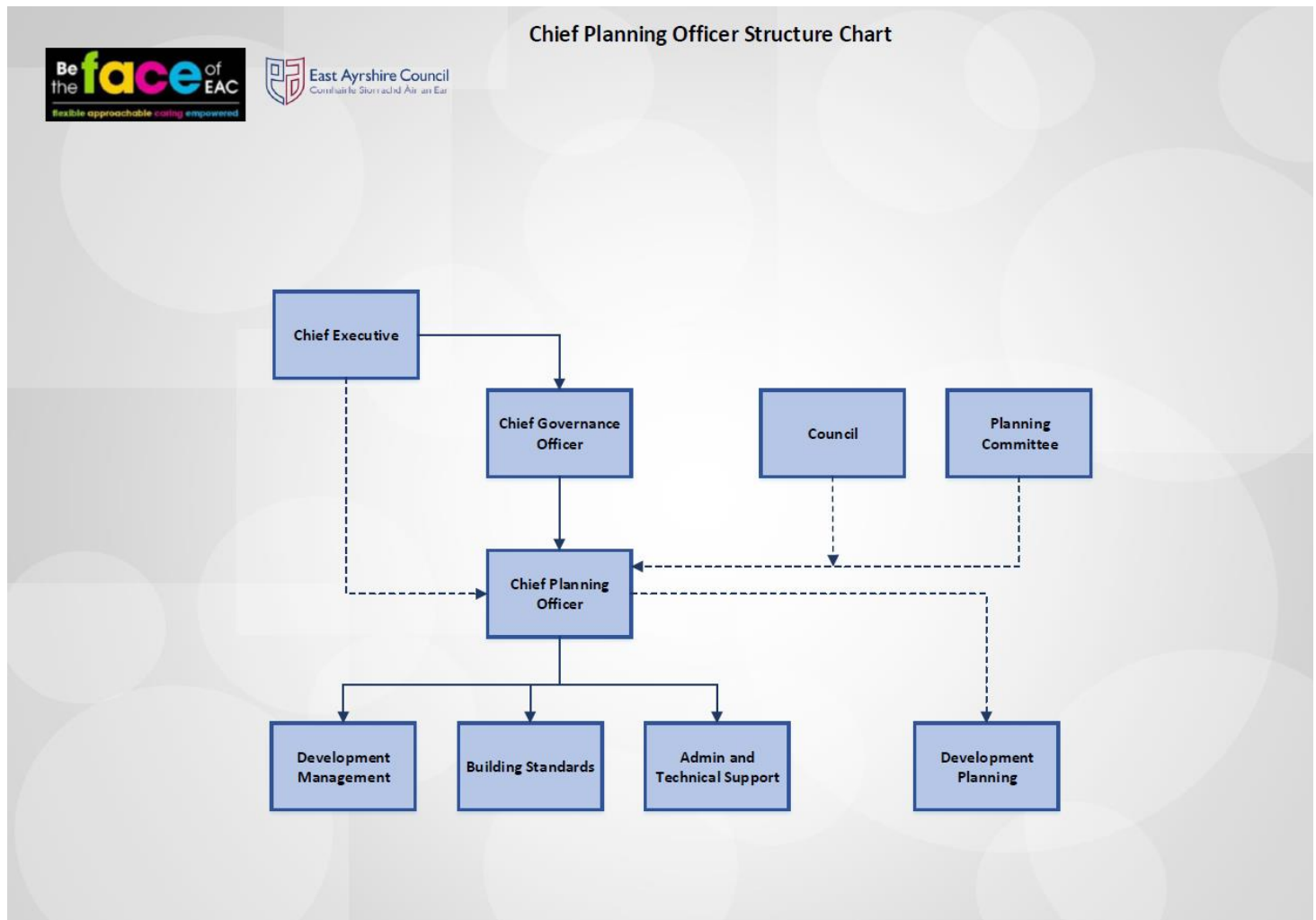
Chief Planning Officer

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) requires that each planning authority must appoint a Chief Planning Officer. The appointment and role of the Chief Planning Officer became a statutory requirement in April 2024. The person should hold chartered membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and should have the relevant skills and experience for the role of Chief Planning Officer including effective communication, stakeholder relationship management externally and throughout the authority, planning and delivery skills and leadership skills.

The Chief Planning Officer guidance indicates that the role is to help strengthen leadership on planning and corporate recognition of the importance and positive influence of planning within their authorities. The duties and responsibilities of the Chief Planning Officer are around 5 main attributes:

- *Professional Advisor*
- *Delivering National Planning Priorities*
- *Champion of place*
- *Head of Profession*
- *Performance Improvement*

The findings and report of the Best Value Service Review of Governance Services (as detailed in Attributes 1 and 3) recognised the need to appoint a statutory Chief Planning Officer and to be appointed at an appropriate level of seniority to ensure that the officer can add value to strategic objectives and aspirations within the Council. As Head of the Profession for Planning, the Chief Planning Officer will influence key planning, place and architecture decisions. Reports to Planning Committee are in the name of the Chief Planning Officer and there is a structural link to the Development Planning and Regeneration Team with the Chief Planning Officer having the final sign off in terms of the Development Plan.



The role has now been filled and Pamela Clifford was appointed as the new Chief Planning Officer and started the role on 29th April 2024. See case study.

Professional Advisor

The role of the Chief Planning Officer in East Ayrshire Council is to deliver on the vision of and the six priorities of the Strategic Plan. The Chief Planning Officer is a member of the Council's Corporate Management Team and the Governance Team supports the Senior Management Team and elected members in developing corporate objective and translating these into place –based strategies. Key skills of the post involve the delivery on a strategic vision and working collaboratively in partnership with senior managers and elected members to promote and achieve the Strategic Plan priorities.

A recent example is a significant housing development to the North of Kilmarnock where a more collaborative approach was taken with the developer to achieve biodiversity enhancements and a more coordinated masterplan layout. This approach was welcomed by the developer.

“Many thanks for meeting with us earlier this week, it always good to sit round a table and talk all things planning and development. We appreciate the officer time on the current Buntonhill/Northcraigs allocated site and hopefully we can progress this through to determination later this year as discussed. It would be great to talk about how we could assist realising the local ambitions for Kilmarnock, and sit down with your policy team to see how that could be achieved collaboratively”.

Andrew McNab | Senior Land and Planning Manager | Hallam Land Management Ltd



Delivering National Planning Priorities

The Chief Planning Officer is currently the Scottish Convenor of Royal Town Planning Institute 2024 whereby she represents the planning profession both private and public sector in Scotland and nationally promoting the value of the Institute and Planning at a national level. She regularly attends the General Assembly which provides a forum for debate about the development of planning policy and practice. She also communicates through RTPI monthly bulletin, the Scottish Planner and through X @ConvenorRTPIS which has over 1815 followers. She recently hosted the Sir Patrick Geddes Commemorative Lecture in May 2024 and will hold an Annual Conference in October 2024.

Champion of Place

The role of Chief Planning Officer supports place making ambitions within the Council and it is the Council's placemaking champion and encourages working collaboratively with other Council officers, elected members and developers. The Chief Planning Officer has a passion about Place and has a strong track record of delivering multi-scale Projects and quality Placemaking, NPF4 has shifted the focus to place and there are good opportunities in East Ayrshire – through the Levelling Up Programme, the Town Centre Strategic Advisory Group and the Council's Ayrshire Growth Deal proposal as well as other major development sites to encourage placemaking qualities to be at the forefront of development proposals.

Head of Profession

The Chief Planning Officer is the Head of the Planning Profession in East Ayrshire and the most senior responsible qualified officer for the Council's Planning Service. She is the main contact for key stakeholders on planning and place and represents the Council externally on various external groups. She is a member of RTPI and has been a Chief Planning Officer for over 14 years with substantial experience of facilitating large scale regeneration and major development, delivering on the Local Development process and on large scale project management. As detailed above the Chief Planning Officer is Scottish Convener of the RTPI 2024 and Chair of Heads of Planning (Scotland). She represents these organisations and the Council at various groups such as the High Level Group, COSLA, SOLACE and the Scotland's Local Authority Professional Association Leadership 2024. She encourages team members to be part of HOPS sub- groups, RTPI Chapters and to attend workshops, Conferences and various events and meetings, to collaborate and develop further skills.

As previously detailed, the Strategic Manager – Development Planning and Regeneration is the Chair of the Development Planning sub-group and the Interim Development Management Manager is participant of the Development Management sub-group and the Climate and Energy sub-group. Team members are encouraged to gain RTPI charter membership. A number of the younger planners are licentiates and are working towards the assessments of Professional Competence.

Recently, one of the Planning Officers from the Development Planning Team wrote an article for the recent Scottish Planner discussing how the transformative impact of NPF4 on planning in Scotland – the challenges and opportunities it presents.

Performance and Improvement

In East Ayrshire, there is a strong recognition to deliver and support Fit for Future Services which results in excellent performance and customer service whilst delivering outcomes and development on the ground.

The role of the Chief Planning Officer is to embed continuous improvement in the Service and improvements have been identified previously through the Planning Performance Framework and the Best Value Service Review and either have been delivered or are being taken forward.

In terms of Continuous Improvement, work has commenced on a new Committee report format, review of the registration and validation process of applications, review of the Scheme of Delegation, digital transformation in terms of online forms and exploring moving to a new GIS platform.

The Chief Planning Officer is the interface between elected members and officers and Senior Planning Officers work closely with elected officers. As the postholder is fairly new to the post and the local authority, a strong work relationship is being developed by the Chief Planning Officer with elected members especially the Chair and Vice Chair and other Planning Committee members. This will be done through pre agenda meetings before the Planning Committee, informed briefing workshops on various service improvements such as the new Committee report format, Scheme of Delegation and identify training needs such as certain policies of LDP2 as well as ward site visit with the respective elected members.

Improvement Action Plan (Culture theme)

(1=Making excellent progress, 5= No progress)

Attribute	Score
3. This Planning Authority has embedded continuous improvement	2
4. This Planning Authority has sound governance	2
5. This Planning Authority has effective leadership	2

Based on the grading above, the following areas of improvement have been identified. Their level of importance (High/ Medium/ Low) and by when (short – 1 Year/ medium – 3 Years/ long term – 3+ Years).

Improvement Action	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
Attribute 3: Review of customer feedback form and process in connection with planning decisions to facilitate easier engagement and feedback by our customers and ensure that it is properly recorded and actioned. We will seek to align this work with the national survey to be undertaken by the National Planning Improvement team.	Planning Service and Improvement Service	Medium	Medium	Development Management and technical support staff
Attribute 4: Review of scheme of delegation to bring SoD up to date and to reflect relevant pressures and priorities. This will seek to ensure that the work of committee	Planning Service	High	Short	Service Managers

is proportionate to the nature of the development under consideration and ensure that smaller scale development is determined under delegated power, thereby allowing elected members to focus on strategic and complex developments.				
Attribute 4: Elected member training to bring forward a more structured and consistent approach and greater awareness of current wider development, news and innovation within the Scottish planning sector. We will seek to ensure that training is aligned with forthcoming Scottish Government guidance and legislation in respect of statutory councillor training and to support elected members in decision-making and knowledge gathering.	Planning Service, Elected members and Scottish Government	Medium	Short to Medium	Chief Planning Officer/ Development Management staff/Development Planning and possible external resource
Attribute 5: Corporate Management Team workshops to show links between planning and other departments on e.g. developer contributions, place and wellbeing outcomes. We will also involve external stakeholders in sharing good practice.	Planning Service Corporate Management Team	Medium	Short	Service Managers and Development Planning