



National Planning Improvement Framework

Attribute 2: The planning authority has a valued and supported workforce

Workforce Strategy



East Ayrshire Council recognises that the workforce is an organisation's most valuable resource and they benefit from the dedication, skills, values and diversity of a workforce that is focused on working together to achieve the aims of the Council's Strategic Plan and the overarching Community Plan. The Council has a Corporate Workforce Strategy 2022-27 which supported the Council's Transformation Strategy 2017-22. Significant workforce actions are being progressing or have been implemented. These actions have direct consequences for the Planning Service and include a Flexible Working policy, developing Career Change Pathways, developing place-based empowered teams, introducing multi skilled roles and developing a Young Workforce by the establishment of an Apprenticeship Framework. The Council also has implemented the Mentoring Framework which creates support and builds across the organisation from our young workforce to our senior leaders. The Strategic Manager in Development Planning and Regeneration is a mentor and mentee.

Whilst the Planning Service does not have its own Workforce Strategy it is intended for the next Governance Service Improvement Plan in Autumn 2024 that this will include an area of workforce planning and workforce profile which will identifies any workforce related actions. This will identify the direction for the workforce, financial constraints, skills gap, etc.

The Planning Service in East Ayrshire have a number of workforce challenges including how to recruit, retain and develop our employees to ensure we remain an employer of choice. In 2023-24 the Planning Team were more settled with regard to staff changes.

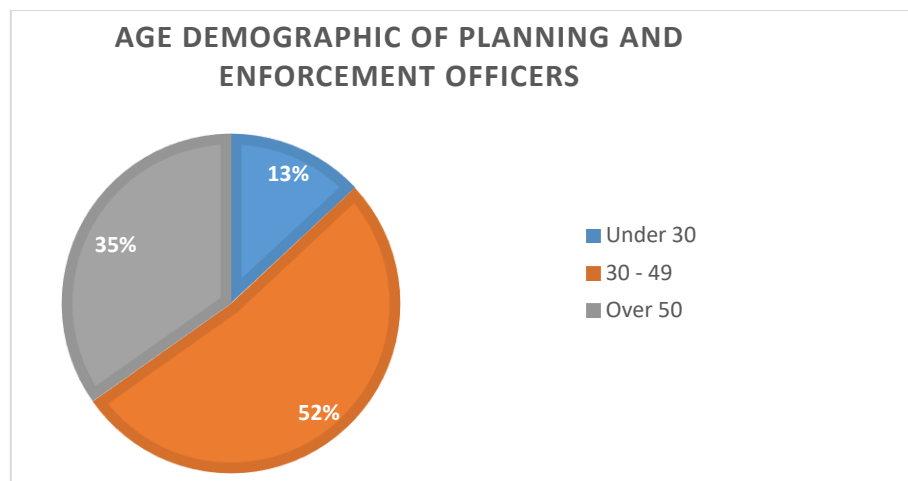
However recruitment of experienced Development Management and Enforcement staff has continued to prove difficult with vacancies in the team. With 3 posts in Development Management remaining vacant at the end of March 2024. However, the appointment of staff is proving a challenge for all local authority planning departments and the Council is an interested and active participant in the RTP1 /HOPS Future Planners Project. With an undergraduate accredited Planning Course in the University of West of Scotland (UWS) likely to take its first intakes in 2025, the Council will hopefully continue to be able to offer placements in future years to support the Future Planners Projects. It will continue to support existing Planning Courses in Dundee University and the postgraduate course in Glasgow University.

To this end the Council have a graduate intern post in Development Planning and also have a graduate planning officer post in Development Management. The graduate intern post is financed by the employability team of the Council and is a temporary post for 2 years.

The Age Demographic

5% of total East Ayrshire Council workforce is age 16-24 while age 45 and above equates to 51% of the workforce.

The workforce in both Development Planning, Development Management and Enforcement shows an ageing workforce with 35% of staff over 50 and over 50% in the 30-45 age group.



People Management

Support for staff is through the FACE Framework which develops qualities and behaviours as part of the Council's Workforce Plan. The Council's Face Framework supports the Council's Culture to be more flexible in the way we work, with greater collaboration and partnership working, with the ability to provide services closer to where communities need support and for employees to be equipped enabled and empowered to make effective decisions. It keeps staff motivated, engaged and to identify training needs.



FACE Time (annual development review) is a career conversation between the employee and the line manager. This was put in place to support individuals in their development whether they wish to progress or remain in the same role to equip them with the skills and knowledge to be the best they can be in their role enabling effective succession planning. The annual development review keeps staff motivated, engaged and to identify training needs. As part of the Council's succession planning framework it also develops a process for identifying critical skills and training so that employees are upskilled to assume new positions and responsibility.

Regular Team Meetings are held to share good practice, update on national and council issues and to take forward service improvements. All team members have one to ones which are more personal, individual and flexible and provide a safe space to discuss work and other related matters.

People Development

Staff attended a number of training events during 2023-24. Three young planners attended the RTPi Scottish Young Planners conference 2024 in Glasgow on Future Planners, two staff members participating in the RTPi Conference in Dundee in October 2023 on delivering a digital future for planning and a Planning Officer attended Scotland's EIA Conference 2023.

Conference attendance has the triple benefits of giving staff sometime away from daily workload to hear about new ideas and future thinking, making connections with other planners from across Scotland and hearing about projects in other areas that are directly relevant to what is going on in East Ayrshire.

The Planning Team were encouraged in May to take an hour out of their day to be inspired by the poet Kevin P.Gilday who was presenting the annual Sir Patrick Geddes Commemorative Lecture on the topic of the Poetics of Planning: how art can shape the future. Kevin encouraged planners to release our creativity skills and get back to why we came into the planning profession. There was an opportunity to write a piece of poetry during our lunch break. This is a piece of poetry by a member of the Planning Team.



***"A town is a rainstorm on an October day.
A plate of tapas mixing flavours and colours to
tantalise the palate.
A planner is a modernist painter who never
finishes her painting.
Hoping to achieve a garden full of bright
colours and inspiration.
The planning process is a pack of frantic wild
dogs protecting its prey each to achieve its
own.
A greenspace of grass against dense dark
buildings to let out the light.
The outcome is as good as the participants let it
be."***

Poem by a Town Planner – an unacknowledged poet of the physical world.

Other courses and workshops attended during the year included the Planning Skills session on NPF4 Biodiversity, onshore Wind Pipeline Analysis, Grid Improvements for Scotwind, and A Network for Net Zero: Consenting Pathways for 2030, HOPS Carbon Literary, Trees, Flooding, Housing, Open Space Strategies and Scottish Town Partnership workshop on Climate.

The Chief Planning Officer is Scottish Convenor of RTP1 2024 and is the Chair of Heads of Planning (Scotland/) 2024-25. The Development Planning and Regeneration Strategic Lead is the Chair of the Development Planning Sub-group for 2024-25. The Chair of HOPS provides leadership for 34 Planning Authorities and is HOPS Spokesperson for Media and Communications. She liaises with the Scottish Government, and attends the High Level Group on Performance and is supported by the various sub groups.

Other planning team members also participate in the various sub groups of HOPS - Development Planning sub-group, Development Management, Climate Change, Energy and Resources, Development Planning.

“I attended the Young Planner Conference organised by RTPI Scotland to deepen my understanding of Scottish Planning System. Various topics were discussed including community benefit, housing need and collaboration between developers and Local planning authorities (LPAs). The discussion on improving communication and different methods of communication was particularly insightful. Moreover, role of GIS in efficient planning was also highlight of the conference.

I gained valuable insights into fostering better collaboration and communication within the planning process. Moving forward, I intend to utilise these learnings to enhance my communication strategies and leverage GIS tools for more efficient assessment of planning applications.”

Syedda Laila

Planning Officer

East Ayrshire Council

Health and Wellbeing

The Council and the Planning Service have a focus on the wellbeing of the workforce and it recognises the responsibility as an employer to provide avenues of support both preventative and reactive to contribute positively to the physical and mental health of employees.

There are Wellbeing Supports on the Council intranet site where employees are able to find a wide range of information and organisations to contact for support.

These include a range of online wellbeing courses and a revised Flexible Working policy incorporating Hybrid Working arrangements as well access to early intervention assistance through Occupational Health Service and Employee Counselling Service in order to promote positive wellbeing.

The Council also encourages employees to volunteer and give back to their local community, giving them time away from their normal duties to help out a community or voluntary organisation. The employee is granted one day's paid leave per calendar year. Employee Supported Volunteering supports workforce development as well as contributing to the wellbeing of employees.

Improvement Action Plan (People theme)

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

Attribute	Score
1. The planning authority has sufficient resources and skills to maximise productivity	3
2. The planning authority has a value and supported workforce	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 Actions	Owner	Importance	Timescale	Resources
Attribute 1&3: Review of the Enforcement Function to encompass staffing, workload and digital and to increase the capacity of the enforcement function through upskilling of planning officers.	Planning Service	High	Short (to undertake) Medium (to implement)	Service Managers/ Enforcement Officers/ Development Management Team Leaders
Attribute1: Undertake a Specialist Skills Review in the Delivery of NPF4 and LDP3 and relate to Service Structure. We will feed the outcome of this review to the Improvement Service and HOPS to assist with the development of the Planning Hub.	Planning Service/ Improvement Service	High	Short (undertake) Medium (implementation)	Service Managers/ Greener Communities/ Environmental Health

Attribute 2: Undertake Workforce Strategy. We will work with the Council's Organisational Development and HR sections and external partners to deliver a pipeline of future leaders and skilled practitioners by ensuring that appropriate skills and training is provided. We will explore the possibility of utilising modern /graduate apprenticeships, working with the Council's Employability Service and University of the West of Scotland to deliver a future workforce. We will consider the impact of the Planning Hub on the service including our needs, skills and resources to ensure we maximise the output of our workforce.	Chief Planning Officer/ Governance Service/EAC OD,HR/ Improvement Service/ Universities/ UWS	Medium	Short (undertake) Long (implementation)	Service Managers/ Planning Staff
Attribute 2: Promote a positive healthy workplace culture which aligns with the Council's policies and Workforce Strategy building on meaningful work, open communication and FACE values through communication at work events, training and networking sessions within and outwith the office. Investigate and introduce measures for a less risk averse work environment.	Chief Planning Officer/ Planning Service/ Governance Service/EAC OD, HR.	Medium	Long	Planning Team/ EAC Organisational Development/Service Managers/Team Leaders