

Annual Report and Planning Performance Report

2012/13

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Aberdeen City and Shire is a growing and economically dynamic city-region with high quality environmental assets and exceptional quality of life. The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA), in partnership with others, has a key role in shaping the future development of the area.
- 1.2 This is the fifth annual report of the SDPA since its formation in 2008. This report covers the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 and incorporates the authority's 'Planning Performance Report'. The SDPA's audited accounts for 2012/13 are published separately on the SDPA's website.
- 1.3 This year has been an important one in the life of the SDPA, with the preparation and publication of the Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan being the key highlight.
- 1.4 This report provides the opportunity to both review the achievements of the past year and look forward to the year ahead. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the SDPA, while section 3 provides more detail on the preparation of the emerging strategic development plan (SDP) and other related workstreams. Section 4 covers the National Headline Indicators and section 5 presents information to demonstrate the performance of the SDPA against a defined set of themes. The final section of the report looks to the year ahead in terms of both priorities for the SDPA and service improvement objectives. Appendices are provided as appropriate to present more detailed information.
- 1.5 All 32 local planning authorities, 4 strategic development planning authorities and 2 national park authorities in Scotland are preparing performance reports in a common format. Due to the particular function of the SDPAs, their reports are more limited in scope. However, the SDPA is also required to prepare an annual report on its activities during the year and this has been incorporated into this report.

2. Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority

- 2.1 The Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA is one of four city-regions in Scotland and is made up of the areas of Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. However, the area covered by the SDP excludes that part of Aberdeenshire within the Cairngorms National Park (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Aberdeen City & Shire SDP Area



- 2.2 The SDPA was established in 2008 through the implementation of the Planning etc (Scotland) Act 2006, meeting for the first time on 18 September 2008. The SDPA's predecessor (the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Planning Committee) had started work on a replacement structure plan for the area and the initial task of the SDPA was to take that plan forward to approval by Scottish Ministers before starting work on a strategic development plan. The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers without modification in August 2009 and was commended at that year's Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning.
- 2.3 The SDPA is made up of 12 Councillors (six from Aberdeen City Council and six from Aberdeenshire Council) and a small dedicated officer team. More details are provided in section 5 below.
- 2.4 Figure 2 presents a broad overview of the area as compared to Scotland as a whole. It can be seen Aberdeen City and Shire accounts for around 6.5% of the landmass of Scotland and is home to just less than 9% of the Scottish population. It is an area characterised by high employment, low unemployment and a high rate of economic growth (Gross Value Added) over the last few years, the fastest growing in the whole of the UK by a significant margin (Inner London was the second fastest growing area between 2007 and 2011 at 13%).

Figure 2: City-Region Overview Statistics

	Aberdeen City & Shire (SDP Area where available*)	Scotland
Geographical Area*	5,050 sq km (6.5%)	77,933 sq km
Households* (2011 Census)	206,634 (8.7%)	2,372,777
Population* (2011 Census)	472,652 (8.9%)	5,295,403
Employment (June 2013)	256,000 (82%)	2,531,000 (72%)
Unemployment (July 2013)	4,546 (1.5%)	132,716 (3.8%)
Gross Value Added per head (2011)	£31,944 (25% growth, 2007-11)	£20,571 (7% growth, 2007-11)

3. SDPA activity during 2012/13

Strategic Development Plan

- 3.1 Due to the approval of the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan in August 2009, there was no need to fast-track the preparation of a replacement plan (legislation suggesting that a new plan should be submitted to Scottish Ministers by August 2013). The structure plan had also been prepared in anticipation of the legislation and guidance on strategic development plans, being much more concise, visionary and strategic than previous structure plans. As a consequence, the Aberdeen City and Shire SDP will be the last of the four SDPs to be approved by Scottish Ministers.
- 3.2 The engagement on the plan built on the engagement carried out on the current structure plan. Workshops were held with Councillors as well as Key Agencies and other stakeholders at an early stage to assess the scope of the work required. The consistent message was received that the current plan was fit for purpose and that the update should be light-touch.
- 3.3 Key Agencies were given the opportunity to comment on an early draft of the Proposed Plan which enabled any issues to be addressed before the formal representation stage. This resulted in no representations being received from the Scottish Government which was a welcome confirmation of the robustness of the plan preparation process.
- 3.4 The Proposed SDP is a robust and visionary plan for the future development of the area, identifying the need for a significant increase in historic levels of housing and commercial development as well as the infrastructure required to deliver it (see Figure 3). Two areas of policy have been identified as needing more detailed guidance at a

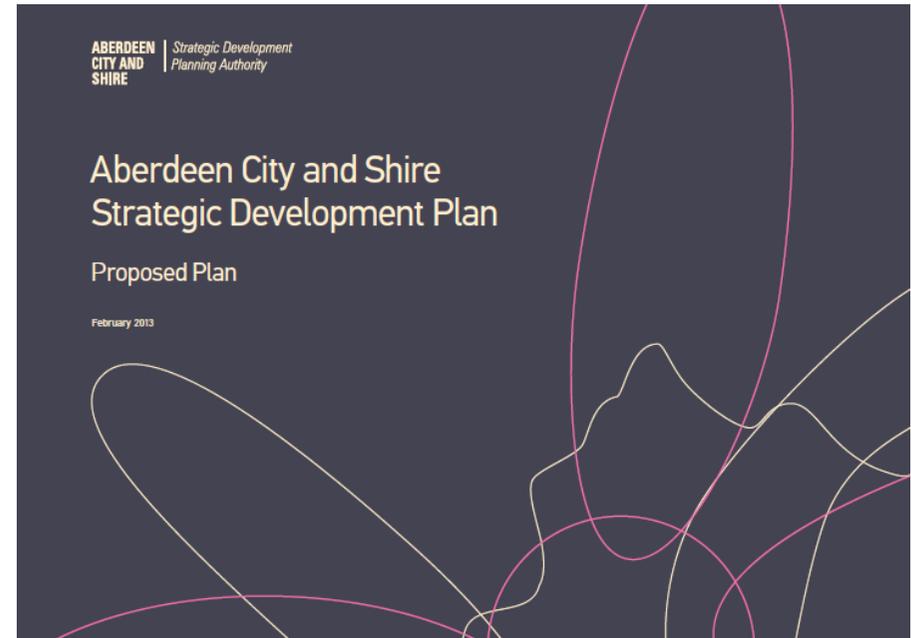
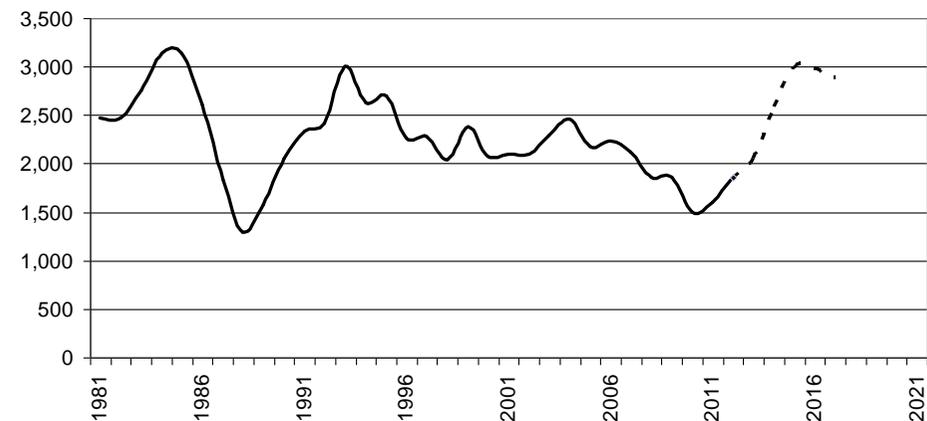


Figure 3: Historic and Programmed Housing Completions



strategic level which would not have been appropriate in the SDP itself. Work is progressing on a development framework for Peterhead South and the existing supplementary Planning Guidance will be refreshed as Supplementary Guidance to the SDP. Both of these work streams have been timetabled to coincide with the approval of the plan by Scottish Ministers.

- 3.5 At the end of March 2013 the period for representations on the Proposed SDP was about to close (12 April 2013). Since then, the plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers for examination in July 2013. The last meeting of the SDPA in 2013/14 should mark the approval of the SDP. Attention with then focus on the implementation of the plan through its action programme and start the preparatory work for the next plan.

Regional Transport Strategy Refresh

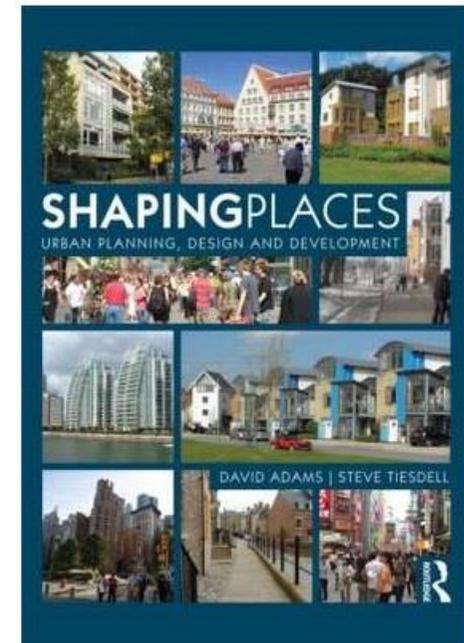
- 3.6 Officers from the SDPA worked closely with Nestrans (the Regional Transport Partnership) on the refresh of the Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) during the year. The preparation of the SDP and RTS refresh are consistent and complementary in content and were prepared in parallel, being submitted to Scottish Ministers within weeks of each other.

Consultation Responses

- 3.7 The SDPA responded to six consultations during the year; four from the Scottish Government, one from Scottish Water and one from Aberdeen Airport. Two of these responses were prepared jointly with Nestrans, with joint seminars being held by the SDPA with the Nestrans Board to facilitate these. Details of these consultations are set out below:
- Development Plan Examinations – Scottish Government – June 2012
 - Development Delivery – Scottish Government – June 2012
 - Draft Masterplan – Aberdeen Airport – June 2012
 - Shaping the Future of your water and waste water services – Scottish Water – Dec 2012
 - National Planning Framework (Early Engagement) – Scottish Government – Dec 2012
 - Scottish Planning Policy (Early Engagement) – Scottish Government – Dec 2012

Other activities

- 3.8 Officers worked with David Adams on a book published by him and the late Steve Tiesdell. Both academics worked in Aberdeen before moving to Glasgow and the Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan was used as a case study within the book, exploring the influence plans can have in shaping the behaviour of actors in the development process and wider property markets. “Shaping Places: Urban Planning, Design and Development” by David Adams and Steve Tiesdell was published by Routledge in September 2012.



4 National Headline Indicators (NHIs)

4.1 This section reports on the Key Outcome measures identified within the National Headline Indicators which are relevant to the work of the SDPA – plan preparation timescales and the availability of land for housing and employment.

Figure 4: National Headline Indicators

Key Outcome	2012-2013		
<p>Development Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> age of local/strategic development plan(s) (full years). <i>Requirement: less than 5 years</i> development plan scheme: on track? (Y/N) 	<p>3 yrs (at 31 March 2013)</p> <p>N</p>	<p>The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers in August 2009.</p>	<p>A decision was taken by the SDPA in September 2012 to defer consideration of the Proposed SDP for further consideration by the two councils. The Proposed Plan was considered by Aberdeenshire Council's Area Committees and the Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure Committee of Aberdeen City Council before being considered again by the SDPA in November 2013. The Proposed Plan was then ratified by both councils on 22 November and 19 December 2012. This introduced a significant delay into the publication of the Proposed Plan for representations. However, this time was made up and the proposed plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers just one week after the date set in the Development Plan Scheme. This was within the 4 year target set for the submission of a replacement Strategic Development Plan to Scottish Ministers. This target was set at the start of the project, even though it was not a legal requirement on the first Strategic Development Plan.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the SDP will be approved by Scottish Ministers in late 2013 or early 2014, well before the 5-year anniversary of the approval of the current structure plan in August 2014.</p> <p>Housing and employment land supply are at record levels in Aberdeen City and Shire, enabling the area to take advantage of the high level of development activity being experienced and anticipated over the next few years.</p>
<p>Effective Land Supply and Delivery of Outputs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective housing land: years supply effective housing land supply housing approvals effective employment land supply employment land take-up 	<p>AHMA = 11,013 (5.7yrs) RHMA = 3,754 (6.2yrs)</p> <p>SDP Area = 14,767 (5.8yrs)</p> <p>3,605 (AHMA = 2,861) (RHMA = 744)</p> <p>522ha</p> <p>19ha</p>	<p>Data taken from the 2013 Housing Land Audit (base date 1/1/2013) and 2012 Employment Land Audit (base date 31/3/2012), both prepared jointly by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils</p>	

5 Defining and measuring a high-quality planning service

5.1 A high-quality planning service is vital to ensure the right development is delivered in the right place at the right time. This section of the report focuses on a number of themes which characterise such a service and the contribution the SDPA has made to each over the last year.

Open for business

5.2 The SDP area is one of the most economically dynamic in the whole of the UK. One of the primary purposes of the strategic development plan is to facilitate this growth and direct this is to the most sustainable locations.

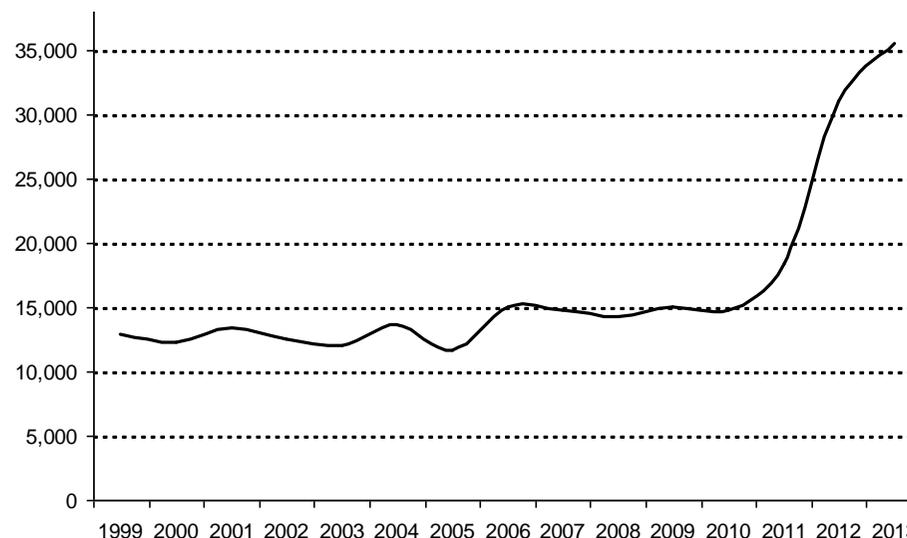
5.3 The current Housing Land and Employment Land Audits highlight the positive and aspirational nature the plans prepared by the SDPA. Significant quantities of land are now available in locations attractive to the development industry and end-users. The available supply of housing land for example (see Figure 5) has more than doubled over the last two years with the approval of the current structure plan and subsequent local development plans in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. This will facilitate the significant expansion of house building to complement the significant take-up being experienced in commercial floorspace. This effectively moved away from the long-term trend evident since at least the late 1990's.

High quality development on the ground

5.4 One of the fundamental reasons for the delivery of an aspirational plan was to focus more on the quality of new development rather than constant debates with the development industry over the quantity of new development.

5.5 The SDP sets the strategic framework for the delivery of high quality development on the ground, focusing as it does on the delivery of sustainable mixed communities. The plan explicitly targets national recognition for schemes and award-winning schemes are highlighted to the SDPA on a regular basis.

Figure 5: Established Housing Land Supply



Certainty

5.6 As well as providing sufficient quantities of land for housing and employment, an up-to-date development plan is one of the primary contributions the SDPA can make to providing certainty to communities and the development industry.

5.7 The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan was approved by Scottish Ministers in August 2009. Scottish Ministers considered that the plan provided the necessary certainty in the short term and sufficient flexibility to allow adjustments over time in response to changing circumstances.

5.8 Local Development Plans consistent with the structure plan were adopted by both councils in 2012 so the whole area has an up-to-date development plan for the first time (both strategic and local plans less than five years old).

5.9 The Proposed SDP was submitted to Scottish Ministers within one week of the timescale published in the Development Plan Scheme and within the four years set by legislation (see Figure 6). It is anticipated that the current structure plan will be replaced by the new SDP up to six months before the 5-year timescale.

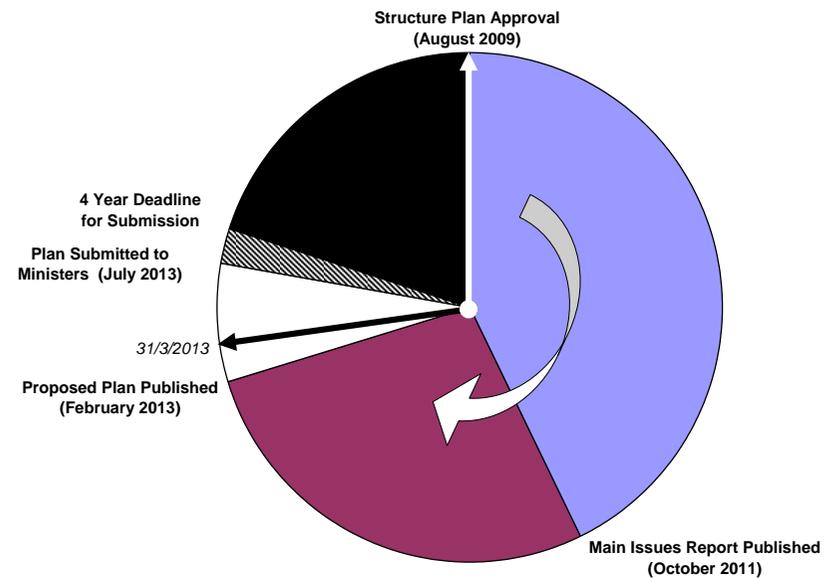
5.10 Only one significant change to the timetable for the preparation of the plan was made during the four-year project. This was made as a consequence of the change in timetable for local government elections (which moved from May 2011 to May 2012 to get them out of sync with Scottish Government elections). The timing of the publication of the proposed SDP was put back to enable it to be agreed by the new administrations in both councils before being published. This change was made in the 2011/12 Development Plan Scheme.

5.11 The Development Plan Scheme for 2014/15 will be published in March 2014 and set out the initial timetable for the preparation of the next SDP.

Communications, engagement and customer service

5.12 The SDPA has pioneered the use of Plain English for strategic development plans. The current structure plan as well as the Development Plan Scheme, Main Issues Report and Proposed Strategic Development Plan all have 'Crystal Marks' from the

Figure 6: Plan Preparation Stopwatch

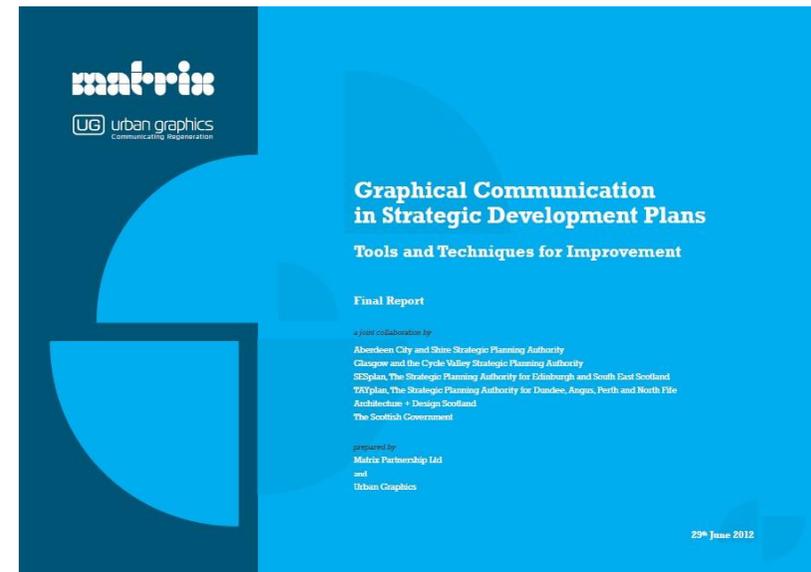


Plain English Campaign. The purpose of this accreditation is to recognise the importance of clear communication with customers and enable meaningful engagement with as wide a variety of stakeholders as possible. Plain English accreditation has been widely welcomed by agencies, consultants, developers, community groups and members of the public alike.

- 5.13 An E-Update system was introduced on the launch of the SDPA's website in 2008 and the recipients of the emails now number around 180. Recipients range from interested individuals, community groups, neighbouring planning authorities, developers and consultants and it is considered to be a useful way of communicating with customers. Updates are provided regularly throughout the year, including in advance of SDPA meetings.
- 5.14 The use of the SDPA website is regularly monitored and reported to the SDPA. A particular focus is put on reporting site traffic during consultation periods when activity increases significantly. The Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA website is highly rated by search engines, with a Google search for 'SDPA' putting the website at the top of the list. This helps to ensure easy access to the website. A total of 13 news items were added to the website during the year. These focused on the preparation of the SDP but also included adoption of Aberdeenshire Council's Local Development Plan and the early engagement by the Scottish Government on National Planning Framework 3. In this way it was more than just a portal for the preparation of the SDP itself.
- 5.15 The Aberdeen City and Shire SDPA has led work on the graphic communication of SDPs in partnership with the other SDPAs, Architecture and Design Scotland and the Scottish Government. In addition to the publication of the initial research report on "Graphic Communication in Strategic Development Plans", this was followed by working closely with the Scottish Government and graphic designers to trial a new way of presenting strategic information in the Proposed SDP which was developed further by the Scottish Government in the Main Issues Report for National Planning Framework 3.
- 5.16 The SDPA agendas normally include a Bulletin which is designed to inform Members and other interested parties of matters relevant to the work of the SDPA but which do not require a decision by the SDPA itself.

Efficient and effective decision-making

- 5.17 The SDPA is comprised of six Councillors from each council with three professional advisors (the Heads of Planning from both Councils and the SDP Manager). The SDPA meet a minimum of four times a year, coinciding with key decision-making events in the life of



the SDPA. However, there is the provision for additional meetings if required by the project plan. An additional meeting took place during 2012/13 to enable the SDPA to approve the content of the Proposed Plan. Attendance at the meetings is open to the public, with agendas, reports and minutes available on the SDPA website.

5.18 Figure 7 below sets out the membership and substitute members of the SDPA. Attendance of SDPA members during the year is shown in Appendix 1. Four of the five meetings during the year were attended by at least 10 members (out of 12). The average attendance rate for full members of the SDPA was 57%, with one member attended all five meetings, while one did not attend any meeting. In addition, 9 of the 12 substitute members also attended at least one meeting. The first meeting of 2012/13 took place just four weeks after local government elections which contributed to this meeting not being quorate (a minimum of two Councillors from each council is required).

Figure 7: SDPA Membership (as at 31/3/2013)

Aberdeenshire Council		Aberdeen City Council
Councillor Peter Argyle (Vice-chair) (Lib Dem)		Councillor Ramsay Milne (Chair) (Lab)
Councillor Peter Bellarby (Lib Dem)		Councillor John Corall (SNP)
Councillor John Cox (SNP)		Councillor Andrew Finlayson (Ind)
Councillor Rob Merson (SNP)		Councillor Ross Grant (Lab)
Councillor Norman Smith (Ind)		Councillor Ross Thomson (Con)
Councillor Brian Topping (SNP)		Councillor Ian Yuill (Lib Dem)
	SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS	
Councillor Graeme Clark (SNP)		Councillor Marie Boulton (Ind)
Councillor Alan Gardiner (Ind)		Councillor Bill Cormie (SNP)
Councillor Ian Gray (SNP)		Councillor Steve Delaney (Lib Dem)
Councillor Martin Kitts-Hayes (Lib Dem)		Councillor Alan Donnelly (Con)
Councillor Gillian Owen (Con)		Councillor Gordon Graham (Lab)
Councillor Stephen Smith (SNP)		Councillor Angela Taylor (Lab)

5.19 Appropriate powers are delegated to the SDPA to ensure that decisions only need to be ratified at key points in the SDP process, primarily the agreement of the Proposed Plan. This ensures that the SDPA is effectively able to co-ordinate the preparation of the SDP and associated workstreams without constant recourse to the partner councils.

5.20 An induction training session was held with members and substitute members of the SDPA following local government elections in May 2012.

Effective management structures

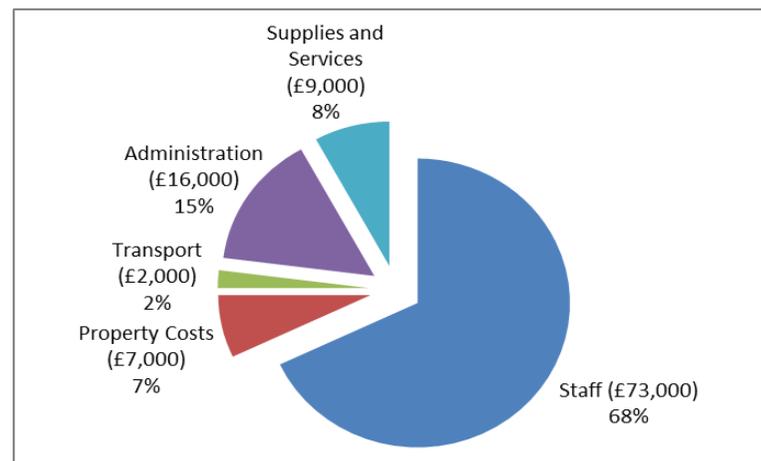
5.21 A Management Team comprising the SDP Manager and the Heads of Planning from the two constituent councils meets on a monthly basis to direct the work of the SDPA and consider reports for subsequent meetings of the SDPA.

Financial management and local governance

5.22 A budget for the SDPA is set and agreed on an annual basis, with indicative budgets produced for the following two years. The SDPA consider a Budget Monitoring Report at least three times a year and also agree unaudited and audited accounts on an annual basis.

5.23 The SDPA is governed by a Minute of Agreement between Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council as well as a set of Financial Regulations, both of which are publically available on the SDPA website. The SDPA is audited on an annual basis as part of Audit Scotland's local government audit activities, with Deloitte being the current auditor. The Auditors Report and Audited Statement of Accounts are published annually on the SDPA website. Total expenditure during 2012/13 amounted to £107,000, as set out in Figure 8 and costs were apportioned on a 50\50 basis between the two councils. Further workforce and financial information is provided in Appendix 2.

Figure 8: SDPA Expenditure 2012/13



Culture of continuous improvement

5.24 During the year staff benefited from placement opportunities with the Scottish Government as well as a range of other training and development opportunities.

5.25 The SDPA has submitted nominations either on its own or in partnership with others for both the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning (SAQP) as well as the Scottish Transport Awards over recent years. The SDPA's Strategic Transport Fund Supplementary Planning Guidance won the 'Most Innovative Transport Project of the Year' award at the Scottish Transport Awards 2013.

5.26 SDP Managers across Scotland's four SDPAs meet on a quarterly basis to focus on innovating together and sharing good practice. During 2012/13 this has focused among other things on the graphical communication of SDPs. Sub-groups have focused on the preparation of the next round of Housing Need and Demand Assessments and the integration of an outcome-based approach into Monitoring Statements.

6 The year ahead

- 6.1 Submission of the Proposed SDP to Scottish Ministers (which took place in early July 2013) and its subsequent Examination will take up most of the year, with approval anticipated in early 2014. Upon approval of the plan the SDPA will need to publish the plan, action programme and post-adoption statements relating to Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulations Appraisal and Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment.
- 6.2 In addition to the above and the normal work of the SDPA, it is also proposed to publish a monitoring report alongside the approval of the plan. The opportunity will also be taken to review the current 'Supplementary Planning Guidance: Delivering Identified Projects through a Strategic Transport Fund' which was adopted in 2012. This will enable it to be re-published as statutory Supplementary Guidance in support of the SDP in early 2014. Work will also start on the preparation of a development framework for Peterhead South to address the delivery of the strategic projects concentrated in that area.
- 6.3 The Scottish Government's review of SDPs will also take place during the year and require the input of the SDPA, as will responding to the reviews of National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy.
- 6.4 Four meetings of the SDPA are planned for 2013/14. There may be the need for an additional meeting in early 2014, although this will depend on the timing of the SDP's approval by Scottish Ministers.

SDPA Meetings 2013/14

19 June 2013
11 September 2013
11 December 2013
12 March 2014

Service improvements: 2013-14

- 6.5 In the coming year we will:
- *Develop an outcome focused Monitoring Report*
 - *Conduct a 'Lessons Learnt' exercise to establish an action plan for improvements for the second SDP.*
 - *Carry out implementation sessions with the councils and development industry, using existing structures as appropriate.*
 - *Establish topic groups with the two councils and Key Agencies to focus work on the next SDP.*
 - *Carry out a customer survey to establish the value of E-updates and how they could be improved.*
 - *Prepare the project plan for the second SDP.*

7 Supporting evidence

7.1 This report was compiled drawing on evidence from the following sources:

- [*Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan \(2009\)*](#)
- [*Housing Land Audit 2013*](#)
- [*Employment Land Audit 2012*](#)
- [*Minute of Agreement and Standing Orders \(Version 2, 2010\)*](#)
- [*Audited Statement of Accounts 2012/13*](#)
- [*Report by External Auditors 2012/13*](#)
- [*Development Plan Scheme 2012/13*](#)
- [*Main Issues Report \(2011\)*](#)
- [*Proposed Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan \(2013\)*](#)
- [*Supplementary Planning Guidance: Delivering Transport Improvements through a Strategic Transport Fund \(2012\)*](#)
- [*Graphical Communication in Strategic Development Plans \(2012\)*](#)
- [*SDPA Website - \[www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk\]\(http://www.aberdeencityandshire-sdpa.gov.uk\)*](#)

MEMBER ATTENDANCE AT SDPA MEETINGS IN 2012/13

	22 June 2012	21 September 2012	9 November 2012	14 December 2012	22 March 2013	Total
Councillor Peter Argyle	✓	✓		✓		3
Councillor Peter Bellarby	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5
Councillor John Corall			✓		✓	2
Councillor John Cox		✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Councillor Andrew Finlayson			✓	✓	✓	3
Councillor Ross Grant						0
Councillor Rob Merson		✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Councillor Ramsay Milne		✓	✓	✓	✓	4
Councillor Norman Smith	✓	✓	✓	✓		4
Councillor Ross Thomson			✓	✓	✓	3
Councillor Brian Topping		✓				1
Councillor Ian Yuill				✓		1
SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS						
Councillor Marie Boulton					✓	1
Councillor Graeme Clark	✓				✓	2
Councillor Bill Cormie		✓		✓		2
Councillor Steve Delaney						0
Councillor Alan Donnelly		✓	✓			2
Councillor Alan Gardiner					✓	1
Councillor Gordon Graham	✓	✓				2
Councillor Ian Gray			✓	✓		2
Councillor Martin Kitts-Hayes						0
Councillor Gillian Owen			✓			1
Councillor Stephen Smith						0
Councillor Angela Taylor		✓				1
	5	11	11	11	10	

Note: Substitute Members are only entitled to attend meetings of the SDPA when substantive members are unable to attend.

WORKFORCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

As at 31 March 2013

Head of Planning Service	Tier?										
	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Managers		Main Grade Posts		Technician Posts		
	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	No. Posts	Vacant	Totals
				1							
Development Planning			1								2

Staffing profile	Number
Under 30	1
30-39	
40-49	1
50 and Over	

Committees & site visits	No. per year
SDPA	5
Full Council	2
Council Committees	2
Area Committees	6

Budgets Planning Service	Budget	Costs		Income
		Direct	Indirect	
Development Planning	£107k			£107k

Note: More detailed information is available in the SDPA's audited accounts for 2012/13 which are available from the SDPA website