

COSLA EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2017

Internal Application Form

The COSLA Excellence Awards showcase the innovative and creative approaches that Scottish local authorities and their partners are embracing to change lives across the country.

The 2017 Awards provide a unique opportunity to highlight ground-breaking work going on in Aberdeenshire Council.

The award categories are listed below:

Category 1

Delivering Better Services

This updated category focuses on reforming and improving how local services are delivered. COSLA wants to hear about new processes, techniques or ways of working that are transforming your effectiveness and efficiency. This might include:

- New service delivery models
- Addressing changing demands or resources
- Turning around 'poor performance'
- Using technology to achieve better services.

Category 2

Achieving Better Outcomes in Partnership

This category is about your approach to integrating services in your local area. COSLA is looking for evidence of joining-up services delivery to focus outcomes, and the impact this is having.

Examples include:

- Community planning projects that focus on local priority outcomes.
- Integrating planning, delivery or commissioning of services, including pooling resources and budgets.
- Focusing on early intervention and prevention.
- Delivering major partnership initiatives such as Health and Social Integration.

Category 3

Tackling inequalities and improving health

This category reflects the key role that councils and their partners have in tackling inequalities and improving health and wellbeing. As well as health and wellbeing of the general population, COSLA is also keen to hear about the ways in which we are supporting vulnerable individuals, groups and communities which might include intervening early to prevent problems from arising, joint working and

building capacity and resilience of communities themselves.

Examples include:

- Promoting health improvement, healthy eating or physical activity
- Enabling sustainable, quality social care in the context of demographic and financial changes
- Responding to poverty and supporting routes into employment.
- Reducing drug and alcohol problems and links to violence.
- Tackling mental illness and improving mental wellbeing.

Category 4

Strong and sustainable communities

Councils and their partners are crucial in creating vibrant, prosperous local communities. We're interested in projects that regenerate the local environment, aid economic development, manage resources or energy responsibly, or foster and develop inclusive growth. Small or large projects are welcome but in all cases, COSLA is looking for clear social, environmental or economic outcomes. Projects might involve:

- Stimulating economic prosperity or attracting business growth.
- Improving quality of life through the built environment.
- Sustainable infrastructure, regeneration or maintenance projects.
- Improving energy use or reducing carbon.
- Innovative solutions to zero waste resource management or climate change.

Category 5

Local Matters

The 'Local Matters' category focusses on the unique impact of local services. They want to hear about how Aberdeenshire Council is addressing local priorities. These projects will be reflecting local issues, improving local democratic accountability or empowering communities to focus on their priorities. Examples include:

- Work with communities, community groups or other stakeholders to tackle local issues.
- Solutions to key local opportunities or challenges.
- Giving communities the skills or resources to influence outcomes.
- Empowering communities to make best use of local assets and resources.

There will also be an additional four awards which will be chosen from the short-listed applications submitted for each category.

COSLA Chair's Award

Selected from short listed applications of exceptional standard, winners must demonstrate achievements that have been conducted in exceptional circumstances or that are beyond the limit stipulated in the award categories

Excellent Outcomes, Excellent People Award

Effective people are at the heart of local government excellence, and this award seeks out innovative projects that have made an outstanding impact by transforming workforces and equipping staff to rise to new challenges

Delivering Excellence Award

Awarded in recognition of public sector excellence for projects that demonstrate particular excellence and achievement, often outwith the specific criteria of the main award categories.

Best Team Award

This coveted accolade is awarded in recognition of projects that demonstrate outstanding all round team performance or ground breaking partnership working.

COSLA doesn't expect all the details, but what's important is a clear business case for what your project has, or will, deliver, and why that represents excellence.

Your entry will not be successful if it does not contain evidence, so please think hard about the information that you provide to ensure that it meets the assessment criteria. For example in terms of the impact that you have achieved or anticipate, or to explain why your approach is innovative.

Results are important, and so we will be looking for you to set out a compelling description of the impact you are having.

Successful applications will all have one thing in common; a clear explanation of what the project is about, why it is innovative, and a good explanation of the difference it has already made, or is set to make in future. There will be also be a strong voice for service users and communities, perhaps through effective engagement or co-production, or by giving communities clear choice and control over the services they receive.

You'll also want to show how your project is delivering excellent services in the context of diminishing resources, perhaps by tapping into new ways of working or by trailblazing ideas that are improving efficiency and improving outcomes.

The same project cannot be submitted for more than one category. However, it is possible to update and re-submit unsuccessful entries from previous years to reflect new progress that has been made.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In one short paragraph, please describe what this project is about, what it has achieved, and why it is delivering excellence?

Category 1 – Delivering Better Services

Aberdeenshire Council has introduced a fully integrated case management system across Planning, Building Standards, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Estates and Housing Assistance.

The project was focused on using technology to achieve better services, turning around poor performance, cost reduction and increased resource efficiency.

The solution incorporates specialised back office case management modules, with integrated workflow and performance management, GIS, EDRMS, public facing websites, automatic document production, integrated email, integrated corporate address gazetteer and corporate financial system integration.

Our Planning and Building Standards (P&BS) sections are already virtually paperless from end-to-end. With the other sections all working towards it.

The fully integrated paperless approach to P&BS was trail blazing in that from day one the entire end-to-end process has been 100% based on electronic workflow.

The new improved ePlanning portal launched in January 2016 with eBuilding Standards in August 2016. A Scottish Government newsletter on the planned eDevelopment initiative “Spotlighted” Aberdeenshire Council as having “transformed the management of planning caseloads across a substantial land mass – containing a number of area offices – bringing savings in both time and costs”.

2. PLANNING AND DELIVERING

What is your project about, why is it important? What are you aiming to achieve, and how does it fit with the bigger picture? Does it tackle the issues that matter most to your community or your organisation? How have you carried out your project? How did you ensure that this was done effectively? Are you improving efficiency and effectiveness?

Project process

The project was managed on PRINCE2 principles with the Head of Planning and Building Standards as project executive and chair of the project board.

The project was focused on what had to be delivered and an output based specification with 19 high level “products” produced. The tender document described what had to be achieved rather than specifying, in detail, the way it had to be achieved.

Procurement was via the Crown Commercial Service, Local Authority Software Applications portal.

The decision to go for a fully-integrated system, with end-to-end workflow and no paper case files was ambitious but also helped define the processes and required actions. For example, extensive staff involvement was required in order to workflow the end-to-end processes and this included many mini-workshops across all roles.

A great deal of effort was spent on maximising possible business benefits and this included several new job roles, changes to existing job roles and revised staffing structures.

The data transfer from various disparate existing systems into the new fully integrated approach was particularly challenging but was required for the achieved seamless changeover and minimised customer disruption.

Project timescales

The total timescale for “Phase 1” which was Planning and Building Standards and the Corporate Address Gazetteer was 17 months (6 months software procurement, 4 months hardware procurement and 7 months for configuring and implementing the virtually paperless approach).

“Phase 2” has been a further 18 months and included: Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Estates and Housing Assistance (all legacy systems replaced but still progressing towards fully paperless and mobile).

Project Team/Board/Service Provider

Internally the project team and project management board comprised officer and management levels from Infrastructure Services, ICT and Business Support and other services who would ultimately use the new system as stakeholders. The project team liaised with the IDOX (software supplier) representatives throughout planning, setup, implementation and training.

Staff

Staff were consulted at all levels with specific focus on circumventing resistance to new paperless workflow methods. Early training on the system was given and super users were identified to test the system both software and hardware, including multi monitors. All levels of staff were included in training programmes.

Consultees

All consultees were notified of the changes. Pilot programmes were offered to consultees, both internal and external consultees played an active part in testing.

Customers/Community Councils

A website page announced the changes and the implementation of the new Public Access Register. Guidance notes and a FAQ document were made available. Advice and training was offered. To compensate for the paperless approach, public access large screen facilities were installed in the main area offices. Attendance at Community Council events and individual training events demonstrated the new system. A real-time demonstration to 80 planning agents took place to promote the eDevelopment approach.

3. INNOVATION & LEADING PRACTICE

Why is your project innovative? How is it helping to prepare for the future? What is happening to help other organisations benefit from your approach?

A Scottish Government newsletter on the planned eDevelopment initiative “Spotlighted” Aberdeenshire Council as having “transformed the management of planning caseloads across a substantial land mass – containing a number of area offices – bringing savings in both time and costs”. This led to several authorities contacting Aberdeenshire for advice and support which we duly provided.

We continue to support other local authorities in achieving “paperless”, we have already shared our complete workflow setup “free of charge” with others.

The software supplier, IDOX, also promotes us as leading with workflow at a national and UK level, so we regularly receive contact from and provide advice, demonstrations, etc., to other authorities.

We also participate fully in various “Scottish User Groups” across several functional areas.

We are an official “early adopter” development partner of the software supplier, this again leads to “experience” related enquires.

Having succeed with our innovative “virtually paperless” approach for offices and home working we are now leading on extending this to field based operations via mobile devices.

Our Windows 10 tablet (single device for all IT usage requirements) based approach pilot in Building Standards is going well and will shortly be extended from 3 to 30 users.

We are working with the supplier on evaluating their mobile “planning” solution which is likely to pilot 2017.

Integrated mobile working for Protective Services (both Environmental Health and Trading Standards) will also be piloted later in 2017 or early 2018 and is expected to deliver

substantial savings by fully providing onsite survey capabilities, e.g., restaurant food standards surveys with automatic uploading to national websites.

New versions of all aspects of the Idox integrated solution are expected in 2017 which will offer further operational efficiencies and as early adopters we will have the opportunity to help set strategic direction and maximise benefits.

All 34 planning authorities in Scotland now use the same software solution for application processing but Aberdeenshire is leading on efficiency, e.g., paperless, mobile and integrated approach.

4. RESULTS & IMPACT

What impact are you having, or expect to have? Are you delivering what you set out to achieve? How do you know this?

Online planning application uptake has improved from 27% (January 2014) to 85%(January 2017).

Online building standards application uptake was only launched in August 2016 but is already at 83% (February 2017).

99% of planning applications received in 2017 have been available for public viewing within 3 days of receiving the application. In fact, 80% (February 2017) was available via our integrated public access website within 1 day! This is a remarkable improvement and is only possible across a widely dispersed workforce by using a paperless and fully electronically workflow based process.

We currently have over 2.2 million documents in our integrated EDRMS system much of which is available online to members of the public with no duplication of effort.

We have more than a hundred standardised templates which are used for automatic document production (via MS Office integration), with built in automatic emailing (when at all possible, e.g. a useable email account exists). The automatically produced documentation is also automatically indexed and inserted into our EDRMS, which then makes them instantly available (when appropriate) to our consultee partners and customers (members of the public).

To achieve a fully end-to-end paperless approach we are currently working with the supplier in field testing a mobile solution that will allow easy access to the cases notes and associated documents in the field. We currently have 3 devices live in the field but have firm plans to extend in next couple of months to 30 users.

Field based devices for crucial building warrant type drawings result in substantial savings of approximately £5 for each A1 drawing. Some cases have dozens of drawings and building standards alone has approximately 800 inspections per month. Field testing is going well, within a few months, we expect savings on drawing printing costs alone of more than £50K p.a.

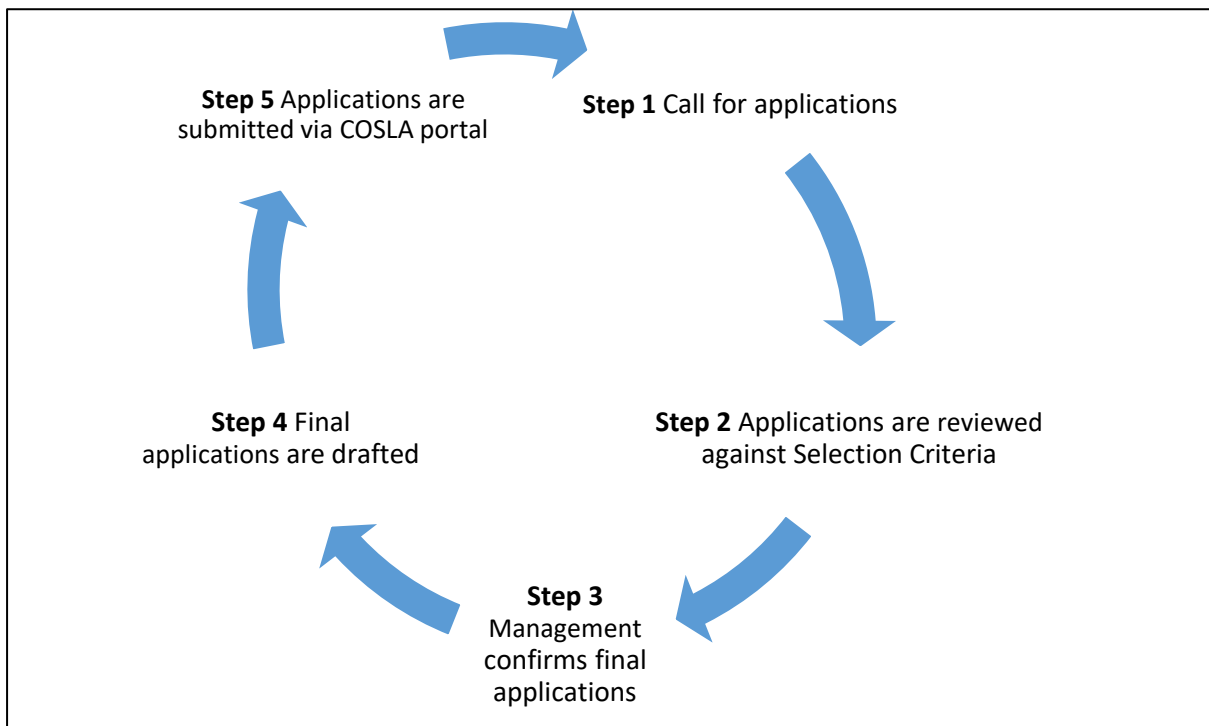
The integrated solution manages and hosts the corporate address gazetteer, having all Council business and customer addresses available, real-time, from every address lookup in the system, is a relatively minor but important business efficiency. The system links all application and case types to the Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN), so full UPRN history across all functional areas, e.g., an Environmental Health “noise complaint” links back to the planning application “Wind Turbine” application, which may have enforceable conditions...

The outsourced scanning service was brought back in-house saving £80k per year.

Aberdeenshire’s statutory performance statistics have significantly improved with national performance for local planning applications increasing from 62.7% (well below Scottish average of 69.4% in 2012/13) to 76.1% (well above Scottish average of 73.4% in 2015/16). It should also be noted that Aberdeenshire processed more local planning applications than any other Scottish Council between 2012/13 and 2015/16 (9.9% of national total, 11,655 of 117,862). Please note, 2016/17 figures not yet nationally available.

Nominations should be made to Performance@aberdeenshire.gov.uk no later than the 19th May and include the name and contact details for the project.

For more information please go to: awards.cosla.gov.uk



Timetable

| Date | Action |
|---------------------------|--|
| 19 th May 2017 | Internal submissions due to the Performance Team |
| 23 rd May 2017 | Submissions assessed against Selection Criteria |

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| 26 th May 2017 | Last date for additional information from Services |
| 26 th May – 5 th June | Editing |
| 9 th June 2017 | Shortlisting of internal submissions by management |
| 13 th June 2017 | Final edits |
| 14 th June 2017 | Final drafts |
| 16 th June 2017 | Applications submitted by the Performance Team |