



Title of Report:	First Quarterly Report on Planning Performance
Committee Report Submitted To:	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting:	25 October 2023
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee YES/NO	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council has agreed policies and procedures and decision making is consistent with them
Lead Officer	Head of Planning

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Nil
Included in Current Year Estimates	
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	N/A	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	N/A	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	N/A	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	N/A	Date:

1.0 Background

1.1 Schedule 4 of The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 sets out the statutory performance targets for the Planning Department for major development applications, local development applications and enforcement cases. The Planning Department Business Plan 2023-24 sets out the key performance indicators to progress towards improving Planning performance against these targets,

1.2 The statutory targets are:

- Major applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks
- Local applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 15 weeks
- 70% of all enforcement cases progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint.

1.4 The Northern Ireland Planning Statistics is an official statistics publication issued by Analysis, Statistics & Research Team within Department for Infrastructure. It provides the official statistics for each Council on each of the statutory targets and is published quarterly and on an annual basis. The First Quarter 2023/24 Statistical Bulletin was published on 12 October 2023 providing planning statistics for this period. It also provides a summary of Council progress across the three statutory targets.

2.0 Details

Website link 1 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-april-june-2023> provides the link to the published bulletin.

Development Management Planning Applications

2.1 Table 1 below provides a summary of performance in relation to the statutory targets for major development applications and local development applications for the first quarter of 2023-24 business year and provides a comparison of performance against all 11 Councils and against Business Plan KPIs.

Table 1: Planning Applications

2023/24	Major		Local		Total		Live	
Q1	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Total	Over 12mths
Planning Applications	1	2	237	215	234	217	947	276 (29.1%)
Rank	8 th	7 th	4 th	7 th	4 th	8 th	2 nd	5 th (%)
Average Processing Times	207.2 weeks		28.6 weeks					
Rank	10 th		8 th					
Business Plan Target	Major Category – 40 weeks - Not met		Local Category – 30 weeks - Met		Over 12 month applications – reduce by 10% - Not Met			

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: First Quarter 2023/24 Statistical Bulletin and Planning Department Business Plan 2023-24

- 2.2** In the Q1, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council issued one major planning application for 2no. broiler units within the 30 week statutory target (18.8 weeks) and had 1 legacy major application for pig farm withdrawn (396 weeks), resulting in an average processing time of 207.2 weeks, not meeting the statutory target or Business Plan target during this period.
- 2.3** Over the same period 215 local category applications were decided or withdrawn. This was a decrease in numbers when compared to the same period last year due to the 2no. vacant Planning Officer posts. Although not meeting the statutory target, the Business Plan target of 30 weeks was met with 58 applications in the system over 12 months concluded.
- 2.4** Although a total of 59 applications in the system over 12 months were concluded, the number of applications within this time category rose by 10 applications, thereby not meeting the Business Plan target. This is largely due to the high caseloads of staff due to the 2no. vacant posts and the number of applications delayed due to awaiting statutory consultation responses.

Enforcement

- 2.5** Table 2 below shows statistics in relation to enforcement for Q1 of the 2023/24 business year. The statutory target for bring to a conclusion enforcement cases is not reported on at this time due to inability to extract the accurate information from the system; work is ongoing to resolve this issue. Progress has been made in terms of increasing the number of cases concluded to moving closer to a position where cases closed exceed cases opened in order to reduce live cases to a manageable level. At this time at end of q1, the Business Plan target to reduce live cases has not been met.
- 2.6** Of the cases closed, 27% were remedied/resolved, 15.4% had planning permission granted; 28.8% were closed as not expedient; and 28.8% had no breach identified.

Table 2: Enforcement

2023/24	Open	Closed	Live cases	Court Action	
Q1				Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	63	52	474	0	0
Rank	7 th	7 th	3 rd	-	-
Business Plan Target	Reduce live cases by 10% - not met				

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: First Quarter 2023/24 Statistical Bulletin

Stable Staff Resource and Reduction in Staff Caseloads – Business Plan KPI - Not Met

- 2.7** Work continues to decrease case loads of staff to a manageable level. This has proved difficult in Q1 due to 2 vacant Planning Officer posts. Case loads in both Enforcement Team and Development Management Teams remain excessively high and with the recruitment of Agency staff to cover vacant positions these case loads will continue to be monitored.

Reduction in vacant posts – Business Plan KPI – on target to be met

- 2.8** Work is ongoing to recruit agency staff to fill vacant posts. This is processing with aim of filling posts in Q2 in line with KPI target.

Training Plan - Business Plan KPI – Met

- 2.9** In additional to mandatory training for all staff, in Q1 the following training was attended by staff:
- Planning for Minerals,
 - Planning Development Air Quality Impacts;
 - Wind Farms,
 - Rural Expressions of 20 minute neighbourhoods
 - Enforcement Statement taking
 - RTPI NI Annual Planning Conference

Draft Plan Strategy – Business Plan KPI - on target to be met

- 2.10** Workshops with Party Groups arranged for Q2. Other KPIs in relation to the draft Plan Strategy will follow the completion of these workshops with Members.

Number of cases where Ombudsman determines maladministration is less than 0.4% of all decisions made - Business Plan KPI – on target to be met

2.11 There have been no cases in the Q1 period of cases where the NIPSO has determined maladministration on planning decisions made. There have been no decisions by NIPSO during this period.

3.0 Recommendation

3.1 IT IS RECOMMENDED that the Planning Committee note the Planning Departments Quarterly Report.