



Title of Report:	Second Quarterly Report on Planning Performance
Committee Report Submitted To:	Corporate Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	21 March 2024
For Decision or For Information	For Information
To be discussed In Committee YES/NO	No

Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)	
Strategic Theme	Improvement and Innovation
Outcome	Council maintains its performance as the most efficient of NI's local authorities
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 Second Quarter 2023/24 Statistical Bulletin was published on 14 December 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-july-september-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 second 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	
Q2	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd / W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd / W/D	Total	Over 12mths
Planning Applications	4	3	239	249	234	252	943	308 (32.7%)
Rank	1 st	4 th	5 th	4 th	4 th	4 th	3 rd	5 th (%)
Average Processing Times	25.6 weeks		23.8 weeks					
Rank	3 rd		8 th					
Business Plan Target	Major Category – 40 weeks - Met		Local Category – 25 weeks - Met		Over 12 month applications – reduce by 10% - Not Met			
YTD	Major		Local		Total		Live	
Planning Applications	6	5	478	464	484	469	943	308
Rank	5 th	6 th	4 th	5 th	4 th	5 th	3 rd	5 th (%)
Average Processing Times	25.6 weeks		25.8 weeks					
Rank	2 nd		9 th					

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

- 2.2** In the Q2, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council issued three major planning applications, two of which were processed within the 30 week statutory target, resulting in an average processing time of 25.6 weeks for Q2 and 25.6 weeks year to date (6 applications decided/withdrawn) meeting both the Statutory and Business Plan targets for major planning applications. This was the second fastest processing time out of all 11 councils year to date. During Q2, we received the highest number of major applications, similar number to 5 other councils and 5th highest received year to date.
- 2.3** Over the same period 249 local category applications were decided or withdrawn, exceeding the number of applications received and reducing the total number of live applications from end of Q1. Although not meeting the statutory target, the Business Plan target of 25 weeks for Q2 was met with 56 local applications in the system over 12 months concluded, 114 year to date. Of note, this Council was one of only 2 councils that received an increase in the number of planning applications received in Q2 when compared to the same period last year.
- 2.4** Although a total of 114 applications in the system over 12 months were concluded year to date, the number of applications within this time category rose by 38 applications since the beginning of this Business year, thereby not meeting the Business Plan target. This is a similar issue in 9 out of the 11 councils who experienced an increase in over 12 month applications at end of

Q2 compared to the position at the beginning of this business year. This is largely due to the high caseloads of staff and the number of applications delayed due to awaiting statutory consultation responses. Focus in Q3 will be to reduce the number of over 12 month applications in the system which may have a negative impact on the average processing times for local category of planning applications.

Enforcement

- 2.5** Table 2 below shows statistics in relation to enforcement for Q2 of the 2023/24 business year. The statutory target for bringing 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, moving closer to a position where cases closed exceed cases opened in order to reduce live cases to a manageable level. This is a similar position to 9 out of the 11 councils when compared to the position at the beginning of this business year. At this time, at end of Q2, the Business Plan target to reduce live cases has not been met.
- 2.6** Of the cases closed in Q2, 22% were remedied/resolved, 20.3% received retrospective planning permission; 20.3% were closed as not expedient; and 25.4% had no breach identified.

Table 2: Enforcement

2023/24	Opened	Closed	Live cases	Court Action	
Q2				Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	62	59	477	1	0
Rank	8 th	6 th	4 th	4 th	-
Business Plan Target	Reduce live cases by 10% - not met				
YTD	Opened	Closed	Live cases	Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	125	111	477	2	0
Rank	8 th	7 th	4 th	2 nd	-

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Second 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. The 2no. vacant Planning Officer posts have been filled on a temporary basis and staff are being trained in these roles. The high case loads of the

Enforcement Team and the Single Rural Dwellings Team remain a concern and will continue to be monitored.

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

- 2.8 The vacant posts were filled by end of Q2. This Business Plan KPI has been met.

Training Plan - Business Plan KPI – Met

- 2.9 In additional to mandatory training for all staff, in Q2 the following training was attended by staff:
- Neighbour Notification
 - RTPI NI Annual Planning Conference 2023
 - NI Active Travel Plan
 - Planning for Biodiversity in post Brexit NI

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

- 2.10 Workshops with Party Groups were held in Q2. A full member workshop is scheduled to be held in Q3. 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 Q2 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 consider the content of the Planning Departments Quarterly Report.