



Title of Report:	Third Quarterly Report on Planning Performance
Committee Report Submitted To:	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting:	24 April 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 Third Quarter 2023/24 Statistical Bulletin was published on 28 March 2024 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 [Northern Ireland planning statistics October - December 2023 | Department for Infrastructure \(infrastructure-ni.gov.uk\)](#) 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 third 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		
Q3	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Total	Over 12mths	Over 24mths
Planning Applications	6	5	235	284	241	289	895	288 (32.2%)	111 (12.4%)
Rank	1 st	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	5 th	3 rd	4 th	5 th (%)	
Average Processing Times	54.2 weeks		36.5 weeks					6.5% reduction on Q2	4.7% increase on Q2
Rank	4 th		10 th						
Business Plan Target	Major Category – 40 weeks – Not Met		Local Category – 20 weeks - Not Met						Over 12mth applications – reduce by 10% - Not Met
YTD	Major		Local		Total		Live		
Planning Applications	12	10	712	759	724	759	895	288	188 (21%)
Rank	3 rd	6 th	5 th	4 th	4 th	4 th	4 th	5 th (%)	
Average Processing Times	41.9 weeks		30.6 weeks						
Rank	4 th		10 th						

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

- 2.2** In the Q3, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council issued 5 major planning applications, two of which were processed within the 30 week statutory target and three outside the target, resulting in an average processing time of 54.2 weeks for Q3 and 41.9 weeks year to date (10 applications decided/withdrawn). Unfortunately, this resulted in neither the Statutory or Business Plan targets being met for major planning applications. Nevertheless, this was the fourth fastest processing time out of all 11 councils year to date. During Q3, we received the highest number of major applications and 3rd highest received year to date.
- 2.3** Over the same period 284 local category applications were decided or withdrawn, exceeding the number of applications received and reducing the total number of live applications from end of Q2 by 5%. The focus over the quarter of reducing the number of older applications in the system had a negative impact on processing times with the average processing time increasing significantly over this period.
- 2.4** Over the Q3 period 112 local applications and 3 major applications in the system over 12 months were issued/withdrawn, twice as many when compared to Q2. Of note, this Council was one of only 5 councils that reduced the % of live applications in the system over 12 months over the quarter.

2.5 In addition, 128 local category of planning applications in the 6-12 month category were also issued/withdrawn, an increase of 91% when compared to Q2 and a total of 223 YTD. Focus on issuing older application in the system will continue into Q4 which will have a negative impact on the average processing times for local category of planning applications.

Enforcement

2.6 Table 2 below shows statistics in relation to enforcement for Q3 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 to resolve this issue is nearing completion. Progress continues in terms of increasing the number of cases concluded. However, there was a significant increase in the number of cases opened in Q3 that impacted the ability to reduce live cases, an increase of 28% when compared to Q2 and a 77% increase when compared to the Q3 last year, significantly higher than any other Council. At this time, at end of Q3, the Business Plan target to reduce live cases has not been met.

2.7 Of the cases closed in Q3, 24% were remedied/resolved, 20% retrospective planning permission; 19% were closed as not expedient; 30% had no breach identified; and 7% were immune from enforcement action.

Table 2: Enforcement

2023/24	Opened	Closed	Live cases	Court Action	
Q3				Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	78	59	493	0	0
Rank	2 nd	6 th	4 th	-	-
Business Plan Target	Reduce live cases by 10% - not met				
YTD	Opened	Closed	Live cases	Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	202	172	493	4	0
Rank	6 th	6 th	4 th	1 st	-

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

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

2.8 Work continues to decrease case loads of staff to a manageable level. 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

- 2.9 The vacant posts have been filled by agency staff. This Business Plan KPI has been met.

Training Plan - Business Plan KPI – Met

- 2.10 In addition to mandatory training for all staff, in Q3 the following training was attended by staff:
- Planning Portal training
 - RTPI NI Annual Law Update 2023
 - Cyber Security training
 - Local Council Housing Information seminar
 - Validation training

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

- 2.11 A full member workshop was 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

- 2.12 There have been no cases in the Q3 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.