

Regional Planning Directorate



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

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Your Reference:  
Our Reference:

6 March 2019

Dear Chief Executive

**Re: Planning Monitoring Framework**

At the SOLACE meeting in December I undertook to send you a revised planning monitoring framework once the changes that had been discussed and agreed at the continuous improvement working group (CIWG) on 25 October had been made. I now attach a revised framework, incorporating the agreed changes.

The Department has agreed with the proposal put forward by the group that the first full publication of the framework will take place in September 2019, instead of July 2019.

I am sure you will agree that it has been a long road, but I trust that we can now move forward with implementation of the framework and I would like to take this opportunity to thank both you and the members of the CIWG for all your input. It is hoped that the work of the CIWG can now focus on continuous improvement of the planning system.

Yours sincerely

**ANGUS KERR**  
**Chief Planner**  
**& Director of Regional Planning**

Encl

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# NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING MONITORING FRAMEWORK



February 2019

## Introduction

- 1.1 The planning system in Northern Ireland has undergone a period of significant change. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, the majority of planning functions were devolved from the Northern Ireland Government's former Department of the Environment (DOE) to 11 newly re-organised councils. The previous arrangement of 26 councils had been in place since the early 1970s.
- 1.2 While there are currently three statutory planning indicators, it is widely recognised that these do not cover all the work carried out by the local planning authorities (LPAs). This framework will help to address this by capturing data on other planning-related activities.
- 1.3 The framework incorporates the existing three statutory indicators, which will remain in addition to the new indicators.

## Monitoring and reporting arrangements

- 2.1 The new reporting arrangements will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. The Department will gather the data on a quarterly basis. Where possible, the data will be extracted from the planning portal, to minimise the burden on LPAs. See reporting timeline at [Annex A](#).
- 2.2 The quarterly reports will be issued to councils following the end of each quarter by DfI, pre-populated with centrally available data, as part of the current official statistics (OS) validation process. Councils will be asked to provide the input for any indicators they are responsible for updating and to confirm their agreement with the content of the reports. The Department's Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch (ASRB) will continue to publish the official statistics, as now, on a quarterly and annual basis.
- 2.3 The current draft Programme for Government has been developed under an outcomes-based approach and aims to improve well-being for all by demonstrating how we are tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth.
- 2.4 It is envisaged that this framework will evolve over time and with the right measures in place such a framework will allow Planning, both at NI and council level, to demonstrate the contribution it is making towards the outcomes expressed in the draft Programme for Government, councils' community plans, and associated local development plans. The Department, in conjunction with local government, will review indicators and definitions based on lessons learnt, trends, priorities and aspirations.
- 2.5 The Department will publish an annual chief planner's report.
- 2.6 A list of the indicators can be found at [Annex B](#).

## **Indicators**

### **Indicator 1**

Average processing time taken to determine major applications.

**This is the existing statutory indicator.**

**Standard** – Major applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks.

#### **Definition**

- i) A 'major' application is as defined in the [Planning \(Development Management\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#).
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### **Indicator 1.1**

Average time taken to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications).

#### **Definition**

- i) Applications withdrawn by the applicant prior to the decision notice being issued will be excluded from the statistics.
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**Indicator 2** – Average processing time taken to determine local applications.

**This is the existing statutory indicator.**

**Standard** – Local applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 15 weeks.

#### **Definition**

- i) A 'local' application is as defined in the [Planning \(Development Management\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#), and any other applications for approval or consent under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (or any orders or regulations made under that Act). Applications to discharge conditions are excluded.
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### **Indicator 2.1**

Average time taken to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications).

- i) Applications withdrawn by the applicant prior to the decision notice being issued will be excluded from the statistics.
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### **Indicator 3**

Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks:

**This is the existing statutory indicator.**

**Standard** – 70% of all enforcement cases progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint

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### **Indicator 4**

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers.

#### **Definition**

- i) The numerator is the number of applications determined under delegated powers during the reporting period. The denominator is the total number of applications determined during the reporting period.
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### **Indicator 5**

Number of applications taken to planning committee and percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation.

#### **Definition**

- i) The numerator is the number of applications determined by the Planning Committee that were contrary to officer recommendation as published in the Committee minutes, during the reporting period. The denominator is the total number of applications determined by the Planning Committee during the reporting period.
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### **Indicator 6**

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that are dismissed.

#### **Definition**

- i) The numerator is the number of appeal decisions that were dismissed (i.e. the council's decision was upheld) during the reporting period. The denominator is the total number of appeals determined by the Planning Appeals Commission during the reporting period. This indicator excludes appeals against non-determination and enforcement notices.
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**Indicator 7**

Number of claims for costs received by the PAC and number of claims awarded.

**Definitions**

- i) This measures the number of instances where costs were either awarded fully or partially in the council's favour, or wholly or partially against the council. The indicator measures the number of instances, not the amount of money.
  - ii) This indicator will include the Department.
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**Indicator 8**

The Department to progress regionally significant planning applications (RSD) from date valid to a ministerial recommendation or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks.

**Definition**

- i) A 'regionally significant' application is as defined in the [Planning \(Development Management\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#).
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**Indicator 9**

Number of applications notified to the Department and number processed within 28 days.

**Definition**

- i) A notification is where a council must notify the Department for particular categories of applications and circumstances before it can grant planning permission or consent subject to legislative requirements.
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## **REPORTING TIMELINE**

### **2018-19**

- **1 April 2018** – commence monitoring of framework. Data has been collected quarterly for internal purposes only at this stage.

### **2019-20**

- **1 April 2019** - quarterly monitoring of statutory indicators will continue as normal. Data on the new performance framework indicators will be collected quarterly.
- **July 2019** – annual official planning statistics for 2018-19 published.
- **September 2019** - progress on monitoring framework will be published.
- **September 2019** –Chief Planner’s Report will be published.

## Annex B

<b>INDICATOR</b>		<b>Data available from</b>	<b>Reported</b>
<b>1</b>	Average time taken to determine major applications (current statutory indicator)	<b>DfI – Planning Portal</b>	<b>Quarterly/ Annual</b>
<b>1.1</b>	Average time taken to determine major applications (excluding withdrawn applications)	<b>DfI – Planning Portal</b>	<b>Quarterly/ Annual</b>
<b>2</b>	Average time taken to determine local applications (current statutory indicator)	<b>DfI – Planning Portal</b>	<b>Quarterly/ Annual</b>
<b>2.1</b>	Average time taken to determine local applications (excluding withdrawn applications)	<b>DfI – Planning Portal</b>	<b>Quarterly/ Annual</b>
<b>3</b>	Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks (current statutory target)	<b>DfI – Planning Portal</b>	<b>Quarterly/ Annual</b>
<b>4</b>	Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers	<b>DfI – Planning Portal</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>5</b>	Number of applications taken to planning committee and percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation	<b>Councils / Department</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>6</b>	Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that are dismissed	<b>PAC</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>7</b>	Number of claims for costs received by the PAC and number of claims awarded	<b>PAC</b>	<b>Annual</b>
<b>8</b>	The Department to progress regionally significant planning applications (RSD) from date valid to a ministerial recommendation or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks	<b>Department</b>	<b>Quarterly/ Annual</b>
<b>9</b>	Number of applications notified to the Department and number processed within 28 days	<b>Department</b>	<b>Quarterly/ Annual</b>