



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

PLANNING

BUSINESS PLAN 2020-2021



SECTION 1

Purpose of this plan

- Give a clear sense of what the service is for and the challenges it faces.
- Show how it is supporting Council's priorities.
- Show how it is contributing to the efficiency drive and transformation of service delivery.
- Show how it is aligning its resources to meet the challenges ahead.
- Help us to hold ourselves to account and ensure we deliver for Council and its residents.
- Bring key information together in one place about the service, which Members, staff and stakeholders can understand.

The Vision for the service area

'Working in partnership with our community we will seek to protect and enhance our environment, promote well-being, and support a sustainable economy.'

Strategic Themes / Functions

The key functions of the Planning service area are:

- Local Development Planning – creating a plan which will set out a clear vision of how the council area should look in the future by deciding what type and scale of development should be encouraged and where it should be located to create a sustainable environment; designation of conservation areas; issuing Building Preservation Notices and Tree Preservation Orders.
- Development Management – determining the vast majority of planning applications and other planning consents, including waste and minerals applications, conservation area consents, advertisement consents, certificates of lawful development, non-material changes, and discharge of conditions.



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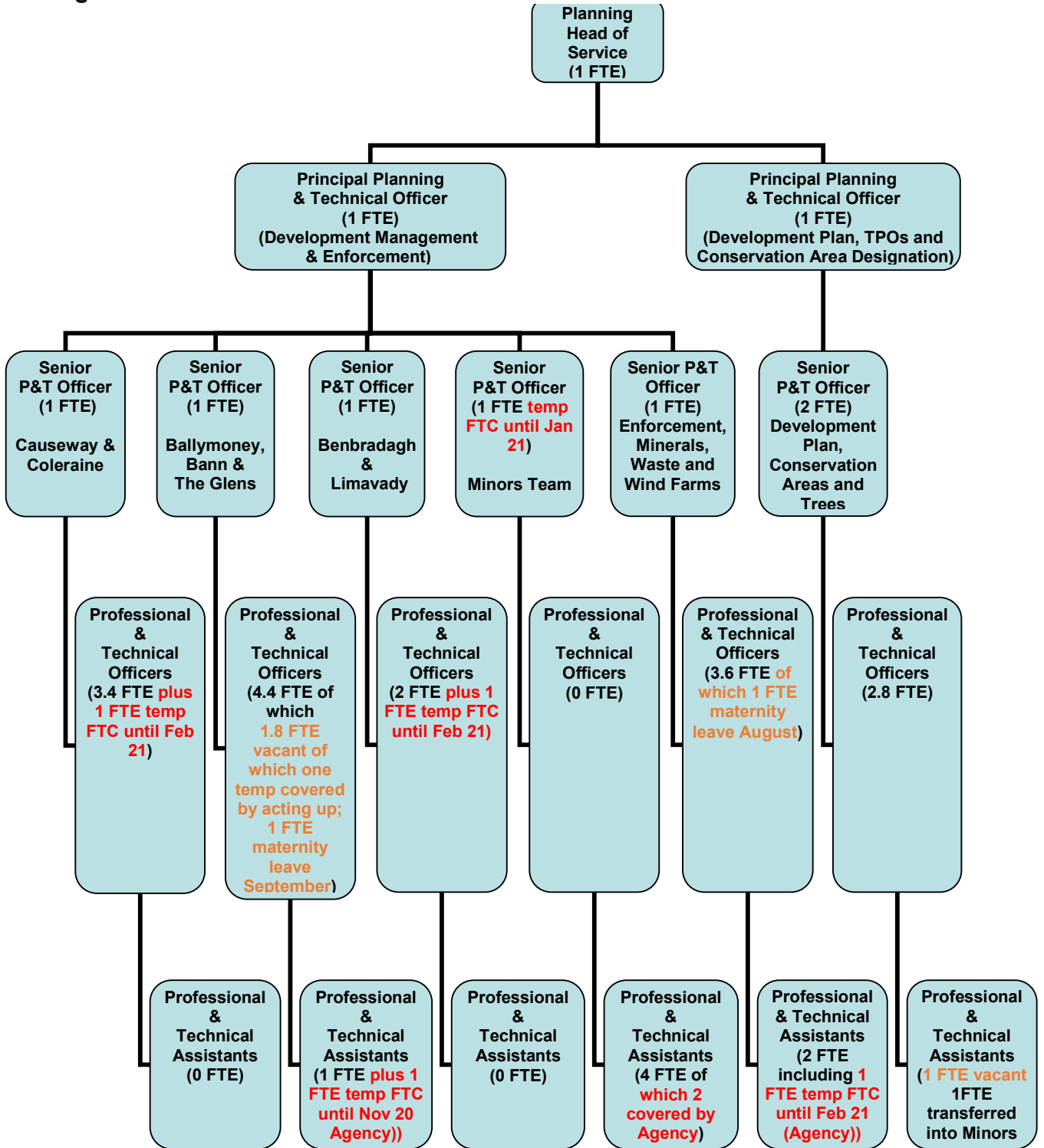
- Planning Enforcement – investigating alleged breaches of planning control and taking action where it is considered expedient to do so; issuing of Urgent Works Notices.

Strategic Aims of the Service

1. To contribute to the growth of a sustainable economy and investment in the Borough by making timely decisions and developing sound planning policies.
2. To contribute to the protection of the environment and the creation of safer communities by making sound decisions and developing sound policies through the development plan process.
3. To engage customers, stakeholders and partners more effectively in order to increase understanding of and compliance with processes and regulation.
4. To manage finance, staff, information and other resources effectively and efficiently within a strong corporate governance framework.

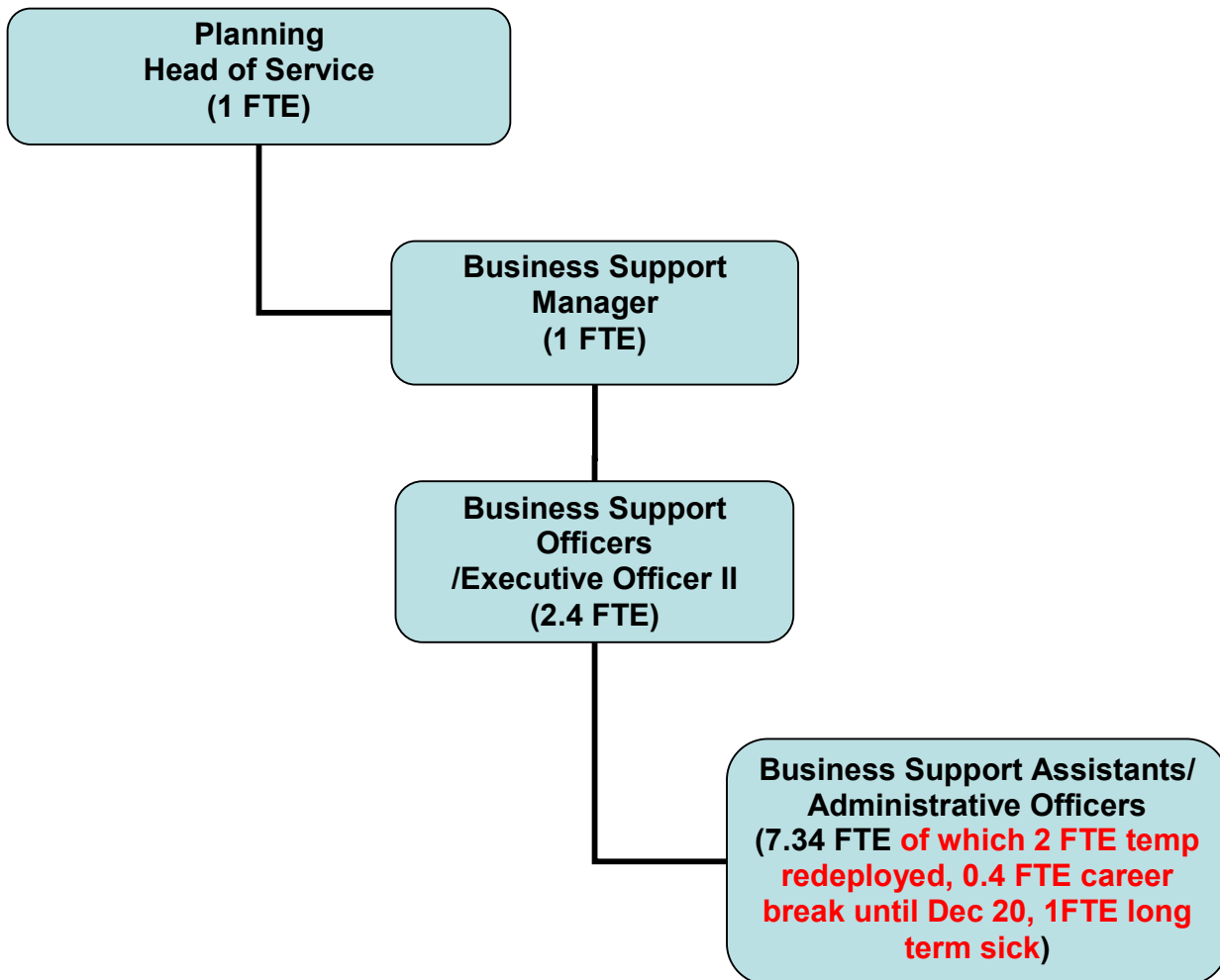


Organisational Structure - Professional & Technical Staff





Organisational Structure – Administrative Support





SECTION 2

SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater engagement with Elected Members in the Local Development Plan process bringing greater local awareness of needs • Agreed Protocol and Scheme of Delegation with Planning Committee in place and regularly reviewed. • Experienced staff at senior level employed on permanent basis with wide range of knowledge and skills • Positive attitude throughout the office. • Clear assigned roles in relation to Development Management, Development Plan and Enforcement. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of experience in staff at lower grades and instability in staffing resources with 7FTE on fixed term contracts/agency, 1.8 vacant Planning Officer posts, 1 FTE planning assistant post and 2 FTE Planning Officers going on maternity leave. • Great uncertainty for developers due to political input into decision making process high percentage of officer's recommendations on referred applications overturned by Planning Committee. • Increasing complexity of legislation and environmental areas/issues which limited internal expertise. • Increased number of complaints regarding delays in the planning process and decisions. • Detailed policies within SPPS constrain Council's ability to develop policies specific to needs of Borough within its new Local Development Plan (LDP).
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity through the SPPS to develop better partnership working – between Council, the Department for Infrastructure, other Councils and the general public. • Agreement to FBC for the development of new Planning Portal IT System procurement process with 9 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of Covid-19 restricting access to the office and reduction in income from Planning applications. • No control over number of planning applications submitted and hence income generation and resultant impact on expenditure. • Not filling vacant posts including



<p>other Councils and DfI ensures up-to-date stable system with improved customer interface and reduced Council risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for collaborative working with other council staff. 	<p>covering those on maternity leave due to budget pressures resulting in increased workloads and increased delays to processing applications and cases.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater risk of challenge through Judicial Reviews/Ombudsman etc. on environmental governance • Risk to breaches of confidentiality/data protection due to high volumes of correspondence received and uploaded onto the Planning Portal.
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Summary Narrative

Planning is a demand-led service and we are affected by the wider economic factors which determine the level of applications received. Enforcement is similarly reactive process as the majority of complaints are received from the public.

The significant challenge ahead for Planning is dealing with the impact of restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. With offices closed for a significant period of time, the number of planning applications is predicted to be drastically reduced when compared to the previous business year. This will have a negative impact on budget expenditure as the budget set during the rate setting process was based on normal activity.

In order to operate within the set budget and making up the shortfall in predicted income, will require difficult decisions to be made over the coming months. The largest expenditure in Planning is staffing. Expenditure within other codes within the Planning budget will be reduced, however, this will be insufficient to address the shortfall between expenditure and reduced fee income predicted. Therefore, posts vacated at end of the last business year and those that will be vacated in the coming months due to maternity leave are proposed to remain vacant over this coming business year in order to reduce expenditure. Money set aside to publish the draft Plan Strategy has also been removed from expenditure as workshops with Members are put on hold whilst restrictions due to Covid-19 are in place. However, without DfC funding, these cuts will not be sufficient to reduce the deficit to ensure Planning operates within its significantly reduced budget.



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With reduced staffing will be the inevitable impact on caseloads and processing times for planning applications and enforcement cases. With caseloads increasing to cover the vacant posts, including the fixed term contracts coming to an end in Q4 of this business year, this increases the risk of delays in processing of applications and cases and also increases the risk of complaints and challenges.

Council is now responsible for the publication of a new Local Development Plan that will, when adopted, form the basis of all decision making within the Borough. The impact of restrictions on workshops with Members in the preparation of the draft Plan Strategy will also have a negative impact on the timetable for publishing the draft Plan. This will result in the draft Plan not publishing in this business year.

Council has signed up to the delivery of the new Northern Ireland Planning Portal with 9 other Councils and DfI. This shared system is due for completion in 2022 and will provide Council with a stable, up-to-date system that will have an improved customer interface. Staff will be involved in workshops over this business year to assist in the development of the new system.

PESTEL Analysis

Political	Local accountability – Elected members have responsibility for decision making for those applications not delegated to planning officers and for agreeing the new development plan. The lack of a functioning Northern Ireland Assembly in Stormont is impacting on the ability to have planning legislation reviewed.
Economic	Receipts are closely related to general economic activity in the Borough. Planning can be an enabler of development and can be viewed as an income generator to the overall benefit of the Council. The impact of Covid-19 will have a significant impact on the income generated by planning applications over this business year.
Social	Opportunity to improve the wellbeing of citizens of the Borough through the linkage with the Community Plan and greater community involvement in the development plan process. Continue to implementation the agreed Statement of Community Involvement and consider reviewing.
Technological	Development of the Planning Portal/Website will contribute to improvement in customer accessibility and engagement in the planning functions.
Environmental	Ability to protect the environment and encourage economic development through a balanced delivery of the planning system. The new development plan process will encourage greater political and community involvement in the local development plan process with each option appraised through the Sustainability Assessment and other Assessments. Continuation of the collaboration with other council staff will improve knowledge and evidence to produce sound policies to promote sustainable development.
Legal	Working in a complex legal environment increases the risk of challenge through Judicial Reviews/Ombudsman cases. Large number of European designated sites in the Borough and increased scrutiny through The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017 and the Council Directive 92/43/EEC raising complex issues.

Summary Narrative

Planning is largely constrained by complex legislation and policies implemented through central government. The risks involved in failing to comply with these can result in a significant financial cost to Council. It is therefore important to ensure that Planning has sufficient staff resources with the necessary skills and knowledge to make sound decisions thereby reducing the risks of administrative errors.

SECTION 3

Planning service area Strategic Aims and Objectives Aligned with Council's Strategic Aims and Objectives:

BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVE 1: Maintain performance in relation to processing planning applications

WORKSTREAM	ACTION	OUTCOMES	BUDGET	TIMESCALE	KPI	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS	RAG STATUS
Streamline the planning application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Development Management Strategy for agreement with Planning Committee • Planning Committee agree to implement Development Management Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear framework for efficient delivery of development management function • Reduction in timeframes to improve performance against statutory targets 	Ensure adequate budget allocated in next rate setting process to ensure sufficient staff resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q4 • Q4 	Achieve yearly target for 2020/21: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local applications average processing time of 19 weeks; • Major applications average processing time of 50 weeks. • 70% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint 	Denise Dickson Head of Planning		
Maintain sufficient staff resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek agreement to fill existing vacant posts outside of reduced budget but within original budget • Prepare Business Case to retain Fixed Term Contracts on permanent basis • Seek agreement on Business case • Recruit/retain agreed staff resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in agency staff if permanent appointments agreed • Retain staff workloads at a manageable level • Reduction in timeframes to improve performance against statutory targets 	Seek agreement to revert to original budget expenditure which includes these staffing costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q3 • Q3 • Q4 • Q4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stable staff resource • Achieve a reduction in the number of applications in the system over 12 months 	Denise Dickson Head of Planning		

BUSINESS PLAN OBJECTIVE 2: To manage finance, staff, information and other resources effectively and efficiently within the corporate governance framework.

WORKSTREAM	ACTION	OUTCOMES	BUDGET	TIMESCALE	KPI	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	PROGRESS	RAG STATUS
Ensure all Audit recommendations are implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree budget expenditure to be that of original budget • Prepare Business Case to retain Fixed Term Contracts on permanent basis • Seek agreement of Business Case through SLT, Planning Committee and full Council as necessary • Recruit/retain agreed staff resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree staffing resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within original budget but outside reduced budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q2 • Q3 • Q3 • Q4 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in number of temporary staff 	Denise Dickson Head of Planning		

**SECTION 4
Financial Position for 2020/2021 Provisional**

Service Area	Expenditure & Income	Detail Sub Category	Total	
Head of Planning	Expenditure Summary	Staff Costs – Salaries (Incl Agency & supperann)	£2,152,800	
		Training/Course Costs	£2,900	
		Stationery, Postage, Printing, and Photocopiers	£23,640	
		Protective Clothing & Health and Safety	£1,150	
		Legal Services	£33,800	
		Hospitality	£325	
		Advertisement	£35,000	
		Subscriptions/Licences/Management Systems	£55,431	
		Travel, Subsistence and Carparking	£25,000	
		Development Plan Costs	£35,000	
		Surveys	£3,000	
		Expenditure Total		£2,368,046
		Estimated Income	Receipts from planning applications and Planning Property Certificates	
	Predicted Income Total		£1,467,773	
Head of Planning Total (Gross)			£900,273	