

Title of Report:		Third Quarterly Report on Planning Performance	
Committee Report Submitted To:		Corporate Policy and Resources Committee	
Date of Meeting:		29 April 2025	
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		
Estimated Timescale for Completion			
Date to be Completed		N/A	
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 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a quarterly update on Planning performance against the Planning Department Business Plan 2024/25.

2.0 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 2024-25 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 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin was published on 27 March 2025 providing planning statistics for this period.

3.0 Details

Website link 1 https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-october-december-2024_ provides the link to the published bulletin.

Business Plan Objective 1: Improve performance in relation to the processing of planning applications and enforcement cases

- 3.1 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 2024-25 business year and provides a comparison of performance against all 11 Councils and against Business Plan KPIs.

Table 1: Planning Applications

2024/25	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	3	6	259	214 (11 w/d)	262	224 (15 w/d)	909	267 (29.4%)
Rank	5 th	5 th	4 th	6 th	4 th	5 th	4 th	5 th (%)
Average Processing Times	74.3 weeks		26.2 weeks					
Rank	7 th		9 th					
Business Plan Target	Major Category – 40 weeks - Ongoing		Local Category – 28 weeks - Met		Over 12 month and over 24 month applications – reduce by 10% - Ongoing			

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: First Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin and Planning Department Business Plan 2024-25

Department Business Plan 2024-25

2024/25	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	6	5 (1w/d)	233	244 (20w/d)	239	249 (21w/d)	899	256 (28.5%)
Rank	2 nd	3 rd	5 th	5 th	5 th	5 th	3 rd	5 th (%)
Average Processing Times	43.6 weeks		23.8 weeks					
Rank	5 th		9 th					
Business Plan Target	Major Category – 40 weeks - Ongoing		Local Category – 26 weeks -Met		Over 12 month and over 24 month applications – reduce by 10% - Ongoing			

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Second Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin and Planning Department Business Plan 2024-25

Department Business Plan 2024-25

2024/25	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
Planning Applications	5	2	221	315 (30w/d)	226	317 (30w/d)	805	257 (31.9%)
Rank	5 th	8 th	5 th	2 nd	5 th	2 nd	4 th	6 th (%)
Average Processing Times	14.7 weeks		22.6 weeks					
Rank	2 nd		8 th					
Business Plan Target	Major Category – 40 weeks - Ongoing		Local Category – 23 weeks -Met		Over 12 month and over 24 month applications – reduce by 10% - Ongoing			

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Third Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin and Planning Department Business Plan 2024-25

2024/25	Major		Local		Total		Live	
YTD	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Total	Over 12mths
Planning Applications	14	13 (1w/d)	712	777 (65w/d)	726	790 (66 w/d)	805	257 (31.9%)
Rank	3 rd	5 th	5 th	5 th	5 th	5 th	4 th	6 th (%)
Average Processing Times	43.6 weeks		24 weeks					
Rank	5 th		9 th					
Business Plan Target	Major Category – 40 weeks - Ongoing (year end target)		Local Category – Q1, Q2 and Q3 targets met		Over 12 month and over 24 month applications – reduce by 10% - Ongoing (year end target)			

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Third Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin and Planning Department Business Plan 2024-25

- 3.2** In the Q3, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council issued 2 major planning applications (one relating to submission of noise survey for previously approved Craiggore Wind Farm and the other relating to drainage assessment for previously approved Mill Strand Integrated Primary School and Nursery) resulting in an average processing time of 14.7 weeks meeting the statutory target for this period and 2nd fastest out of all 11 Councils. Year to date the processing of major planning applications is moving closer to meeting the Business Plan target of 40 weeks by end of this business year and also closer to meeting the statutory target of 30 weeks.
- 3.3** Over the same period, we received 5 major planning applications in Q3 (1 new wind farm application, variations to 2no. wind farms, variation to retail approval at the Riverside, and variation to caravan park). This brings to a total of 14 major applications received year to date, 3rd highest out of all 11 Councils.
- 3.4** Over the same period 221 local applications were received, 13 less than for the same period last year. Over Q3, 315 local category applications were decided including 30 local applications withdrawn, 2nd highest out of all 11 Councils. Although not meeting the statutory target, the Business Plan target of 23 weeks was met continuing the improvement in processing times over the business year.
- 3.5** There was a total of 257 applications in the system over 12 months at end of Q3, a decrease of 5% when compared to the beginning of this business year. Although not meeting the Business Plan target of 10% reduction, this is the 6th lowest out of all 11 Councils when compared to % of live applications.
- 3.6** In Q3, focus was on reducing the number of over 24 month applications decreased to 88 a reduction of 12% from the beginning of the Business Year and meeting the Business Plan target of 10% reduction by end of year. Focus will continue into Q4 to continue to reduce the number of over 24 month applications in the system.

Enforcement

3.7 Table 2 below shows statistics in relation to enforcement for Q1, Q2, Q3 and YTD of the 2024/25 business year. Progress continues to improve performance meeting the KPIs set out in the Business Plan. The statutory target for bringing to conclusion enforcement cases of 70% within 39 weeks has not been met over this period. However, the Business Plan target of 55% for Q1, 60% for Q2 and 65% for Q3 have been achieved and through improved performance moving closer to meeting the statutory target by end of the business year.

3.8 Of the cases closed in Q3, 18.4% were remedied/resolved, 20.4% had planning permission granted; 14.3% were closed as not expedient; 16.3% were immune from enforcement; and 30.6% had no breach identified. A total of 7 enforcement notices were issued during Q3 and 2 breach of condition notices.

Table 2: Enforcement

2024/25	Open	Closed	Concluded	Conclusion Times	Live	Court Action	
Q1						Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	54	76	77	56.4%	438	1	1
Rank	8 th	5 th	6 th	8 th	4 th	2 nd	-
Business Plan Target				Conclude 55% within 39 weeks			

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: First Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin

2024/25	Open	Closed	Concluded	Conclusion Times	Live	Court Action	
Q2						Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	61	45	56	69.6%	454	8	0
Rank	4 th	5 th	5 th	8 th	3 rd	1 st	-
Business Plan Target				Conclude 60% within 39 weeks			

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Second Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin

2024/25	Open	Closed	Concluded	Conclusion Times	Live	Court Action	
Q3						Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	47	49	50	80%	450	2	0
Rank	7 th	7 th	7 th	4 th	3 rd	1 st	-
Business Plan Target				Conclude 65% within 39 weeks			

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Third Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin

2024/25	Open	Closed	Concluded	Conclusion Times	Live	Court Action	
YTD						Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	160	170	184	66.8%	450	12	1
Rank	7 th	7 th	7 th	8 th	3 rd	1 st	-
Business Plan Target				Q1, Q2, Q3 Business Plan targets met			

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Third Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin

Implement a new Pre-Application Discussion process – Timescale Q2 – Met

- 3.9** The new Pre-Application Discussions procedures were agreed at Planning Committee on 22 May 2024 and implemented on 01 September 2024. This Business Plan KPI target has been met.

Implement a new Validation Checklist process – Timescale Q2 – Met

- 3.10** The new Validation Checklist process was agreed at Planning Committee meeting held on 22 May 2024 and implemented on 01 September 2024. This Business Plan KPI target has been met.

Implement Standing Advice from NI Water – Timescale Q3 agree – Met and Q4 to implement – ongoing

- 3.11** NI Water Standing Advice has been agreed at a meeting held on 21 November 2024. The Standing Orders were agreed with NIW at a meeting held on 21 November 2024 and will be implemented in this Council when Ni Water have updated their website with the necessary information.

Develop an action plan to manage and reduce the number of over 12 month applications in the system – Timescale Q2 - Met

- 3.12** The over 12 month action plan has been developed and this KPI target has been met.

Reduce the number of over 12month and over 24month applications in the system by 10% - Timescale Q4 – ongoing

- 3.13** At end of Q2 this target was not being met but the number of over 12 month applications had been significantly reduced by 5% and the over 24 months by 12%. Work continues to reduce the number by end of Q4 in accordance with target set out in the KPI.

Business Plan Objective 2: preparation of Council's draft Plan Strategy

Completion of research to inform LDP preparation in line with published timetable – Timescale Q3 – partially met

- 3.14** Although the tender exercise for the independent research was unsuccessful, a direct award contract has been agreed to be awarded to Ulster University - Timescale Q3 – target met for award of contract. The completion of the research is scheduled for September 2025. This is in accordance with the proposed new Local Development Plan 2038 Timetable.

Tree Preservation Order interactive map viewer operational and accessible by the public – Timescale Q3 – Met

- 3.15** The TPO interactive map has been developed and further supporting information is in the process of being linked – target has been met.

Business Plan Objective 3: to manage finance, staff, information and other resources effectively and efficiently within corporate governance framework

Review Planning Fraud Risk Self Assessment Checklist – Timescale Q2 - Met

- 3.16** The review of the Planning Fraud Risk Self Assessment Checklist was completed on 16/10/24; target has been met.

Review outstanding Audit/Ombudsman recommendations and allocate timeframe for implementation – Timescale Q3 - ongoing

- 3.17** The review of outstanding Audit/Ombudsman recommendations has been completed and timeframe for implementation will be finalised by end of Q3 – target ongoing.

Recommendations from outstanding Audit/Ombudsman recommendations implemented – Timescale Q4 - ongoing

- 3.18** On finalisation of timeframe for implementation of outstanding Audit/Ombudsman recommendations will be implemented in accordance with the timeframes set out – target unlikely to be met.

Number of cases where Ombudsman determines maladministration is less than 0.4% of all decisions made – Timescale Q4 - ongoing

- 3.19** At end of Q2 there were no cases during this period where the Ombudsman determined maladministration – on target to be met.

Long term vacant posts filled – Timescale Q2 – partially met

- 3.20** Pre-employment procedures complete for Planning Assistant grades in Q3; all other posts filled – target partially met.

Reserve list held for future vacancies for next 12 months – target met

- 3.21** A reserve list is in place for all Planning Principal, Senior, Officer and Assistant grades following successful recruitment campaigns.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee note the Planning Departments Third Quarterly Report.