Title of Report:	**Planning Department Statistical Annual Report 2021/2022 - Update**
Committee Report Submitted To:	**Planning Committee**
Date of Meeting:	**24 August 2022**
For Decision or For Information	**For Information**

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

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	Nil
Included in Current Year Estimates	
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

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 and these are reflected in Council's Performance Improvement Plan 2021-22 and the Planning Department Business Plan 2021-2022.

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.

1.3 The Planning Department Performance in relation to Business Plan targets were reported to Planning Committee at the meeting held on 25 May 2022 based on unvalidated statistics. This report considers performance as set out in the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics the official statistics publication issued by Analysis, Statistics & Research Team, 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 2021/22 Annual Statistical Bulletin was published on 7th July 2022.

2.0 Details

Website link 1
https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-april-2021-march-2022 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 2021-22 business year and provides a comparison of performance against all 11 Councils.

Table 1: Planning Applications

2021/22	Major		Local		Total		Live	
	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Rec'd	Dec'd/ W/D	Total	Over 12mths
Planning Applications	12	16	1,248	1,214	1,260	1230	923	250 (27.1%)
Rank	4th	3rd	5th	5th	5th	5th	4th	3rd (2nd %)
Average Processing Times	54.6 weeks		18.8 weeks					
Rank	7th		8th					
Approval Rate	93.3%		95.8%		95.8%		5th Rank	

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: 2021/22 Annual Statistical Bulletin

2.2 In the 2021/22 business year, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council received the 5th highest number of planning applications and decided the 5th highest number of applications. The number of applications received and decided increased when compared to the previous year, most markedly in the number of decisions issuing which increased by 28.4%. Furthermore, the approval rate of 95.8% has increased when compared to the previous year and is above the Northern Ireland average. The number of over 12 month applications in the system remains a concern ranking 3rd highest out of the 11 councils and 2nd in terms of percentage of live applications.

2.3 Steady progress continues in the reduction of the average processing times of planning applications and subsequent ranking out of the 11 councils. There has been a significant improvement in the processing times for major applications, issuing the 2nd highest number of major decisions out of the 11 councils (excluding applications withdrawn) in an average processing times 31.6 weeks faster than the previous year and ranking 7th fastest out of the 11 councils, an improvement of 3 ranking positions. The average processing times of local applications also improved over this period. Local applications were processed on average 2 weeks faster than 2020/21 business year and a further improvement in ranking when compared to the other councils. This is the fastest average processing time for local applications for this Council since transfer of powers in April 2015. It is important to continue this improvement into the next business year with the front-loading of planning applications and assessments. Nevertheless, the statutory targets for local and major planning applications were not met over the business year, but it is encouraging to note the continued improvement in processing times.

2.4 In order to continue improvement in performance in the processing of both local and major planning applications, focus going forward will be to continue to improve the front-loading of the assessment of local and major planning applications to reduce delays in the processing of applications especially in relation to NI Water issues. The processing of applications must incorporate the reduction of over 12 month applications in the system.

<u>Enforcement</u>

Table 2 below shows statistics in relation to enforcement for the 2021/22 business year. The statutory target to progress 70% of all enforcement cases to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint has been met. We opened the 7th highest number of cases and closed the 8th highest number of cases with over 32% closed due to no breach identified. We had the highest number of prosecutions and convictions out of the 11 Councils. However, the number of live enforcement cases continues to rise largely as a result of staff vacancies within the Enforcement team. A permanent planning assistant has been appointed and this will assist in relieving some of the pressures on other staff within the team in dealing with new cases, allowing them to balance their casework with other workload including enforcement appeals and attendance at court. Going forward, caseloads will require to be carefully monitored to further reduce pressures on staff and continue to meet the statutory target while also reducing live cases. The appointment of the Senior Planning Officer to fill the vacant post will be completed in Q1 of 2022/23 with commencement of employment in early Q2.

Table 2: Enforcement

2020/21	Open	Conclude	Conclusion Times	Court Action		Live cases
			70% within 39wks	Prosecutions	Convictions	
Cases	294	212	78.8%	20	8	423
Rank	7th	8th	5th	1st	1st	4th

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: 2021/22 Annual Statistical Bulletin

Other Activity by Planning Department

2.5 Tables 3 and 4 below indicates the level of other activity carried out by the Planning Department over the 2021/22 business year.

Table 3: Other Activity

	2018/19 Received	2019/20 Received	2020/21 Received	2021/22 Received
Discharge of Conditions	48	100	96	89
Certificate of Lawful Development	43	58	48	59
Pre Application Discussions	52	46	37	43
Non Material Change	27	41	30	34
TPOs	14	13	7	9
Pre Application Notice	17	13	6	17
Total	**201**	**271**	**224**	**251**

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Annual Statistical Bulletins

Table 4: Correspondence, Complaints and Appeals

	2018/19 Received	2019/20 Received	2020/21 Received	2021/22 Received
Complaints Stage 1	27	24	44	15
Complaints Stage 2	9	11	23	7
Complaints Stage 3	4	11	12	8
Complaints to Ombudsman	3	6	6	6
Judicial Review Decision	2	1	0	1
General Correspondence	734	607	535	383
Request For Information (EIR/FOI)	60	69	91	65
Planning Appeal Decisions	22	17	20	12
Total	**861**	**746**	**731**	**496**

Source: Unvalidated Statistics – Internal Reports

2.6 In addition to the formal applications received, the Planning Department received 251 other types of applications relating to planning applications and dealt with some 496 pieces of correspondence, complaints and appeals, a substantial reduction on the previous year. Most notably is the reduction in the number of complaints, general correspondence and Planning Appeal Decisions. Of the 12 PAC decisions, 5 were dismissed, 5 upheld and 2 partially upheld. Of the 5 upheld, 4 related to temporary carparking in the vicinity of the Giant's Causeway and related to EIA determinations and related certificates of lawful development. The 1 judicial review decision was dismissed at leave hearing stage due to the judge not granting standing for the

applicant, Mr Duff. This decision is now being appealed to the Court of Appeal by Mr Duff. Of the 6 complaints to the Ombudsman, 5 were not accepted and 1 case is ongoing.

Conclusion

2.7 In conclusion, performance within the Planning Department remains steady against a difficult year due to Covid-19 restrictions and vacant posts. However, with restrictions easing and recruitment of staff ongoing it is envisaged that improvements in performance and increased number of decisions issuing will continue into the 2021/22 business year.

3.0 Recommendation

3.1 **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the Planning Committee note the Planning Departments Updated Annual Report.