



Title of Report:	First Quarterly Report on Planning Performance		
Committee Report Submitted To:	Corporate Policy & Resources Committee		
Date of Meeting:	26 November 2024		
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

2.1 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.

2.2 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.

2.3 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 First Quarter 2024/25 Statistical Bulletin was published on 03 October 2024 providing planning statistics for this period.

3.0 Details

Website link 1 <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-april-june-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 first 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	220 (11 w/d)	920	276 (30%)
Rank	5 th	5 th	4 th	6 th	4 th	6 th	4 th	7 th (%)
Average Processing Times	74.3 weeks		26.2 weeks					
Rank	7 th		9 th					
Business Plan Target	Major Category – 40 weeks - Not met		Local Category – 28 weeks - Met		Over 12 month applications – reduce by 10% - Not Met			

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

- 3.2** In the Q1, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council issued 6 major planning applications (including erection of 126 dwellings (47no. social and affordable) an extension to a light industrial unit, and a new fabrication, assembly and R&D facility) resulting in an average processing time of 74.3 weeks, not meeting the statutory target or Business Plan target during this period. However, this is 54.2 weeks faster when compared with performance over the same period in 23/24 and 4 more when compared to the same period last year. In addition, we received 3 major planning applications (modifications to Portstewart Golf Course, variation of a condition for retailing at Riverside, and extension to existing sports clubhouse); 1 more than the same period last year.
- 3.3** Over the same period 259 local applications were received, an increase of 9.3% on the same period last year. Over Q1, 203 local category applications were decided and 11 local applications withdrawn. Although not meeting the statutory target, the Business Plan target of 28 weeks was met and average processing times were 2.4 weeks faster when compared to the same period last year.
- 3.4** There was a total of 276 applications in the system over 12 months at end of Q1, an increase of 5 applications compared to the beginning of this business year, thereby not meeting the Business Plan target. This equates to 30% of the total number of live applications and is the 7th highest percentage of live applications out of the 11 Councils. Work is ongoing on these applications in order to reduce the number of over 12 month applications in Q2.

Enforcement

- 3.5** Table 2 below shows statistics in relation to enforcement for Q1 of the 2024/25 business year. Progress has been made in reducing the number of live cases, however this has impacted on performance. 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% has been achieved.
- 3.6** Of the cases closed, 26.3% were remedied/resolved, 19.7% had planning permission granted; 31.6% were closed as not expedient; and 22.4% had no breach identified.

Table 2: Enforcement

2024/25	Open	Closed	Concluded	Conclusion Times	Live	Court Action	
Q1						Prosecutions	Convictions
Cases	55	76	73	57.5%	438	1	1
Rank	8 th	5 th	5 th	8 th	4 th	-	-
Business Plan Target				Conclude 55% within 39 weeks			

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

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

- 3.7** The new Pre-Application Discussions procedures were agreed at Planning Committee on 22 May 2024 with implementation date of 01 September 2024. This Business Plan KPI is on target to be met.

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

- 3.8** The new Validation Checklist process was agreed at Planning Committee meeting held on 22 May 2024 with implementation date of 01 September 2024. This Business Plan KPI is on target to be met.

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

- 3.9** NI Water advised that the Standing Advice is due to be piloted in this Council Area in Autumn – on target to be met.

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

- 3.10** The over 12 month action plan has been drafted and this KPI is on target to be met.

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

- 3.11 At end of Q1 this target was not being met with the number of over 12month applications increasing. However, work is in progress to reduce the number by end of Q4 in accordance with timeframe 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

- 3.12 Although the tender exercise for the independent research was unsuccessful, work is ongoing to identify alternative provision of evidence to inform the LDP process – Timescale Q3 – on target to be met.

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

- 3.13 The TPO interactive map has been developed and supporting information is in the process of being linked – on target to be 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

- 3.14 The review of the Planning Fraud Risk Self Assessment Checklist is on target to be met.

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

- 3.15 The review of outstanding Audit/Ombudsman recommendations has commenced and timeframe for implementation will be finalised by end of Q3 – on target to be met.

Recommendations from outstanding Audit/Ombudsman recommendations implemented – Timescale Q4

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

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

- 3.17** At end of Q1 there were no cases during this period where the Ombudsman determined maladministration – on target to be met.

Long term vacant posts filled – Timescale Q2

- 3.18** Pre-employment procedures ongoing for Planning Assistant grades; all other posts filled – on target to be met.

Reserve list held for future vacancies for next 12 months

- 3.19** Reserve list held for all grades except Planning assistant. Further recruitment campaign to be commenced – unlikely to be met.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1** It is recommended that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee note the Planning Department's Quarterly Report.