



Title of Report:	Planning Business Plan 2021-22
Committee Report Submitted To:	Planning Committee
Date of Meeting:	28 April 2021
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

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:

FOR DECISION

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of the Planning Service Business Plan is to set out the key business focus for Planning over the next business year for consideration and agreement by Members.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The last business year was severely impacted by the restrictions imposed by Covid-19. The business plan includes continuation of the focus of last year as well as new targets to bring Planning closer to achieving the statutory targets set out in The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The strategic aims of the Service are:

- To contribute to the growth of a sustainable economy and investment in the Borough by making timely decisions and developing sound planning policies.
- 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.
- To engage customers, stakeholders and partners more effectively in order to increase understanding of and compliance with processes and regulation.
- To manage finance, staff, information and other resources effectively and efficiently within a strong corporate governance framework.

- 3.2 The business plan objectives are

- To improve performance in relation to processing of planning applications
- To manage finance, staff, information and other resources effectively within the corporate governance framework

- 3.3 The Planning Service Business Plan is attached at Appendix 1.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that the Planning Committee APPROVE the Planning Service Business Plan 2021-22.



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

***PLANNING
BUSINESS PLAN
2021-2022***



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 ratepayers.

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

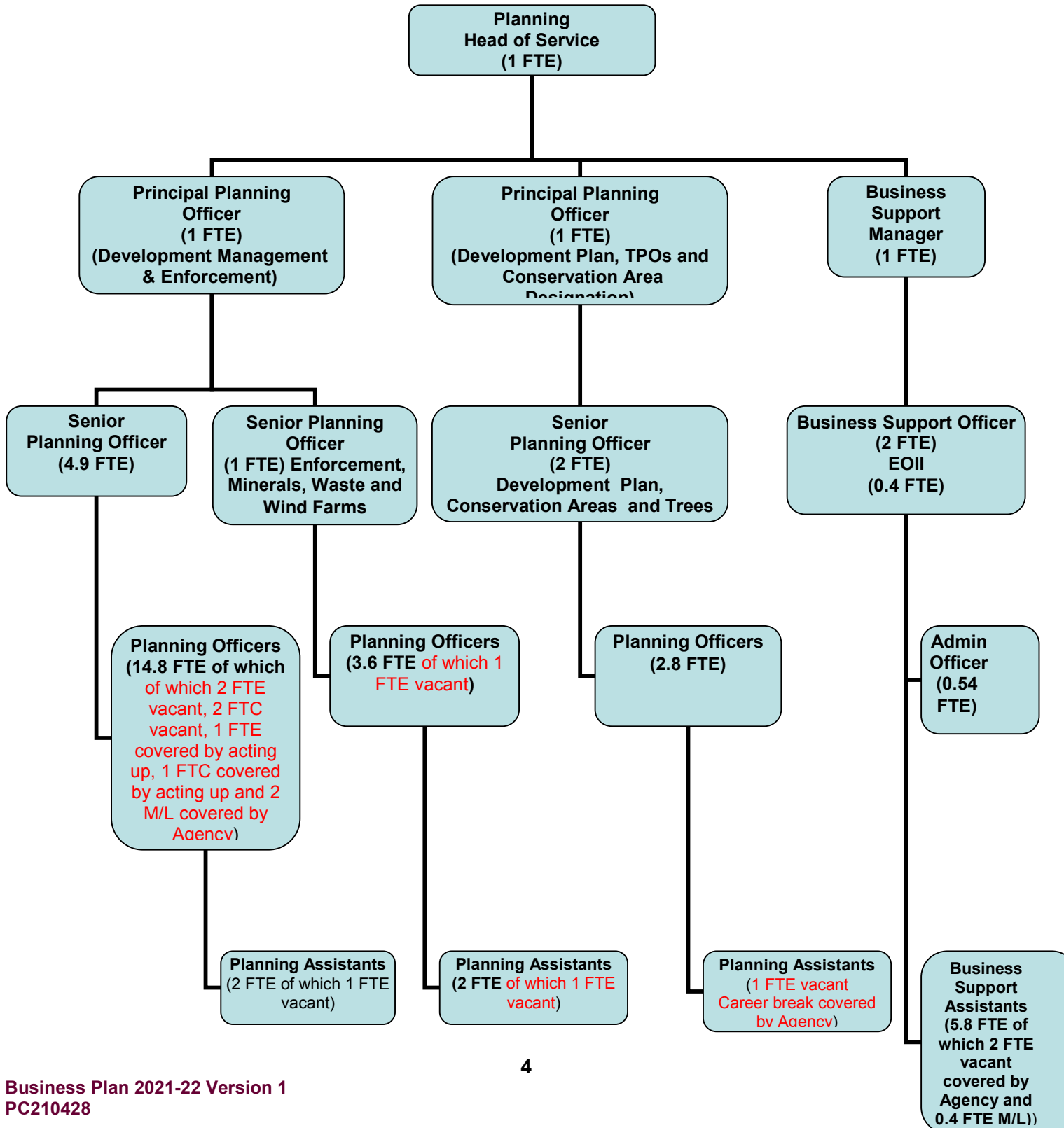


Strategic Aims of the Service

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 - Staffing





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. • Greater engagement with Elected Members in the decision-making process for planning applications. • Teams established to deal with specific application types provides consistency and efficiency to development management process. • Agreed Protocol and Scheme of Delegation with Planning Committee in place and regularly reviewed. • Experienced and resilient 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. • Increasing complexity of legislation and environmental areas/issues which limited internal expertise. • Increased number of complaints regarding planning approval decisions and enforcement closure decisions. • Detailed policies within SPPS constrain Council’s ability to develop policies specific to needs of Borough within its new Local Development Plan (LDP). • Operational constraints arising from the restrictions imposed due to the Coronavirus pandemic.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop better partnership working between Council and statutory consultees through development of advice and guidance to reduce formal consultations and improve performance. • Input into amendments to planning 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No control over number of planning applications submitted and hence income generation and resultant impact on expenditure. • Staff working at full capacity and not filling vacant posts including covering those on sick leave and maternity leave



<p>legislation to bring about improvements to the planning function.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of new Planning Portal IT System ensuring up-to-date stable system with improved customer interface and reduced Council risk. • Innovative and cost efficient working practices through use of remote technology. 	<p>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 the reduced economy due to the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic over the last year. This may have a negative impact on fee income due to reduced number of major applications as businesses remain cautious over investment during this time.

Recruitment from external candidates for vacant posts remains a challenge in this area due to restricted catchment area.

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 has had a negative impact on the timetable for publishing the draft Plan. This use of remote technology has assisted in reconvening these workshops.

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 are 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.
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 coronavirus pandemic may 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 implement the agreed Statement of Community Involvement which has recently been reviewed in light of the coronavirus pandemic.
Technological	Development of the Planning Portal will contribute to improvement in customer accessibility and engagement in the planning functions. Remote meetings have provided an opportunity to continue engagement during the coronavirus pandemic.
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: Improve 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 	Within agreed budget	<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: process those applications received in this business year within an average processing time of 50 weeks. • 70% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint • reduce number of planning applications in the system over 12 months by 10% 	Denise Dickson Head of Planning		
Maintain sufficient staff resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	Within agreed budget	<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 by 10% 	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/Ombudsman recommendations are implemented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruit/retain agreed staff resources Train/update staff on procedures and interpretation of planning policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recruited to fill vacant posts Training events delivered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Within agreed budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Q2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduction in number of temporary staff Number of cases where Ombudsman determines maladministration is less than 0.5% of all decisions made 	Denise Dickson Head of Planning		

**SECTION 4
Financial Position for 2021/2022**

Service Area	Expenditure & Income	Detail Sub Category	Total	
Planning	Expenditure Summary	Staff Costs – Salaries (Incl Agency)	£2,280,390	
		Training/Course Costs	£2,627	
		Stationery, Postage, Printing, and Photocopiers	£24,320	
		Protective Clothing & Health and Safety	£350	
		Legal Services	£30,000	
		Hospitality	£171	
		Advertisement	£24,086	
		Subscriptions/Licences	£41,500	
		Travel, Subsistence and Carparking	£16,143	
		Development Plan Costs	£60,000	
		Surveys	£3,000	
		Expenditure Total		£2,482,587
		Estimated Income	Receipts from planning applications and Planning Property Certificates	
		Predicted Income Total		£1,271,806
Total (Gross)			£1,210,781	