

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Quarterly Report on Planning Performance</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>Planning Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>25 January 2023</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>For Information</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council has agreed policies and procedures and decision making is consistent with them
Lead Officer	Head of Planning

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

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	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.

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 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 Second Quarter 2022/23 Statistical Bulletin was published on 08 December 2022 providing planning statistics for this period. It also provides a summary of Council progress across the three statutory targets.

## 2.0 Details

Website link 1

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-july-september-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 year to date (April – September) of 2022-23 business year and provides a comparison of performance against all 11 Councils.

2.2 The Planning Department has issued the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest number of major planning applications out of the 11 Councils year to date with all 9 applications approved in an average processing time of 25.8 weeks, a staggering 26.6 weeks faster when compared to the same period last year. This is the fastest average processing time out of all 11 Councils and the only Council to meet the statutory target for processing major planning applications. This is a significant improvement on performance in this area and is the fastest average processing time for major applications since transfer of planning functions to Council.

2.3 In relation to local planning applications, the Planning Department continues to receive the 5<sup>th</sup> highest number of this category of planning applications and issue the

5<sup>th</sup> highest number of decisions with approval rate above the Northern Ireland average.

- 2.4** Improvement on the average processing times as been maintained into Q2 with average processing times remaining at 18.0 weeks, just 1 week slower than the Northern Ireland average. Of the decisions issued, 95.8% were approved, the 5<sup>th</sup> highest approval rate out of 11 Councils and higher than the Northern Ireland average.

**Table 1: YTD Planning Applications Statistics**

<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Major</b>		<b>Local</b>		<b>Total</b>		<b>Live</b>	
<b>YTD (end Q2)</b>	<b>Rec'd</b>	<b>Dec'd/ W/D</b>	<b>Rec'd</b>	<b>Dec'd/ W/D</b>	<b>Rec'd</b>	<b>Dec'd/ W/D</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Over 12mths</b>
<b>Planning Applications</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>261 (31.6%)</b>
<b>Rank (highest)</b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> (%)</b>
<b>Average Processing Times</b>	<b>25.8 weeks</b>		<b>18.0 weeks</b>					
<b>Rank (highest)</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>		<b>6<sup>th</sup></b>					
<b>Approval Rate</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>95.8%</b>		<b>95.9%</b>		<b>5<sup>th</sup> Rank</b>	

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Second Quarter 2022/23 Statistical Bulletin

- 2.5** Vacancies at Planning Officer grade due to resignation and long term sick leave has impacted the number of decisions issuing in Q2 when compared with the previous quarter. Nevertheless the number of decisions issued is greater than applications received resulting in a decrease in the number of live applications. The number of applications in the system over 12 months has been maintained with a very slight decrease. Focus in Q3 will be to reduce the number of over 12 month old applications, although this is likely to impact on the average processing times for local applications.
- 2.6** As stability of the workforce is an important factor in the drive to improve performance and reduce the number of older applications, we will continue to work to recruit temporary planning officers to fill the vacant posts. However, due to the temporary nature of these posts this has been proving difficult to date with limited interest through the agency and difficulty attracting those with the necessary qualifications and experience.

## Enforcement

- 2.7** Table 2 below shows statistics in relation to enforcement for year to date at end of Q2. During this period, the enforcement team the number of prosecutions and convictions equalled that of 3 other Councils; all other Councils are recorded as having zero convictions YTD. Conclusion times for 70% of cases dipped below the statutory target in Q2 due to focus on concluding an increased number of cases in a drive to constrain the continual increase in live cases. Of the cases concluded, 34.7% were closed due to no breach being identified. Nevertheless, these cases still required to be site visited and research undertaken, report written and discussed at a meeting with the authorised officer to agree the 'no breach' decision.
- 2.8** As the number of cases opened continues to exceed those closed, the number of live cases continues to rise with the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest live cases out of the 11 Councils, an increase of 63 cases when compared to the end of Q2 of 2021/22.

**Table 2: YTD Enforcement Statistics**

2022/23	Open	Conclude	Conclusion Times	Court Action		Live Cases
YTD			70% within 39wks	Prosecutions	Convictions	
Cases	162	128	68.0%	4	1	467
Rank (highest)	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Second Quarter 2022/23 Statistical Bulletin

## Other Activity by Planning Department

- 2.9** Tables 3 below indicates the level of other activity carried out by the Planning Department year to date at end of Q2 of 2022/23 business year.
- 2.10** In addition to the formal applications received, YTD at end of Q2 the Planning Department received 98 other types of applications relating to planning applications, a slight reduction when compared to Q1.

**Table 3: YTD Other Activity**

YTD 2022/23	Received	Rank (highest)
Discharge of Conditions	35	6 <sup>th</sup>
Certificate of Lawful Development	22	8 <sup>th</sup>
Pre Application Discussions	24	5 <sup>th</sup>
Pre Application Notice	1	11 <sup>th</sup>
Non Material Change	13	7 <sup>th</sup>
TPOs	3	7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	

Source: Northern Ireland Planning Statistics: Second Quarter 2022/23 Statistical Bulletin

**2.11** In addition to the formal applications received and other activity detailed above, YTD at end of Q2 the Planning Department received 18 requests for information, 130 general correspondence and 13 complaints at varying stages. This is a significant decrease in the number of general correspondence, requests for information and complaints received when compared to the same period last year.

Income

**2.12** Table 5 below provides a breakdown of the income generated by the Planning Department year to date end of Q2 of 2022/23. Income (including Property Certificates Q1 and Q2) was below that predicted by over £80k.

**Table 5: Income**

YTD 2022/23	Received
Planning Applications	£585,996.10
Property Certificates	£68,643.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>£708,149.23</b>

Source: Unvalidated Statistics – Internal Reports

Conclusion

**2.13** Significant improvement in the processing of major planning applications is reflected in this Council being the only Council to meet the statutory performance target for major planning applications out of all 11 Councils and at the same time issuing the second highest number of major application decisions with 100% approval rate. This demonstrates the focus of staff on processing the most significant economic development applications in a timely fashion. Performance continues to steadily improve towards meeting the local statutory target. The approval rate for both major and local planning applications is above the Northern Ireland average.

**2.14** Although, the statutory target for enforcement was just missed, the enforcement team continues to achieve the highest number of prosecutions and convictions out of all 11 Councils.

**2.15** Focus going forward in Q3 will be on reducing the number of planning applications and enforcement cases in the system over 12months and maintaining caseloads at a manageable level. Stability of the workforce is an important element in achieving further improvement and recruitment of suitably qualified staff into vacant posts remains a concern and a priority.

**3.0 Recommendation**

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