



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

[www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](http://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

**From the Permanent Secretary  
Peter May**

Council Chief Executives

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Your reference:  
Our reference: PSDFI 22/18  
30 January 2018

*Dear Chief Executive*

## **PLANNING MONITORING FRAMEWORK**

This letter summarises progress made on the Planning Monitoring Framework and the way forward. It seeks any comments from SOLACE on the attached document.

As you are aware, Departmental officials have been working with council planning representatives over the past two and a half years to agree a planning performance management framework (now called a planning monitoring framework). This work has involved the Department employing a consultant, Mark Hand, to discuss and agree indicators with heads of planning, the issuing of a draft framework last May, and the setting up of a continuous improvement working group. This group has included officials from councils' planning and performance improvement teams, and representatives from the Department for Communities and this Department. Three meetings of this group have now been held, which have proved to be very useful.

I attach the final draft framework, with changes that were discussed at the last working group on 10 January. I also attach a draft visualisation of the framework reporting format the Department is developing, to give you an idea of how the indicators will be presented. It is intended that each council will have its own version of the attached draft. Of course, the NI Planning Statistical Bulletin, containing the three statutory indicators, will continue to be published as normal.

The reporting timeline will be as follows: data on the indicators will be collated from 1 April this year on a quarterly basis, initially for internal purposes only. However, publication of the new indicators will not take place until July 2019, so there will be plenty of time for any fine-tuning to take place through the working group, which will continue to meet during the year. In the meantime, the NI Planning Statistical Bulletin containing the three statutory indicators will continue to be published as usual.

I believe that the framework is an important mechanism which we can use together to continue to improve the effectiveness of the planning system and to highlight the very important role planning plays across all aspects of society, as well as helping to contribute to the outcomes within the draft Programme for Government.

If you have any comments to make on the attached documents please let me know. I appreciate you may have to take this through your committees and am content to wait until the end of February for any comments.

I should be grateful, therefore, if any comments could be forwarded to [cathy.pringle@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:cathy.pringle@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk) by Wednesday, 28 February 2018.

Yours sincerely

Peter May

**PETER MAY**

# NORTHERN IRELAND PLANNING MONITORING FRAMEWORK



## Introduction

- 1.1 The planning system in Northern Ireland has undergone a period of significant change. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, the majority of planning functions were devolved from the Northern Ireland Government's former Department of the Environment (DOE) to 11 newly re-organised district councils. The previous arrangement of 26 district councils had been in place since the early 1970s.
- 1.2 The current draft Programme for Government has been developed under an outcomes-based approach and aims to improve well-being for all by demonstrating how we are tackling disadvantage and driving economic growth.
- 1.3 This new Planning Framework comes at an opportune time. With the right measures in place such a framework will allow Planning, both at NI and council level, to demonstrate the contribution it is making towards the outcomes expressed in the draft Programme for Government, councils' community plans and associated local development plans.
- 1.4 While there are currently three statutory planning indicators, it is widely recognised that these do not cover all the work carried out by the local planning authorities (LPAs). This framework will help to address this by capturing data on other planning-related activities.
- 1.5 The framework incorporates the existing three statutory indicators, which will remain in addition to the new indicators.

## Monitoring and reporting arrangements

- 2.1 The new reporting arrangements will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. The Department will gather the data on a quarterly basis. Where possible, the data will be extracted from the planning portal, to minimise the burden on local planning authorities (LPAs). See reporting timeline at [Annex A](#).
- 2.2 The quarterly reports will be issued to councils following the end of each quarter by DfI, pre-populated with centrally available data, as part of the current official statistics (OS) validation process. Councils will be asked to provide the input for any indicators they are responsible for updating and to confirm their agreement with the content of the reports. The Department's Analysis, Statistics and Research Branch (ASRB) will continue to publish the official statistics, as now, on a quarterly and annual basis.
- 2.3 The Department may publish a Chief Planner's report in September of each year.
- 2.4 It is envisaged that this framework will evolve over time. The Department, in conjunction with local government, will review indicators and definitions based on lessons learnt, trends, priorities and aspirations.
- 2.5 A list of the indicators can be found at [Annex B](#).

## **Indicators**

### **Indicator 1**

Has the council:

- a) Had its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) agreed by the Department (year 1)?
- b) Published its Preferred Options Paper (year 1)?
- c) Published its Plan Strategy (year xx)?
- d) Published its Local Policies Plan (year xx)?

### **Definitions**

- i) 'Statement of Community Involvement' means the document as defined in the Planning (Statement of Community Involvement) Regulations (NI) 2015. Guidance can be found in Development Plan Practice Note 02.
- ii) 'Agreed' by the Department means that the council has either received a positive written response accepting the SCI from the Department or that no response has been received within 4 weeks of the council submitting the SCI to the Department.
- iii) 'Preferred Options Paper' means the document as defined in Part 3 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the LDP Regulations). Guidance can be found in Development Plan Practice Note 04.
- iv) 'Published' means made publically available in accordance with the relevant section of the LDP Regulations (for example Regulation 11 in relation to the POP).
- v) Publication of the 'Plan Strategy' refers to making publically available the adopted Plan Strategy under Regulation 24.
- vi) Publication of the 'Local Policies Plan' refers to making publically available the adopted Local Policies Plan under Regulation 24.

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### **Indicator 2**

Has the council submitted its local development plan (LDP) Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) (year xx)?

The AMR would detail the extent to which the objectives set out in the LDP are being achieved. This indicator would not be applicable until a full year following LDP adoption, which is some time off.

### **Definitions**

- i) 'Submission' of the Annual Monitoring Report means the date on which a copy of / link to the council's AMR is sent in writing to the Department under Regulations 25 and 27.
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### **Indicator 3**

Average processing time taken to determine major applications.

**This indicator is the existing statutory indicator.**

**Standard** – Major applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks.

#### **Definitions**

- i) A 'major' application is as defined in the [Planning \(Development Management\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#).
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### **Indicator 3.1**

Average time taken to determine major applications (excluding those requiring an environmental statement) from date valid to decision or withdrawal.

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### **Indicator 3.2**

Average time taken to determine only those major applications requiring an environmental statement from date valid to decision or withdrawal.

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### **Indicator 3.3**

Average time taken to determine major applications (excluding legacy and withdrawn applications).

#### **Definitions**

- i) A 'legacy' application is described as an application registered as valid on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.
  - ii) Applications withdrawn by the applicant prior to the decision notice being issued will be excluded from the statistics.
- 

### **Indicator – 3.4**

Average times taken to determine major legacy applications.

#### **Definitions**

- i) A 'legacy' application is described as an application registered as valid on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.
-

### **Indicator – 3.5**

Numbers of major legacy applications.

#### **Definitions**

A 'legacy' application is described as an application registered as valid on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

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**Indicator 4** – Average processing time taken to determine local applications.

**This indicator is the existing statutory indicator.**

**Standard** – Local applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 15 weeks.

#### **Definitions**

- i) A 'local' application is as defined in the [Planning \(Development Management\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#), and any other applications for approval or consent under the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (or any orders or regulations made under that Act). Applications to discharge conditions are excluded.
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### **Indicator 4.1**

Average time taken to determine local applications (excluding legacy and withdrawn applications).

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### **Indicator – 4.2**

Average times taken to determine local legacy applications.

#### **Definitions**

- i) A 'legacy' application is described as an application registered as valid on or before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.
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### **Indicator – 5**

Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks:

**This is the existing statutory indicator.**

**Standard** – 70% of all enforcement cases progressed to target conclusion within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint

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**Indicator – 6**

Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers.

**Definitions**

- i) The numerator is the number of applications determined under delegated powers during the reporting period. The denominator is the total number of applications determined during the reporting period.
- 

**Indicator – 7**

Number of applications taken to planning committee and percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation.

**Definitions**

- i) The numerator is the number of applications determined by the Planning Committee that were contrary to officer recommendation as published in the Committee minutes, during the reporting period. The denominator is the total number of applications determined by the Planning Committee during the reporting period.
- 

**Indicator – 8**

Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that are dismissed.

**Definitions**

- i) The numerator is the number of appeal decisions that were dismissed (i.e. the council's decision was upheld) during the reporting period. The denominator is the total number of appeals determined by the Planning Appeals Commission during the reporting period. This indicator excludes appeals against non-determination and enforcement notices.
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**Indicator – 9**

Number of claims for costs made and number awarded.

**Definitions**

- i) This measures the number of instances where costs were either awarded fully or partially in the council's favour, or wholly or partially against the council. The indicator measures the number of instances, not the amount of money.
  - ii) This indicator will include the Department.
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**Indicator – 10**

Does the council allow public speaking at planning committee meetings?

**Definitions**

- i) 'Public speaking at Planning Committee meetings' means any scheme formally adopted by the council and in operation that allows applicants, objectors and / or third party supporters to speak at Planning Committee meetings in relation to a specific application on the Committee agenda. The number of speakers, types of application on which speaking is permitted, length of time allowed for speakers etc. are all matters for the council to decide for itself to best meet its service needs.
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**Indicator – 11**

Does the council have a planning officer on duty to provide general planning advice to visiting customers?

**Definitions**

- i) The Duty Officer service must, as a minimum, be available Monday to Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm to count as a full Duty Officer service and to be recorded as a 'yes' in the performance returns. A lesser service should be recorded as 'partial', or no service as 'no'. The Duty Officer should be suitably qualified or experienced to provide day to day general planning guidance. The Lagan/NI Direct Service does not constitute a Duty Planning Officer.
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**Indicator – 12**

- i. number of affordable housing units granted consent;
- ii. proportion of affordable housing units granted consent that are located within defined settlement boundaries;
- iii. number of market housing units granted consent;
- iv. proportion of market housing units granted consent that are located within defined settlement boundaries;
- v. total number of housing units completed;
- vi. housing land availability indicators;
- vii. amount of office floor space granted (net increase in sqm);
- viii. amount of retail floor space granted (net increase in sqm);
- ix. amount of industrial floor space granted (net increase in sqm);
- x. number of megawatts of renewable energy approved.

While this information will be required by councils to populate their local development plans and for ongoing monitoring of those plans, it is considered important as an indicator of planning outcomes and therefore has been included in the framework. However, it is recognised that the planning portal does not capture all this information. Some of the above data may already be collated by

some councils, but not all. In order to allow all councils time to collate this data, these outcome indicators will not be reported upon, or published, during 2018-19. The intention would be that councils will have this year to establish the monitoring systems necessary to capture this information, with a view to reporting properly from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019.

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### **Indicator – 13**

Contribute to sustainable economic growth by progressing all regionally significant applications (RSD) to a Ministerial recommendation within 30 weeks of receipt of the application (or environmental statement, where applicable).

### **Definitions**

- i) The processing target shall apply to RSD applications that:
    - have been subject to pre-application discussions (PADs) with satisfactory provision of draft environmental information prior to submission, where applicable;
    - are not the subject of a request for further environmental information. Such a request will extend the target by 30 weeks upon receipt of the information.
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**REPORTING TIMELINE****2018-19**

- **1 April 2018** – commence monitoring of framework. Data will be collected quarterly for internal purposes only at this stage.
- **July 2018** – annual official planning statistics for 2017-18 published (will not include new indicators).
- **September 2018** – first Departmental Chief Planner’s Report may be published – this report will be narrative-based and will include some elements of the framework (e.g. development plan information, RSD work) and will describe the new framework and other work undertaken by the Department during the year.

**2019-20**

- **1 April 2019** - quarterly monitoring of statutory indicators will continue as normal. Data on the new performance framework indicators will be collected quarterly.
- **July 2019** – annual official planning statistics for 2018-19 published. Progress on monitoring framework will be published.
- **September 2019** – second Chief Planner’s Report may be published.

| INDICATOR |   | Data available from   | Reported             | Current Position   |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|----------------------|--|
| 1         | Has the council:  |                       |                      |  |
|           | a) Had its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) agreed by the Department?   | Dfi                   | Annual               |  |
|           | b) Published its Preferred Options Paper?   | Council               | Annual               |  |
|           | c) Published its Plan Strategy?   | Council               | Annual               |  |
|           | d) Published its Local Policies Plan?   | Council               | Annual               |  |
| 2         | Has the Council submitted its local development plan (LDP) annual monitoring report (AMR)?  | Dfi                   | Annual               |  |
| 3         | Average time taken to determine major applications (current statutory indicator)  | Dfi – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | Published<br>Official Statistics   |
| 3.1       | Average time to determine major applications (excluding those requiring an environmental statement) from date valid to decision or withdrawal | Dfi – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | Requires further<br>consideration  |
| 3.2       | Average time to determine major applications requiring an environmental statement from date valid to decision or withdrawal                   | Dfi – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | Requires further<br>consideration  |
| 3.3       | Average time taken to determine major applications (excluding legacy and withdrawn applications)  | Dfi – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | Could be<br>provided now<br>from ASRB  |
| 3.4       | Average time taken to determine major legacy applications   | Dfi – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | Published<br>Official Statistics<br>Table 8.2  |
| 3.5       | Numbers of major legacy applications  | Dfi – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | If count of<br>decided /<br>withdrawn<br>Published<br>Official Statistics<br>Table 8 |
| 4         | Average time taken to determine local applications (current statutory indicator)  | Dfi – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | Published<br>Official Statistics   |
| 4.1       | Average time taken to determine local applications (excluding legacy and withdrawn applications)  | Dfi – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | Could be<br>provided now<br>from ASRB  |

| INDICATOR |   | Data available from   | Reported             | Current Position                              |
|-----------|---|-----------------------|----------------------|---|
| 4.2       | Average time taken to determine local legacy applications   | DfI – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | Published<br>Official Statistics<br>Table 8.2 |
| 5         | Proportion of enforcement cases progressed to the target conclusion within 39 weeks (current statutory target)                | DfI – Planning Portal | Quarterly/<br>Annual | Published<br>Official Statistics              |
| 6         | Percentage of applications determined under delegated powers  | DfI – Planning Portal | Annual               |   |
| 7         | Number of applications taken to planning committee and percentage of committee decisions made against officer recommendation. | Council               | Annual               |   |
| 8         | Percentage of appeals against refusals of planning permission that are dismissed  | PAC                   | Annual               | Information<br>available from<br>PAC          |
| 9         | Number of claims for costs made and number awarded  | PAC                   | Annual               | Information<br>available from<br>PAC          |
| 10        | Does the council allow public speaking at planning committee meetings?  | Council               | Annual               |   |
| 11        | Does the council have a planning officer on duty to provide general planning advice to visiting customers?                    | Council               | Annual               |   |

**2018-19 to be used as base year for data collection purposes:**

|           |  |         |        |  |
|-----------|--|---------|--------|--|
| <b>12</b> | <b>Planning outcomes:</b>  |         |        |  |
|           | Number of affordable housing units granted consent   | Council | Annual |  |
|           | Proportion of affordable housing units granted consent that are located within defined settlement boundaries | Council | Annual |  |
|           | Number of market housing units granted consent   | Council | Annual |  |
|           | Proportion of market housing units granted consent that are located within defined settlement boundaries     | Council | Annual |  |
|           | Total number of housing units completed  | Council | Annual |  |

|           |   |                |                              |  |
|-----------|---|----------------|------------------------------|--|
|           | Housing land availability indicators  |                | <b>Annual</b>                |  |
|           | Amount of office floor space granted (net increase in sqm)  | <b>Council</b> | <b>Annual</b>                |  |
|           | Amount of retail floor space granted (net increase in sqm)  | <b>Council</b> | <b>Annual</b>                |  |
|           | Amount of industrial floor space granted (net increase in sqm)  | <b>Council</b> | <b>Annual</b>                |  |
|           | Number of megawatts of renewable energy approved  | <b>Council</b> | <b>Annual</b>                |  |
| <b>13</b> | Contribute to sustainable economic growth by progressing all regionally significant applications to a Ministerial recommendation within 30 weeks of receipt of the application (or environmental statement where applicable). | <b>Dfi</b>     | <b>Quarterly/<br/>Annual</b> | <b>Published<br/>Official Statistics</b> |

## Planning Monitoring Framework 2018-19

### DRAFT VERSION

Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) agreed by the Department



Local development plan Annual Monitoring Report submitted?

Due Sept 2018

Published Preferred Options Paper



XX claims for appeals costs awarded

Published Plan Strategy



XX appeals costs awarded

Published Local Policies Plan

Due Sept 2018



The Council allows / does not allow public speaking at planning committee meetings



The Council has / does not have a planning duty officer on duty to provide general planning advice to visiting customers

This area can be used to provide a narrative to any notable events that have happened that may relate to or have affected the points of interest or any required reasoning for any of the points presented.

Working group meetings have shown that narrative is important and the framework should provide context as well as data.

All data included in this draft is dummy data and all content is subject to change as part of the continuing design process.

The format of any presentational way forward is open to any design requirements or tweaks that may be felt necessary and this draft is purely to give a starting point to any discussions around what this may look like once agreed.

Colours, graphics, order and placement are all customisable. We would suggest that one "report card" is compiled for each Council and one for NI overall and ideally each card is kept to two sides (if possible, content requirements will dictate this) to allow each Council to have a one-sheet performance review that can be used at Committees, Council meetings and easily lifted into annual reporting.

### DRAFT VERSION

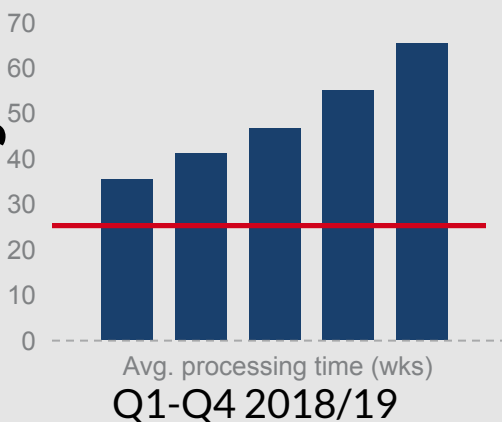
Further space is available for alternative content or additional content once final framework content is agreed

### DRAFT VERSION

### Statutory Targets

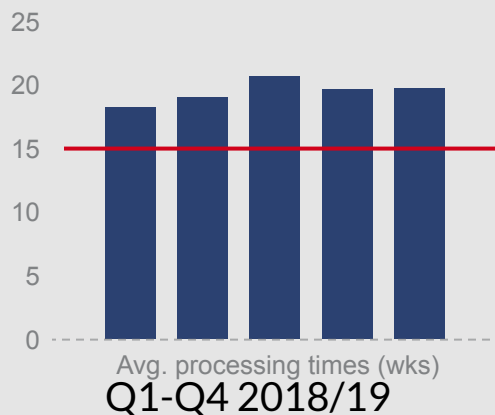
#### Major Development Applications

Statutory target - 30 wks



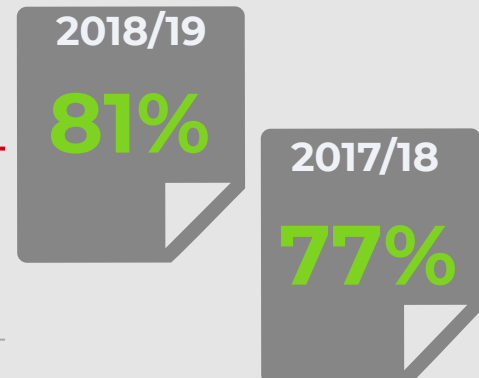
#### Local Development Applications

Statutory target - 15 wks



#### % of Enforcement Cases concluded in 39 weeks

Statutory target - 70%

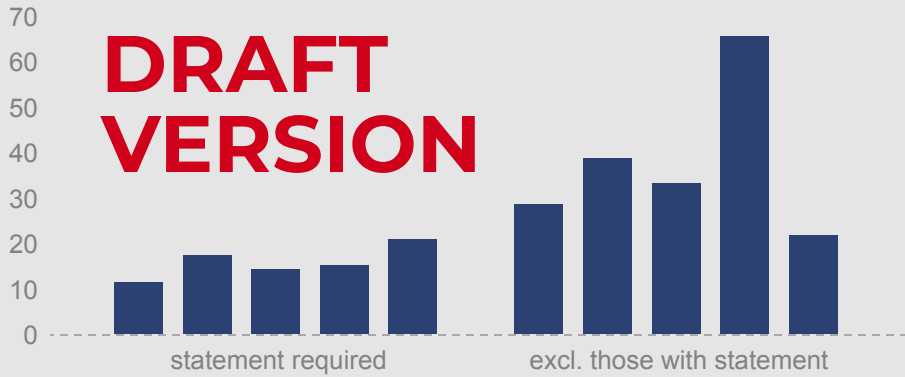
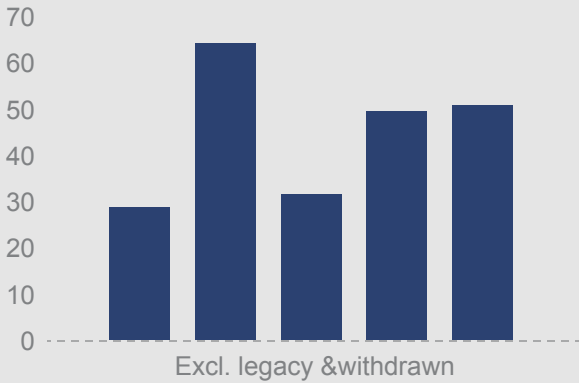


## DRAFT VERSION

Average Time to Determine Major Applications (weeks)

Average time to determine major applications (environmental statement)

Major applications

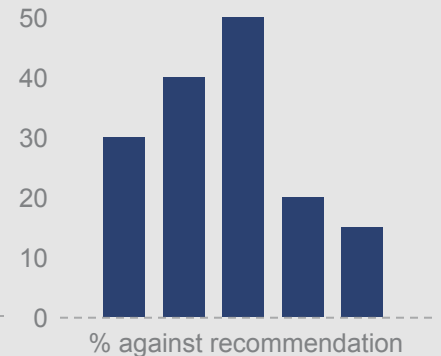
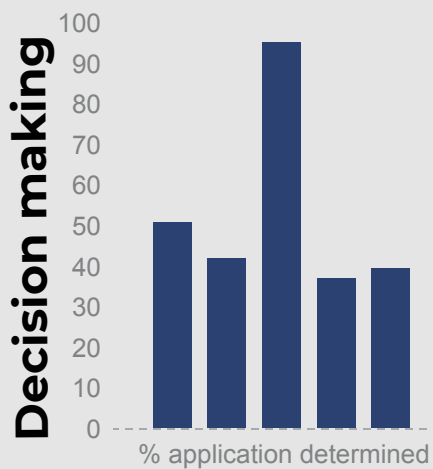
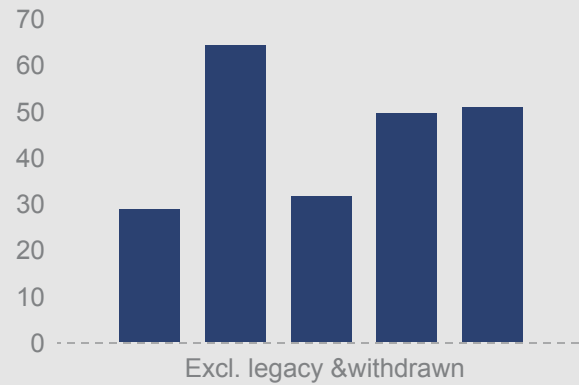


Average Time to Determine Local Applications (weeks)

Delegated powers

Decisions against officer recommendation

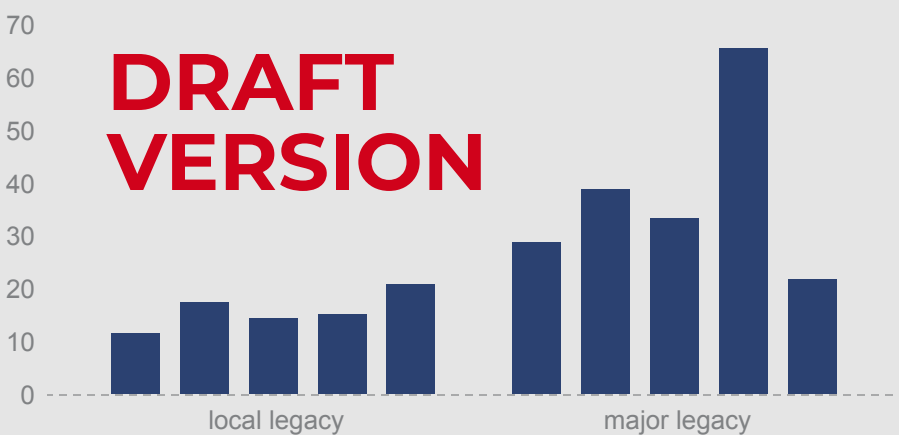
Local applications



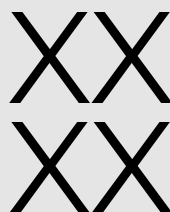
Average time to determine legacy applications

Legacy applications remaining in system @ 31st March 2019

Legacy applications



Number of appeal claims for cost awards  
Number of appeal cost awards



% of appeals against refusals of planning permission that are dismissed







**Causeway  
Coast & Glens  
Borough Council**

Cloonavin  
66 Portstewart Road  
COLERAINE  
BT52 1EY

Ms Fiona McCandless  
Deputy Secretary  
Planning, water & DVA  
Department for Infrastructure  
71 Ebrington Square  
Derry-Londonderry  
BT47 6FA

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> September 2017  
Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
(Please quote at all times)  
Tele: 0300 200 7830

Dear Ms McCandless

### **Planning Performance Management Framework**

I refer to the above proposed Planning Performance Management Framework and thank you for the opportunity to provide comment.

Further to our letter of 10<sup>th</sup> July 2017 advising that we would not be in a position to respond to the proposed Planning Performance Management Framework within the requested timeframe, I am pleased to advise that Council's Planning Committee have now had the opportunity to fully consider the proposed Framework.

As a preliminary point, Council would raise concerns about the intention of DfI to publish the information collected under the Management Framework on a quarterly basis. Members consider that by publishing the raw data in this format it could mislead the public in terms of performance as comparison between other Council Planning Departments is not comparing like with like.

For example, PI9: percentage of applications determined under delegated powers – each Council has a different Scheme of Delegation in operation with varying percentages of applications determined by the Planning Committee; how does this reflect quality of performance? The number of applications determined by the Planning Committee is for each Council to determine and does not reflect on the quality of performance. Likewise PI1 and 2, each Council will determine how quickly it will progress its local development plan subject to a number of factors such as how up-to-date the current development plan is? By answering yes or no – how does this reflect a quality performance?

With reference to the detailed performance indicators, Council's Planning Committee would make the following points in relation to each:

**PI1 and PI2:** red and green colouring gives the perception of success or failure when in fact publication may still be in line with the agreed Timetable. It is suggested that this should be amended to reflect whether the plan-making is in accordance with the agreed Timetable and different colouring applied.

**PI3-PI6:** Clarification is required on what defines 'improve', 'fair' and 'good'. Again colouring gives perception of failure. In terms of timeframes for both major and local applications, those applications subject to an Environmental Statement (ES) of Further Environmental Information (FEI) should be calculated similarly to Regionally Significant Applications where the time commences on receipt of ES or FEI. There should be no distinction in terms of time commencing for any EIA application where an environmental statement is required. Furthermore, no consideration has been given as to environmental designations; whether the application is subject to a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA); and, how this impacts on the processing of applications. It would therefore be useful for proper comparison of performance to indicate the number of applications subject to a HRA.

**PI9-PI13:** Again these indicators do not compare like with like.

In terms of PI9, each Council has differing Schemes of Delegation and this is a matter for each Council.

PI10, how does this statistic indicate quality decisions? It does not take into account the fact that the Council area may have a large number of environmental designations or flood areas? Furthermore, unsure of what benefit this would be to the public - is a high approval rate necessarily an indicator of quality decision-making?

PI11, this should be removed as it is not an indicator of quality. Decisions can be overturned at Committee as a result of amended plans / further supporting information being presented post Planning Committee Report writing.

**PI14-PI15:** Again colour gives the perception of failure when it is entirely up to each Council to determine the protocol for their Committee meetings. Clarification required in terms of the definition of 'improve' and 'good'.

**PI16:** Again colour gives the perception of failure and require definition of 'improve', 'good' and 'fair'.

**PI17:** The time for processing applications should be on a level with Councils in that all applications which require an environmental statement, whether local, major or regionally significant should be measured from the date the environmental statement or further environmental information is received or from date received. Those submitted to the Department should not have the advantage of the time commencing at a different stage to those submitted to Council.

**PI18:** The provision of this information by Council is time consuming and onerous. There is no provision within the existing Planning Portal to record this information. The extraction of this information is manifestly unreasonable in that it will require

staff time (of which resources have not been provided for) to extract this information manually from each application. This indicator should be removed.

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council appreciates this opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Planning Performance Management Framework and trusts that you take the above comments on board before finalising the Framework.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denise Dickson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dot at the end.

**Denise Dickson**  
**Head of Planning**

