

Planning Section Business Plan 2017-2018	24th May 2017
PLANNING COMMITTEE	

Linkage to Council Strategy (2015-19)	
Strategic Theme	Outcome
Leader and Champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Elected Members will provide civic leadership to our citizens working to promote the Borough as an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit
Protect the environment in which we live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All environments in the area will benefit from pro-active decision making which protects the natural features, characteristics and integrity of the Borough.
Lead Officer	Head of Planning
Cost: (If applicable)	See Business Plan at Appendix 1

For Decision

1.0 Background

1.1 The purpose of the Planning Section Business Plan 2017-2018 (attached at Appendix 1) is as follows:

- 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 residents.
- Bring key information together in one place about the service, which Members, staff and stakeholders can understand.

2.0 Detail

2.1 The vision for the planning service area is:

'Working in partnership with our community we will seek to protect and enhance our environment, promote well-being, and support a sustainable economy.'

3.0 Key Functions

3.1 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; 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.

4. Strategic Aims

- 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 strong corporate governance framework.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that Members agree to the Planning Section Business Plan as set out at Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Planning Section Business Plan 2017-2018



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

PLANNING

BUSINESS PLAN 2017-2018

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 residents.
- Bring key information together in one place about the service, which Members, staff and stakeholders can understand.

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; 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.

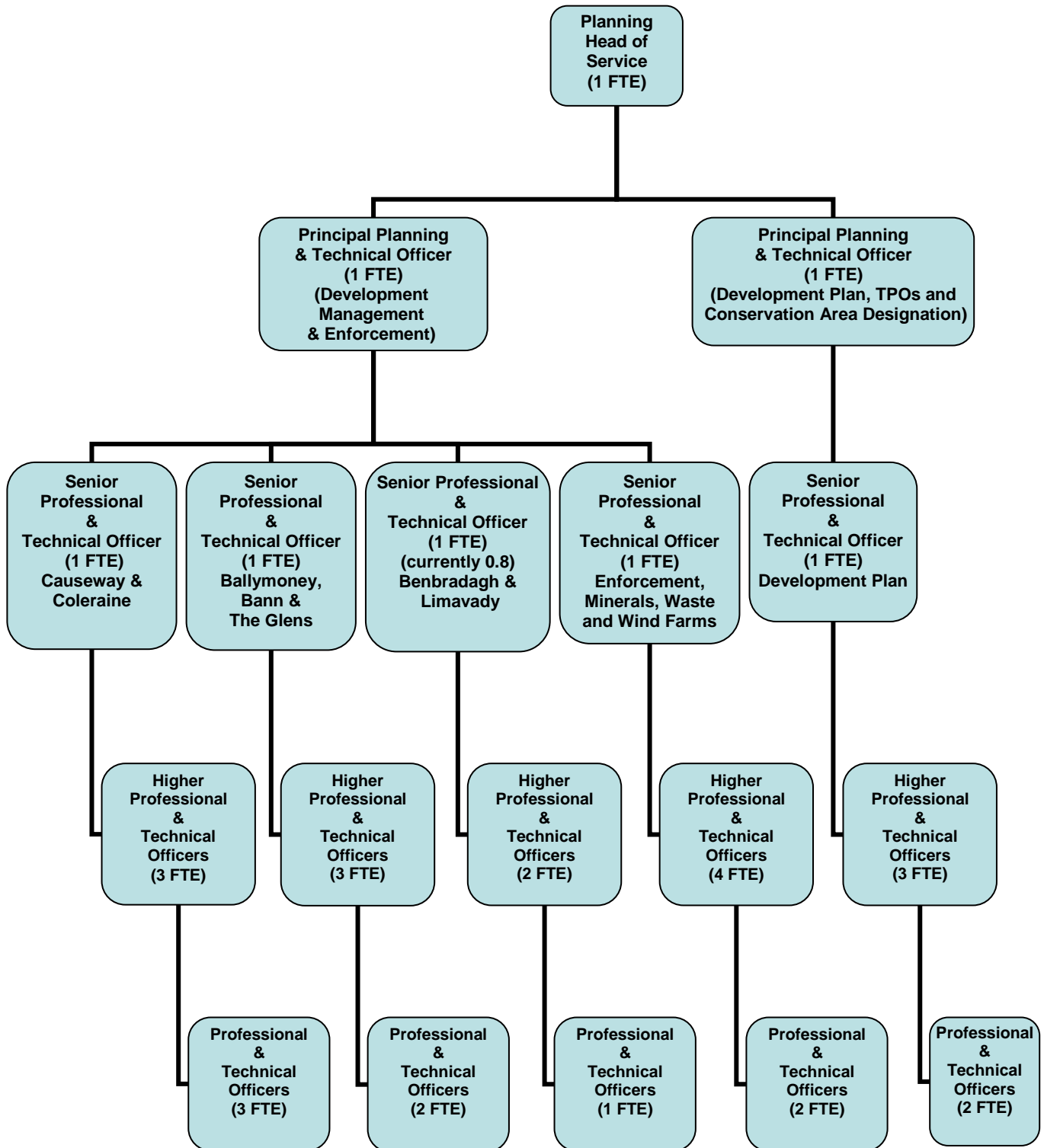
Strategic Aims of the Service

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.



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

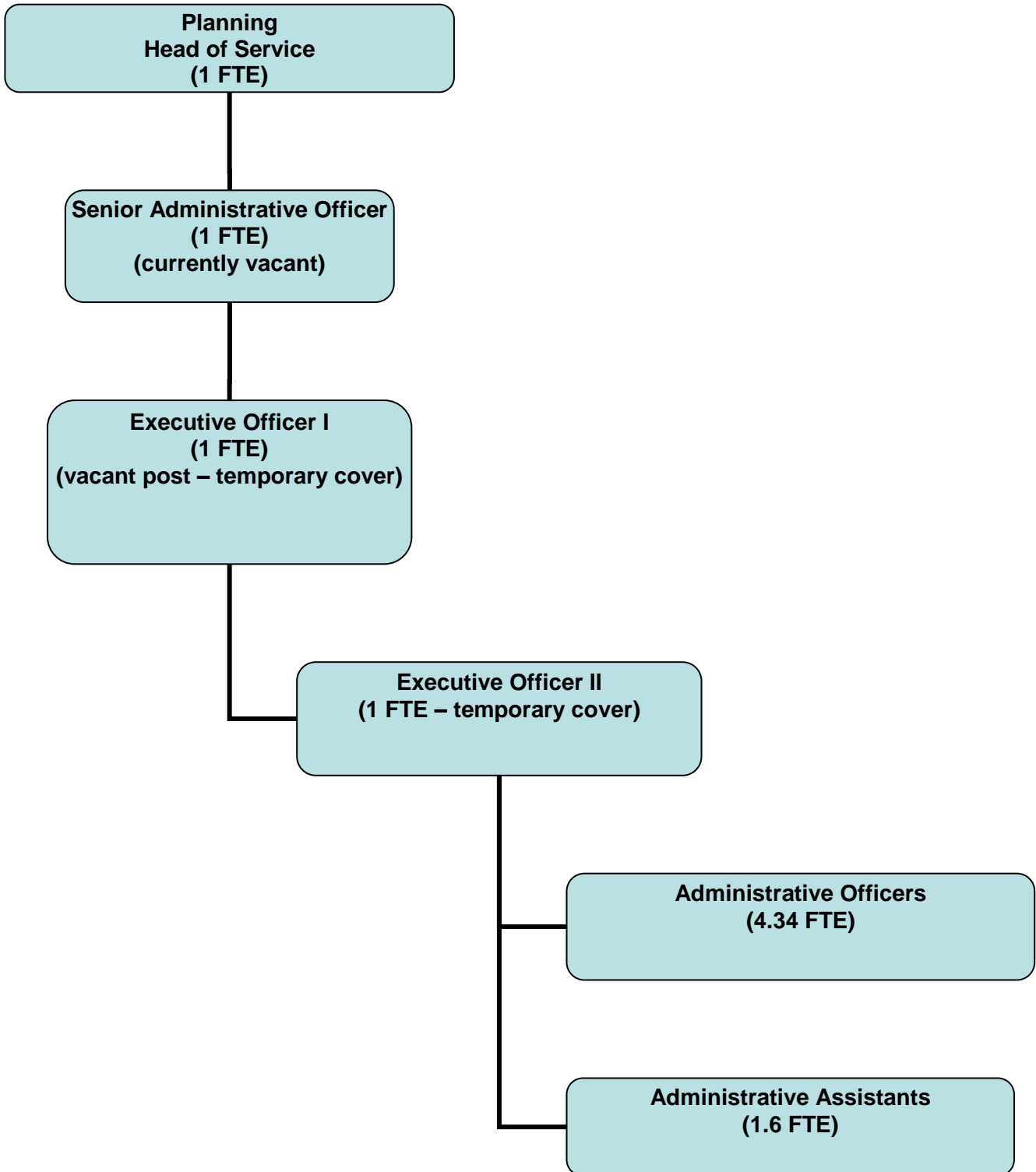
Organisational Structure – Professional & Technical Staff





**Causeway
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Organisational Structure – Administrative Support





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Borough Council**

SECTION 2

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer arrangements (underpinning the implementation of the SPPS) are in place to ensure that extant policies are retained until such times as a new Local Development Plan (LDP) for the Council area has been prepared. • The work of the SPPS is integrated with a number of other work strands on the delivery of planning (e.g. Planning Guidance, Development Planning and Performance Management). • Greater engagement with elected members in the local development plan process bringing greater local awareness of needs • Agreed Protocol and Scheme of Delegation with Planning Committee in place. • Fully equipped operational IT systems in place. • Staff have strong skills and knowledge base. • Positive attitude throughout the office. • Clear assigned roles in relation to Development Management, Development Plan and Enforcement. • Increasing number of planning applications received resulting in increased income generated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New political environment coupled with lack of experience in staff at lower grades. • Great uncertainty for developers due to political input into decision making process. • Detailed policies within SPPS constrain Council's ability to develop policies specific to needs of Borough within its new Local Development Plan (LDP). • Limited ability to develop application forms, letter templates within ePIC specific to this Council. • Dependency on external agencies (Statutory Consultees) and their ability to meet deadlines which can affect performance targets and LDP Timetable. • Member involvement in LDP Process increases timescales to deliver – scale of LDP Work Programme; complexity of issues involved; necessity to agree outcomes. • Increasing complexity of legislation and socio-environmental areas/issues which can require input from external expertise. • Delay to application process due to negotiating with agents to submit amendments/additional information.

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity through the SPPS to develop better partnership working – between Council and the Department for Infrastructure. • Ability to build and strengthen local government through the planning function. • Democratic accountability of the planning function. • Opportunities for collaborative working with other council staff. • New LDP - opportunity to have improved local engagement throughout the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater risk of challenge through Judicial Reviews/Ombudsman etc. • Cost implications of challenges to planning decisions and LDP. • Staff sickness resulting in employment of inexperienced staff to cover. • Increased workload of staff due to increased numbers of planning applications received and work involved in development plan process. • Budgetary constraints due to yearly reduction in budget to meet agreed rates level and no control over number of planning applications submitted and hence income generation. • Performance issues with the Planning Portal and lack of local control to resolve. • Risk to breaches of confidentiality/data protection due to high volumes of letters of representation received and uploaded onto the Planning Portal. • Loss of experienced staff to other councils/private sector.

Summary Narrative

The transfer of responsibility for planning from central government to the Council was a smooth transition and gave planning greater control over its resources within the new Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. Furthermore, the office was able to benefit from an increase in

income through planning fee receipts, which ultimately boosted Council's budget overall. However, receipts are outside the control of Planning and the reverse holds true.

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 demand-led as the majority of complaints are received from the public. Planning staff have limited control over the level of representation received to planning applications and this has the ability to extend the period to determine planning applications beyond the statutory targets.

The receipt of letters of representation and documentation submitted as part of the planning application and enforcement processes carry a risk in terms of data protection under the Data Protection Act and requests for copies of documentation under the Environmental Information Act. This further increases workloads of staff in terms of redaction procedures prior to uploading the documentation onto the Planning Portal for public viewing.

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. With the increased workload in both development management and development plan, staff are under increasing pressure as a result of increasing workloads. This will have to be carefully monitored over the forthcoming months and decisions made in relation to increased staffing to reduce workloads to a manageable level. The vacant posts and structure within the administrative support team will also be examined and reconfigured to ensure resources are allocated to cover all functions efficiently and effectively.

With the decision-making of major and referred applications and the agreement of the new development plan resting with the Planning Committee Members, it is important to increase the knowledge of elected members on the implementation of planning policies and the implications of decisions. A training plan should be discussed and agreed with Planning Committee members to be implemented over the next business year.

With the contract for the Planning Portal due to expire on 31 March 2019, there is a risk that a new system will not be in place in time to replace the current system. It is important that Planning staff are actively engaged with Department for Infrastructure and other Councils to assist in the development of the specification for the new system over the next business year. This will result in a number of staff being diverted away from their normal duties to work on elements of the discovery phase over the next business year.

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. This will necessitate an agreed training plan over the next business year to ensure Members knowledge of the planning legislation and policies is continually improved.
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 Development Plan (through its zonings and policies) provides certainty and confidence for applicants and developers. Correspondence with the general public via postage letters is ever increasing. Opportunity to review functions and consider other methods of communication with those that submit letters of representation to Planning whilst still complying with legislative requirements. Consider whether there is an opportunity to implement a charge for current functions that are not currently subject to a fee under the Planning (Fee) Regulations (Northern Ireland).
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. Implementation of the agreed Statement of Community Involvement in relation to the development plan process with improve engagement.
Technological	Development of the Planning Portal/Website will contribute to improvement in customer accessibility. Consider use of software and modern communication methods to engage with those who submit letters of representation to Planning.
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 increased collaboration with other council staff will improve knowledge and assist in the gathering of evidence to produce sound policies within the new development plan to further protect and enhance our Borough.
Legal	Working in a new political environment and the possibility of increased 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) 2015 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 and for staff and Planning Committee Members to have a continual training plan in place to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to make sound decisions.

Planning has limited flexibility within its budget to absorb reduction as it is a demand-led service and the receipts are offset against the running costs. Only a small amount of the budget offers any flexibility to make savings, which is limited to General Administrative Expenses (GAE) or stationery. The movement of Planning staff to Council Headquarters from County Hall will reduce overhead costs in terms of rental of buildings, heating and service charges. Further consideration of alternative methods of communication with those who submit representations to Planning should be investigated to reduce costs whilst still complying with legislative requirements. Furthermore, methods of generating further income by charging for services provided that as yet are not legislatively covered by a fee should be researched.

SECTION 3

Planning service area Strategic Aims and Objectives Aligned with Council's Strategic Aims and Objectives:

1. Leader and Champion.
2. Accelerating our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity.
3. Innovation and Transformation.
4. Resilient, Healthy and Engaged Communities.
5. Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets.

Strategic Objective				
1. To contribute to the growth of a sustainable economy and investment in the Borough by making timely decisions and developing sound planning policies.				
Link to Corporate Aims and Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerating our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity • Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets 				
Operational Actions / Outcomes	Responsible Officer	Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicators
Processing planning applications in a timely manner within available resources to strive to meet the statutory targets set out in the Local Government Act 2015.	Shane Mathers	Officer time	On-going	Local applications – 15 weeks Major applications – 30 weeks. (Official statistics) Maladministration cases found in



				complainants favour not to exceed 1% of applications received per year Appeals where costs awarded against Council not to exceed 10% of total appeals heard per year
Prioritising planning applications which have significant economic benefits.	Denise Dickson	Officer time	June 2017	Set up a system to identify and monitor these application types
Reduction in the number of applications in the system over 12 months	Shane Mathers	Officer time	On-going	Reduction from 79 to 60 applications (Official statistics)
Complete evidence gathering on retail and leisure activity within the Borough in conjunction with Leisure and Development Directorate	Sharon Mulhern	£12,000 +vat	July 2017	Publication of Retail and Leisure Study on Council website. Publication of On-Street and Business Study on Council website

Strategic Objective				
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.				
Link to Corporate Aims and Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accelerating our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity • Protecting and Enhancing our Environments and Assets 				
Operational Actions / Outcomes	Responsible Officer	Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicators
Taking action on alleged breaches of planning control when it is considered expedient to do so in a timely manner within available resources to strive to meet the statutory targets set out in the Local Government Act 2015.	Shane Mathers	Officer time	On-going	70% of enforcement cases concluded within 39 weeks of receipt of complaint (Official statistics)
Progress Assessments including Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessments in accordance with Development Plan Timetable and legislative requirements	Sharon Mulhern	£21,000	On-going	Publication of Assessments with Preferred Options Paper
Publish "Preferred Options Paper" (POP)	Sharon Mulhern	£5,000	On-going	Publication of Preferred Options Paper in Autumn/Winter 2017 in line with agreed LDP Timetable
To make sound planning decisions in relation to planning applications in compliance with relevant planning legislation and policies.	Shane Mathers	Officer time; costs set by PAC/ Court/	On-going	75% of appeals heard by Planning Appeals Commission dismissed. Appeals where costs awarded against



		Ombudsman		Council do not exceed 10% of total appeals heard per year Number of judicial review decisions where the decision is quashed does not exceed 1. Number of complaints upheld by Ombudsman does not exceed 0.1% of all applications determined.
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Strategic Objective					
3. To engage customers, stakeholders and partners more effectively in order to increase understanding of and compliance with processes and regulation.					
Link to Corporate Aims and Objectives					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader and Champion • Innovation and Transformation • Resilient, Healthy and Engaged Communities 					
Operational Actions / Outcomes – 2016/2017		Responsible Officer	Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicators
Develop and implement learning plans for all staff		Denise Dickson	£5,000	On-going	Learning plans agreed with staff; training offered to staff in accordance with learning plans
Participation in the set-up of the new Planning Portal to replace existing system due to expiry of contract March 2019.		Denise Dickson	Officer time prior to purchase of new system in 2018/19	On-going	Participation in the discovery scoping exercise. Contribution of resources as required to the creation of specification for the new portal. Contribution of resources as required to Alpha and Beta testing upon delivery of

				the product.
Develop and implement training programme for Planning Committee members to develop knowledge in planning decision making and development plan processes.	Denise Dickson	Officer time	August 2017	Training programme agreed by Planning Committee
Hold 6 monthly stakeholder engagement meetings with agents submitting planning applications within the Borough to discuss emerging issues.	Denise Dickson	Officer time	Ongoing	Meetings held on at least 6 monthly basis
Implement agreed Statement of Community Involvement	Shane Mathers; Sharon Mulhern	Officer time; Advertising costs Postage costs	Ongoing	Copies of advertisements; Copies of neighbour notification letters.
Provide guidance on validation process	Denise Dickson	Officer time	September 2017	Publication of guidance on Council website

Strategic Objective				
4. To manage finance, staff, information and other resources effectively and efficiently within a strong corporate governance framework.				
Link to Corporate Aims and Objectives				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader and Champion • Innovation and Transformation 				
Operational Actions / Outcomes – 2016/2017	Responsible Officer	Budget £	Timescale	Performance Indicators
Ensure all audit recommendations are implemented	Denise Dickson	Officer time	Ongoing	Evidence of implementation
Reduce expenditure in line with budget reductions	Denise Dickson	Officer time	Ongoing	End of year financial statement
Review staff resources and structures to ensure effective and efficient Planning service delivery and reduce workload pressures	Denise Dickson	Officer time; Staff salaries	September 2017	Manageable workloads; Improved planning application processing times; Delivery of new development plan within the agreed Timetable.
Review methods of communication with those who submit representations to Planning	Denise Dickson	Officer time	December 2017	Presentation of paper to Planning Committee
Investigate methods of generating further income through charging for services provided by Planning	Denise Dickson	Officer time	December 2017	Presentation of paper to Planning Committee
Consider best practice for dealing with letters of representation/ documentation to reduce risks of breach of Data Protection Act.	Denise Dickson	Officer time	April 2018	Presentation of paper to Planning Committee

SECTION 4

Financial Position for 2017/2018

Service Area	Expenditure & Income	Detail Sub Category	Total	
Head of Planning	Expenditure	Staff Costs – Salaries	£1,580,000	
		Travel & Subsistence & Training	£24,900	
		Stationery & Printing	£12,000	
		Accommodation costs & Utilities	£38,200	
		Legal & Procurement	£48,000	
		Enforcement Equipment	£5,500	
		Subscriptions	£4,500	
		Planner RTPI Membership	£4,650	
		Lagan Telephone Service	£2,625	
		Hospitality	£500	
		Advertisement	£21,500	
		Health & Safety Equipment	£800	
		Training	£3,300	
		Development Plan Costs	£59,500	
		Expenditure Total		£1,805,975.00
		Estimated Income	Receipts from planning applications	£1,100,000 (£1,219,677.53 2016/17)
			Income from Planning Property Certificates	£120,000 (£122,484 2016/16)
	Income Total		£1,220,000 est.	
	Central Government Grant	block grant from Central Government for cost of Planning	£689,000	



Head of Planning Total (Gross)

£1,725,000

(£103,025 nett)