

SUBJECT: MONMOUTHSHIRE PLANNING SERVICE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR)
MEETING: ECONOMY & DEVELOPMENT SELECT COMMITTEE
DATE: 21 OCTOBER 2021
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: ALL

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide the committee with a report on the performance of the Council's Planning Service for the financial year period 2020-21.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1 To note the contents of the Annual Performance Report for (non-mandatory) submission to the Welsh Government by 31 October 2021 and to comment accordingly.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Welsh Government normally requires all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in Wales to submit an Annual Performance Report for the planning service by the end of October each year. This requirement links with the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, and the Welsh Government's objective of creating a positive and enabling planning service. The Act includes new powers for the Welsh Government to intervene, including removing planning powers from a Local Planning Authority, requiring the preparation of joint Local Development Plans (LDPs), or requiring the merger of LPAs. *This year, owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, there is no requirement to do this although your officers see the benefit of assessing the team's performance and to make recommendations for improvement despite the constraints we are working under.*
- 3.2 This is the seventh Annual Performance Report (APR). The six previous APRs were reported to this Select Committee (with Planning Committee Members also invited) and the opportunity to review and discuss performance was welcomed by the Committee, with a request that it become an annual item.
- 3.3 The APR looks at the performance of the Planning Service against nationally set performance indicators, Welsh Government (WG) targets, the Wales average performance, and Monmouthshire's performance over the previous year. The results are considered in the context of the challenges, opportunities, priorities and resources (staffing and financial) available. The objective of the APR is to reflect on and celebrate good performance, identify areas for improvement, and look across Wales to identify potential areas of best practice that Monmouthshire could learn from or share with others. As mentioned above, both for this year and the previous reporting period, due to the Covid-19 pandemic there has been no requirement from WG to submit an APR and no comparative data has been provided as is normally done. In the light of this, Monmouthshire's Planning Service has decided to continue to commit to submitting an APR but has had to base the assessment of our performance over 2020/21 against the Welsh average in 2018/19 (the last year the

national data was published) and our own performance over the 2019/20 reporting period.

3.4 The APR is divided into sections, with the format and appearance being consistent throughout Wales, and all LPAs reporting on the same performance indicators. The report looks at where the Planning Service sits corporately, how it is structured and how its work fits with corporate priorities; local pressures; customer feedback; and performance. Performance is analysed across the five key aspects of planning service delivery as set out in the Planning Performance Framework:

- Plan making (omitted this year as no performance data was provided by WG and the issues are more than adequately covered by the LDP Annual Monitoring Report, also submitted for scrutiny on this meeting's agenda);
- Efficiency;
- Quality;
- Engagement; and
- Enforcement.

This Framework was established by the Welsh Government in partnership with Local Planning Authority representatives. Performance is ranked as 'good', 'fair' or 'needs improvement'.

3.5 The Annual Performance Report is provided at Appendix 1.

4.0 KEY ISSUES

4.1 The purpose of the Planning Service is to help build sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations in Monmouthshire, which is a shared purpose with the Council's Corporate Plan and with our public service board partners. The service is directly involved with wider corporate projects such as 21st Century Schools, commercialisation of our estates portfolio and forms an enabling tool to help address some of the challenges and issues identified corporately.

4.2 Key areas of work for the Planning Service include:

- Carrying out a replacement of the Monmouthshire LDP
- Preparing and co-ordinating thematic supplementary planning guidance to help to foster the interpretation and implementation of LDP policy.
- Implementing the Council's LDP through engaging and working with communities, and partnership working with both internal and external partners.
- Depending on the outcome of legislative changes at the UK Government level, adopting and implementing the Community Infrastructure Levy. Infrastructure needs will be reviewed and consideration will be given to the best options for funding them alongside LDP progress.
- Working within our unified Planning Service (Policy and DM) focussed on enabling positive outcomes.
- Monitoring and evaluating development plan policies, including preparing the statutory LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).
- Maintaining the LDP evidence base and ensuring fitness for purpose for future LDP revision.
- Developing linkages with the Council's emerging framework for community governance and development

- Providing pre-application advice to customers;
- Determining planning applications in accordance with adopted policy and material planning considerations, taking into account stakeholder comments and corporate objectives;
- Securing financial contributions from developers to offset the infrastructure demands of new development;
- Safeguarding the County's 2400 Listed Buildings and 31 Conservation Areas, areas of archaeological sensitivity, the Wye Valley AONB and the Brecon Beacons National Park;
- Providing a heritage service for our neighbouring colleagues in Torfaen County Borough that works in a manner that is consistent and as well-resourced as the one provided for Monmouthshire.
- Taking robust enforcement action against unauthorised development that is unacceptable in the public interest.
- Preparing and submitting the Planning Services' Annual Performance Report (APR) to WG which assesses the effectiveness of the Monmouthshire's planning service and benchmarks it against other Councils' performance.
- Supporting Monmouthshire's businesses and communities to recover and thrive following the Covid-19 pandemic and facilitating new and innovative ways of sustaining our high streets.

Delivery of service

- 4.3 Between 2010 and 2012 the Council's Planning Service underwent a Systems Thinking review. This review sought to strip the function back to first principles: what is important to our customers, and how can waste (actions or procedures that do not add value to the outcome) be eliminated. This evidence-based review has been fully implemented, although part of the Systems Thinking approach requires services to be kept under review and closely monitored.
- 4.4 This review identified that the following things are important to customers:
- Customers value pre-application advice and advice during the consideration of the application;
 - They want officers to be accessible and for there to be open and honest communication;
 - They want consistency of pre-application advice and in the validation of applications;
 - They want Planning Committee to follow the officer's recommendation and value being able to have a dialogue with Members prior to determination;
 - They do not want too many conditions being attached to decisions, and when conditions are imposed they should be relevant and easy to discharge;
 - They value being able to submit an application online and to search for applications and information online; and
 - Third parties value being listened to during the application process.
- 4.5 The service therefore operates with these priorities as guiding principles, shaping behaviour and procedures. The service is committed to having an outcome focus rather than chasing arbitrary performance targets that are not a priority to our customers.

5.0 ACTIONS FROM OUR PREVIOUS APR

- 5.1 Our 2019/20 Annual Performance Report identified four actions:

Action 1 – Digitise information in relation to woodland / tree preservation order work to help customers self-serve and reduce the significant demand on the Planning Service's Tree Officer, the daily Duty officer and Support staff.

Action 2 – upgrade the Planning Service's Uniform (planning application processing) software and the public access module that will provide business continuity and provide enhancements to our customers and ensure better GDPR compliance.

Action 3 – Continue to review and make positive change to the Planning Service's enforcement function and its processes to speed up our decision-making, ensuring we are providing a good service for our customers.

Action 4 – Continue to review the collaboration arrangements in relation to heritage services with neighbouring authorities (Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils) and to develop a Buildings at Risk (BAR) strategy to manage and prioritise any interventions to enable key heritage assets to realise a sustainable use for future generations.

5.2 Action 1 has been commenced but involves significant survey work in reassessing older tree preservation orders to verify if they are still fit for purpose or need amending/ deleting. The survey information would then be digitised and made publicly available to help customers to self-serve, reducing demand on the Tree Officer, daily duty officer and support colleagues. This will involve additional resource and the pandemic has also reduced current staff capacity to manage and conclude this project. This will thus be retained as a priority action for the next reporting period.

5.3 Action was 2, the upgrading of the team's planning application back-office system and public access module (to improve the compliance with GDPR issues and users' experience) was completed at the end of March and went live in April 2021. The system is now more resilient and is working in a stable and consistent manner. The previous system would have been de-supported by our software suppliers.

5.4 In respect of action 3, this was instigated following a downturn in the performance of the planning enforcement function in 2018/19 and has been an action for the last two APRs. Over 2019/20 there were substantial reductions in the time taken to investigate enforcement complaints due to measures instigated by the new manager of this team including providing more of a framework for meeting milestones in the enforcement process. During 2020/21 a team structure has been agreed that essentially reflects the current structure, although there is now more emphasis on the (more junior) Enforcement Officer role prioritising enforcement cases rather than assisting with (enforcement related) planning application work. There remains, however, scope for continued improvement, although performance was reasonable despite the pandemic and the effects of having a member of the team absent for a lengthy period due to a bereavement.

5.5 As regards Action 4, despite challenges during this reporting period it has been possible to extend and manage a shared heritage service between Monmouthshire CC and Torfaen CBC, and also to provide a service to Blaenau Gwent CBC (on a lesser scale). The Heritage Manager drew up a Memorandum of Understanding and secured approval for the collaboration. This resulted in the appointment of a new Senior Heritage Officer to resource the collaboration, managed by Monmouthshire's Heritage Manager but funded by Torfaen. The service has been in place since January 2019 and has had the second review early in 2020/21. The feedback was positive and both authorities were pleased with the progress made. It is anticipated that this will be reviewed formally in the next reporting period. The collaboration has key benefits, including improved resilience and skill sharing, together with more opportunities to learn and build on the team's skill set. Nevertheless, owing to changed management responsibilities of the MCC Heritage Manager which now entails

significant additional DM management, it will be important to review the efficacy of this arrangement. The impact of the pandemic and the limited resources also mean that there has been no meaningful start on the related buildings at risk strategy which will remain a service priority going forward.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF 2020/21 APR

- 6.1 Based on the performance information in Section 6 and Appendix A, we can be very pleased with the service we deliver. During this period:
- o The proportion of major applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed timescales remained healthy at 78%, and was well above the Good target of 60%;
 - o The proportion of all applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed timescales remained high at 91% despite the impact of the pandemic on working practices and was better than the Welsh average performance in 2018/19 prior to the pandemic;
 - o The proportion of applications we approved remained high at 97%;
 - o Of those applications that had gone through our pre-application advice service, and followed our advice 100% were approved;
 - o The 'won' all ten appeals against our decisions to refuse planning permission;
 - o We again dealt with a large number of applications for listed building consent (52 applications) and 88% of these were determined within agreed timescales;
 - o Enforcement performance remained resilient despite the constraints of the pandemic and a temporary reduction in staff resource.

This shows that, despite a challenging workload and the significant impact of Covid-19, our performance has been very good and our pre-application advice service is effective.

- 6.2 A summary table of our performance can be found in Appendix A of the APR. Of the 12 ranked indicators, 8 are ranked 'Good', while 4 are 'Fair' and 0 are in 'need of improvement'.
- The 'fair' results relate to i) the average time taken to determine applications (92 days) which missed the Good target of 67 days but must be seen in the context of the major pressures on the service during the pandemic and cannot be fairly compared to pre-pandemic performance, ii) decisions taken by Members that were contrary to the officer recommendation (there were only two decisions so this has to be judged in that context) as well as iii) and iv), the two enforcement measures that have to be considered in the context of the pandemic and having regard to a key member of that small team being away from work for a considerable part of this reporting period.

	Number of indicators
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance is 'good'	8
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance is 'fair'	4
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance 'needs improvement'	0

- We performed above or at the Wales average (2018/19) in 9 of the 12 comparable indicators. The indicators for which performance was below the Welsh average related to the average time taken to determine all applications in days and the two enforcement indicators – although it is arguably unfair to compare the performance in relation to these measures against pre-pandemic data for clear and obvious reasons. Further commentary on the performance against these measures is set out in Section 6 of the APR.

6.3 Five actions are identified going forwards.

Action 1 – Digitise information in relation to woodland / tree preservation order work to help customers self-serve and reduce the significant demand on the Planning Service’s Tree Officer, the daily Duty officer and Support staff.

Action 2 – Promote the positive aspects of new development to our citizens by publicising the contribution of essential community infrastructure provided under planning agreements attached to the planning permissions for new major developments.

Action 3 – Continue to review and make positive change to the Planning Service’s enforcement function and its processes to speed up our decision-making, ensuring we are providing a good service for our customers.

Action 4 – To develop a Buildings at Risk (BAR) strategy to manage and prioritise any interventions to enable key heritage assets to realise a sustainable use for future generations.

Action 5 – Conduct a review of the planning application process to consider how to improve the average time to determine planning applications performance indicator. The review would consist of reviewing the rationale for applications taking different time scales and it would consider any areas where the process could be amended to ensure best practice to improve customer service.

Digitising paper information, improving the experience of customers and reducing demand on officer time

- 6.4 We still hold substantial information on tree preservation orders in the County as paper records in the Council’s ‘amber storage area’. Retrieving such information is time-consuming and inefficient and the lack of accessible information for the public leads to a high volume of calls and enquiries to the Council’s Tree Officer (who is part time, 0.6 FTE), the daily duty officer and also the Support team. Digitising this information will reduce phone calls and emails to all those officer sand will free up time to carry out work of greater value to the service and customers, such as processing submissions for pre-application advice and the applications themselves. The quality of the data also needs review (for example, some of the older TPOs need reviewing as the information will be out of date), although this may be carried out once the data is in a digitised format that is easier to manage and change (Action 1).

Action 1 – Digitise information in relation to woodland / tree preservation order work to help customers self-serve and reduce the significant demand on the Planning Service’s Tree Officer, the daily Duty officer and Support staff.

We also manage and secure a substantial amount of social infrastructure when approving major developments – this includes areas of public open space, education facilities, affordable housing, sustainable transport infrastructure, ecological

improvements and green infrastructure. Much of this goes unnoticed and unheralded, with many of our local communities tending to focus on more negative aspects of new development such as increased traffic or the additional pressure on local services. To improve awareness of the good things new developments deliver to a community we intend to improve how we promote the community infrastructure each major proposal delivers. This could be via social media as well as more conventional methods such as the Council's web pages or indeed this APR.

Action 2 – Promote the positive aspects of new development to our citizens by publicising the contribution of essential community infrastructure provided under planning agreements attached to the planning permissions for new major developments.

Speed of resolving enforcement cases

- 6.5 The performance of the Council's Planning Enforcement team had declined in relation to the two enforcement measures in the Performance Framework over 2018/19, resulting in complaints about delays from the public and the perception the service was poorly performing. These issues are certainly not unique to Monmouthshire, and the problem is at least in part due to a misunderstanding of the powers available to us and/or unrealistic expectations, a matter that had been addressed in some way by the training on enforcement that took place in May 2018 for community and town councillors. Over 2019/20 there were substantial reductions in the time taken to investigate enforcement complaints due to measures instigated by the new manager of this team. As a result of the pandemic and staffing pressures, unsurprisingly performance declined over 2020/21. Thus, there remains scope for continued improvement. The review of the Planning Enforcement function is ongoing and has already helped to improve this team's practices and drive out waste. The action below therefore is a spin-off from previous years (Action 3).

Action 3 – Continue to review and make positive change to the Planning Service's enforcement function and its processes to speed up our decision-making, ensuring we are providing a good service for our customers

Heritage Collaboration and Buildings at Risk Strategy

- 6.6 Monmouthshire has a wealth of heritage assets and has long invested in its heritage team to manage these assets in the public interest. It has become apparent in recent years that opportunities existed to work collaboratively with neighbouring Councils to provide a shared heritage resource. The previous reporting period saw the establishment of a shared heritage service with Torfaen Council that has been working well. This has given the opportunity to address issues of capacity and consistency of advice between Authorities. In addition, it provides an opportunity to increase resilience, knowledge and the skills base of aspects of Historic Environment Management through building and sharing of expertise and experience. It also acknowledges the agenda for collaboration in the delivery of local government services being promoted by Welsh Government. An action from last year saw the team seek to extend the offer to other neighbouring local authorities which resulted in a memorandum of understanding being agreed to provide heritage services for Blaenau Gwent CBC. This has so far worked reasonably well and has allowed the service to provide resilience to BGCBC whose range of work does not need a full time heritage officer while not impacting on the team's ability to cover the demanding heritage workload in Monmouthshire. This arrangement, however, does need reviewing because of the more limited time the MCC Heritage Manager now has to manage this service due to their increased managerial role in the DM team. This will

be the subject of review during the next reporting period to verify whether the service can viably continue.

There are competing demands on the Heritage Team and many requests from the community are received to intervene to stop the decay of several prominent listed buildings throughout the County. Officer time and financial resources are listed in this regard, but an action plan agreed by Members would help to prioritise the cases that warrant priority working and action. To this end a Buildings at Risk Strategy and action plan is proposed to be developed to manage this process more effectively and to help the communities understand the choices we make when opting to take appropriate action to save and protect such assets. The strategy would put a methodology in place for drawing out the worst buildings and then set out appropriate actions as to how these are tackled; in all likelihood there would be actions identified to address the worst 5-10 buildings at risk so it is a more manageable and transparent process.

Action 4 – Continue to review the collaboration arrangements in relation to heritage services with neighbouring authorities (Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils) and to develop a Buildings at Risk (BAR) strategy to manage and prioritise any interventions to enable key heritage assets to realise a sustainable use for future generations.

Average time to determine planning applications

- 6.7 The average time to determine planning applications has increased to 92 days within the 2020-2021 period however this is understandable given the significant impact that the pandemic had on the capacity of the team given external factors. These issues will not be unique to Monmouthshire's Planning Service. Whilst it is recognised that there is rationale behind this increase it is considered that there should be a review of the planning application process to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the team and that the system thinking principles that were adopted following the 2012-system thinking review are still being fully implemented. The review of planning applications is ongoing however this more detailed review will be conducted when the impact of the pandemic subsides and there is capacity within the team to critically appraise the process and ensure best practice is being implemented.

Action 5 – Conduct a review of the planning application process to consider how to improve the average time to determine planning applications performance indicator. The review would consist of reviewing the rationale for applications taking different time scales and it would consider any areas where the process could be amended to ensure best practice to improve customer service.

Value of Planning

- 6.8 RTPI Cymru has published a new toolkit which measures the value generated by a local authority planning service. The tool has been developed to capture the economic, social and environmental value at a local planning authority level across Wales. The tool and its 'Value Dashboard' has been designed to provide RTPI Cymru and the Welsh Government with a platform to demonstrate to local authorities, national policy makers, the private sector, researchers and other broader policy and media audiences, the value planning contributes and how planning is positively contributing to Wales' seven well-being goals. The data has been updated to reflect planning permissions and completions in the current reporting period, 2020/21. The toolkit has been a very useful means of promoting the good work undertaken by the

department that is often taken for granted. Over this period, the toolkit concludes that the service has contributed £87.3 to the local economy by the allocation of sites in the LDP, the safeguarding of land, the granting and implementation of planning permissions, the operation of its enforcement function and the securing of planning obligations. We aim to update this for the ensuing reporting periods. The 'Dashboard' data summarises the Planning Service's contribution below:

Value of Planning in Monmouthshire 2020/21

Planning service key data



29 FTE jobs in planning service



947 applications handled



£0.4m collected in fees

LDP Land Safeguarded

20
369 ha Green Wedge
3,174 ha Local Nature Reserve
434 ha open space
7,942 ha minerals

LDP Land Allocated

Residential
111 ha

Retail & leisure
0 ha

Commercial
244 ha

Waste
0 ha

LDP Value

£2.1m uplift value
(based on land allocated for whole plan period)

Value adding policies ✓ 89%

Applications

9 major
938 minor
0 other



0 DCOs dealt with
1 DNS dealt with
53 LBC applications granted
10 refusals appealed
0 judicial reviews

Decisions

✓ 923 approvals (97%)
x 24 refusals (3%)
275 subject to pre app



Permissions

Residential
113 units
£4.6m uplift value
29% affordable

Retail & leisure
2,730 m²
£0.1m uplift value

Tourism
120 bedspaces
40 self catering units

Permissions

Consistent with local plan
Departures from local plan

Commercial
6,790 m²
£0.2m uplift value

Renewables & other
0 MW
0 tonnes waste throughput
0 tonnes minerals
0 ha remediation
2 ha formal open space

Contributions

Section 106 income

£0.4m
Breakdown

- Training and employment
- Sports and leisure
- Environmental
- Community/cultural
- Formal open space
- Primary health
- Education
- Infrastructure
- Active travel
- Highways
- Affordable housing

CIL income

£0 total value

Completions

Residential
419 units
17% affordable
£76.5m uplift value
£0.5m council tax p.a

Retail & leisure
650 m²
£0.7m uplift value
12 gross FTE jobs
#N/A

Commercial
7,450 m²
£4.2m uplift value
115 gross FTE jobs
#N/A

Renewables
0 MW
£500 community benefit

Tourism
25 bedspaces 8 FTE jobs
15 self catering units

Enforcement

297 enforcement complaints
3 planning contraventions
2 enforcement notices
7 breach of condition notices
0 stop notices
2 section 125 notices



Wider indicators

£117,000 spend on consultancy fees

8 internal consultees

0 Energy statements
0 EqIAs
1 Environmental statements

£0 health benefits of affordable housing provision p.a

£140,000 recreational benefits from open space created p.a

2 Travel plans
0 HIAs
4 Transport assessments

In 2020/21 the total value of planning was

£87.3m

SOURCES: Planning function outputs (LPA survey), Land and property value data (JLL estimates), business rates valuations (Valuation Office Agency), employment densities (English Homes & Communities Agency), Council tax rates (StatsWales), Health benefits from Affordable Housing (Department for Communities and Local Government Appraisal Guide, based on various studies outlined in appraisal databook), Community benefit from renewables (Renewables UK Cymru). Some of the calculations require high level assumptions to convert between units/m2/ha. Where possible, benchmarks have been employed otherwise reasonable assumptions have been used. Business rate, council tax and gross FTE job estimates based on assumption of 100% occupancy and do not factor in any displacement. Numbers of applications and decisions are unlikely to match up as these can take place in different financial years for any given application. 'Value adding policies' refers to the proportion of policies the team has identified as adding 'intangible value' that are included in local plans. Approvals and refusals do not sum to 100% due to applications carry across years. The total value of planning only incorporates some of the metrics presented in the dashboard.



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7.0 OPPORTUNITIES GOING FORWARD

7.1 The following opportunities for the coming year have been identified as a result of this Annual Performance Report, our LDP, AMR and our Service Business Plan:

- In tandem with our systems thinking approach, to use Team meetings and performance reports to drill down into specific areas of workflow and identify where problems exist and why, with a targeted approach to identifying solutions;
- Continue to roll out the project management of major planning applications, where appropriate, via planning performance agreements to seek by best endeavours to ensure timely and well-managed processing of such applications, providing a good customer experience for the customer;
- To digitise the Tree information held by the Council in paper form to improve the web site experience for customers and improve customers' pathways to information (Action 1);
- To promote the positive work of the Planning Service and colleagues in other Council teams in securing much needed community infrastructure when we approve major development. This could be promoted via this document, our web site and social media (potentially through use of infographics) allowing our local communities to understand the tangible benefits of allowing new development (Action 2);
- To improve the speed with which we deal with enforcement cases via the continued systems review of the Enforcement function (Action 3);
- To continue to review the collaboration arrangements in relation to a Built Heritage Management Service with neighbouring local authorities, ensuring it is fit for purpose in providing resilience, shared learning and consistency across all the collaborating authorities (Action 4);
- To develop a Buildings At Risk Strategy to safeguard some of our most precious but vulnerable heritage assets (Action 4);
- Continue with the replacement Monmouthshire LDP because of the need to facilitate the identification/ allocation of additional housing land as well as addressing the demographic and employment challenges of the County;
- To identify, implement and/or disseminate best practice via the Planning Officers' Society for Wales or other working groups, including the Welsh Government, the WLGA and the RTPi
- Promote the value of the work carried out by the Council's Planning Service by updating the Value of Planning toolkit on an annual basis and publicising the findings in each APR.
- To support our colleagues who have had to work remotely for the vast majority of the reporting period because of the pandemic to ensure their well-being and mental health are resilient and their productivity remains high.
- To respond to the threat provided by the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure our County's businesses can bounce back quickly from the pressures caused by lockdowns and other covid measures that restricted business activity.
- To manage the threat of phosphate pollution in our two main rivers to reduce environmental damage, while finding new ways of managing this issue that will still allow sustainable development to take place in those catchment areas.

7.8 Progress will be measured via our 2021/22 Annual Performance Report, 2021/22 LDP Annual Monitoring Report, and our 2021-2024 Service Business Plan.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

8.1 Officer time and costs associated with the preparation of this APR are met from the Development Management budget and work is carried out by existing staff.

9.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

9.1 Sustainability, equality and well-being considerations are central to the planning service's activities. This report is a review of the previous year's performance against targets and benchmarking information, however the proposed five actions for future improvements seek to improve service delivery to the benefit of our customers and communities.

9.2 An Equality and Future Generations Evaluation is attached as an appendix.

10.0 OPTIONS CONSIDERED

10.1 There is normally a requirement on Local Planning Authorities to undertake an Annual Performance Report and to submit it to the Welsh Government by 31 October in a given year. While the Council could decide not to submit the APR, this year we do consider it useful to carry on with this work to help us continue to improve our service. Consequently, the following options were considered:

- 1) Recommend the APR for submission without any changes;
- 2) Recommend the APR for submission but with changes to the proposed actions for the coming year.

10.2 The APR provides a useful reflection on last year's performance against targets and benchmarking information. The proposed actions seek to continue that journey of improvement, given the resources available to us. Consequently, option 1 is the preferred option.

11.0 HOW WILL SUCCESS BE MEASURED

11.1 The Planning Service is measured against a number of clear and consistent (across Wales, and over time) performance indicators allowing aspects of a successful service to be measured. These indicators need to be viewed in the context of other factors, including what customers have identified as being important to them, customer and stakeholder feedback, outcomes (which are not always captured by performance indicators), and whole Council priorities.

11.2 We strive to deliver the best service possible, and our mission is to advise on, give permission for, and ensure the best development possible.

12.0 CONSULTEES

- Planning Committee and the Economy and Development Select Committee via a report to the latter to be considered on 27 October 2021.
- SLT

13.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

14.0 AUTHOR & CONTACT DETAILS:

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