

Monmouthshire LPA

PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) – 2017-18

PREFACE

I am very pleased to introduce the fourth Annual Performance Report for Monmouthshire County Council's Planning Service.

This report shows that Monmouthshire's Planning Service continues to perform very well, with just two of thirteen ranked indicators ranked in need of improvement against the Welsh Government's targets. In each criterion the service scored above the Welsh average in terms of customer service feedback (in some cases well above the average), demonstrating the Planning Service's commitment to an outcome-focused approach.

Good planning is central to the Council's purpose of building sustainable, resilient communities while also generating growth in the economy and protecting the heritage and landscapes that make our County the beautiful place it is. It is central to achieving our well-being objectives for everyone who lives, works and spends time in our beautiful County.

Councillor Paul Jordan, Cabinet Member

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This is Monmouthshire's fourth Annual Performance Report, which looks at the performance of the Planning Service against nationally set performance indicators, Welsh Government targets, the Wales average performance, and Monmouthshire's performance last year. The results are considered in the context of the challenges, opportunities, priorities and resources (staffing and financial) available to us. 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 we could learn from or share with others.
- 1.2 The nature of the performance indicators means their focus is on decision speed and customer service rather than measuring whether or not better outcomes have been achieved. It has not yet been possible to identify an objective way of measuring outcomes, however we seek to prioritise securing the best scheme possible rather than traditional indicators relating to speed of decision-making. Research has identified that our customers' priority is securing planning permission: customers generally understand the benefits of good design and, within reason, do not see the time taken as a priority.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this report, performance is analysed across the five key aspects of planning service delivery as set out in the Planning Performance Framework:
- Plan making;
 - Efficiency;
 - Quality;
 - Engagement; and
 - Enforcement.

This Framework was established by the Welsh Government in partnership with Local Planning Authority representatives, and Monmouthshire's Head of Planning sat on the working group and the Council's Development Services Manager continues to contribute to the group. Performance is ranked as 'good', 'fair' or 'needs improvement'.

- 1.4 Based on the customer feedback in Section 5 and the performance information in Section 6 and Appendix A, we can be pleased with the service we deliver. During this period:
- The proportion of all applications determined within 8 weeks or an agreed timescale increased;
 - The proportion of major applications determined within agreed timescales declined but was still well above the Welsh average and at 83% was commendable;
 - Although enforcement cases received are proportionally high compared to the Welsh average (per head of population) performance remained good and above the Welsh average;
 - The percentage of applications approved remained well above WG average and is stable at 95%;
 - Over 2017/18, 203 planning applications stemmed from pre-application advice we gave. Of these 97% were approved. There were six applications that received pre-application advice

that were subsequently refused or withdrawn. Five of these six applications did not follow the officer advice given at pre-application stage. The other was withdrawn.

- The proportion of respondents to our customer survey who were satisfied overall with the service was 74%, well above the Welsh average of 63%. This shows that, despite a challenging workload, the implementation of our new planning application processing software and staff changes, our performance and levels of customer satisfaction have improved and our pre-application advice service is effective.

1.5 A summary table of our performance can be found in Appendix A. One of the 17 indicators (progress against LDP delivery timetable) is not applicable to Monmouthshire because we have already adopted our LDP. It will be applicable in the next reporting period as the Council works on its replacement LDP. Of the 16 applicable indicators:

- 13 have targets set by the Welsh Government. Monmouthshire's performance is ranked 'good' against 9, 'fair' against 2 and 'in need of improvement' against 2. The 'fair' results relate to: i) the proportion of planning applications determined by Members that were contrary to the officer recommendation, where we achieved 7%, narrowly missing the 'good' target of 5% or less; and ii), the average time taken to determine applications (77 days) which missed the 'good' target of 67 days but was below the Welsh average of 81.7 days. The two measures that were in need of improvement were the five-year supply of housing land that has fallen to 4.0 years. In addition, our appeal performance declined with just 36% of appeals being dismissed. An analysis of the appeal performance is set out in 'Our Performance 2017-18' Section 3 Table 10 below.
- We performed above or at the Wales average in 14 of the 15 comparable indicators. The indicator for which performance was below Wales average related to appeal performance as referred to immediately above. Further commentary on the performance against these measures is set out in Section 6.
- Our performance declined against three indicators, The declining performance related to:
 - a) 5 year housing land supply;
 - b) Average time taken to determine all planning applications;
 - c) Percentage of appeals dismissed

However, it should be noted that in the measure b), our performance remains well above the Wales average. Where a target was set by the Welsh Government, we are still ranked 'good' or 'fair' except for the appeal performance and the five year housing land supply measure, which had fallen to 4.0 years' supply (and we know has dropped further to 3.9 years' at March 2018) below the required 5 year supply. This is discussed in detail in the LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2018.

1.6 In the light of the above, five actions are proposed going forward;

Action 1 - Systems review to be re-visited and reinvigorated to identify what matters today and how we meet that demand as well as identifying causes of variation in our system that lead to delays in reaching a positive outcome. This includes a review of the enforcement team and their processes to verify if we have the right resources and we are providing a good service for our customers.

Action 2 - Consolidate the department's use of the new Idox Uniform planning application database software system

Action 3 - Monitor the effectiveness of the Council's bespoke pre-application advice service and our fast track application services, while rolling out the use of Planning Performance Agreements, where appropriate.

Action 4 – Improve the Planning Service's web pages to deliver relevant, accessible and legible information so that customers can self-serve.

Action 5 – pursue an agenda of collaboration in relation to heritage services with neighbouring authorities.

2.0 CONTEXT

2.1 This section sets out the planning context within which the Local Planning Authority operates, both corporately and in terms of Monmouthshire as a county, for the 2017-18 period.

Corporate Context

2.2 The Council adopted its Local Development Plan in February 2014 and submitted its third Annual Monitoring Report in October 2017.

2.3 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 public service board partners. This is at the heart of everything we do.

We contribute to delivering the Council's well-being objectives, which align to the Public Service Boards objectives, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2017-2022, the specific objectives we contribute to are:

MCC Purpose	Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities
MCC Well-being Objectives	The best possible start in life Lifelong well-being Maximise the potential of the natural and built environment Thriving and well-connected county Future-focussed Council

2.4 The Planning Service's purpose links directly to Monmouthshire County Council's objective of building sustainable, resilient communities.

2.5 The Planning Service sits within the Council's Enterprise Directorate. The Enterprise Vision provides a strategic context for the development and promotion of an enterprising culture, which builds business resilience and creates high value outcomes for Monmouthshire's communities.

2.6 The Planning Service is made up of i) the Planning Policy and ii) the Development Management teams. The primary purpose of the Planning Policy team is to prepare the statutory Local Development Plan (LDP) and assist in its effective implementation through the Development Management (planning application) process. This ensures that the land use and sustainable development objectives of the Council are met ensuring the provision of an adequate supply of land in sustainable locations for housing, retail, education, recreation, tourism, transport, business, waste and other needs, whilst protecting the county's valued environmental, heritage and cultural assets. This work aligns directly with achieving four of the Council's Well-being objectives while being prepared to work innovatively aligns with the fifth objective regarding a Future-focussed Council.

2.7 The Head of Service for Planning is also the Head of Housing. The Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Plan identifies a key issue as being the need to respond to

demographic change, with the County having an increasingly ageing population. The Planning Service has an important part to play (alongside Housing colleagues) in readdressing the supply and mix of housing stock to ensure suitable and affordable housing is available to all demographic groups.

- 2.8 The Planning Service in its policy-making role and when making decisions on planning applications has a significant part in the Well-being goal that seeks to “Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change”. The PSB Well-being Plan acknowledges this by i) identifying Planning’s (and its partners’) capacity to improve the resilience of ecosystems by working at a larger scale (landscape) to manage biodiversity and maximise benefits such as natural flood risk management; ii) ensuring design and planning policy supports strong, vibrant and healthy communities that are good for people and the environment, and iii) enabling renewable energy schemes, especially community owned schemes, and developing new solutions including storage, smart energy, heat and local supply.
- 2.9 The Planning Service’s Vision is “To enable through the land use planning policy framework the building of sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations.”
- 2.10 In addition, the Development Management Service undertook a System Review over 2010-12 where its purpose was established as being: “To advise on, give permission for and ensure the best possible development” which complements the overall service vision.
- 2.11 Key areas of work for the Service include:
- Carrying out a review and subsequent revision 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 with colleagues in Development Management to create a unified Planning Service 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;

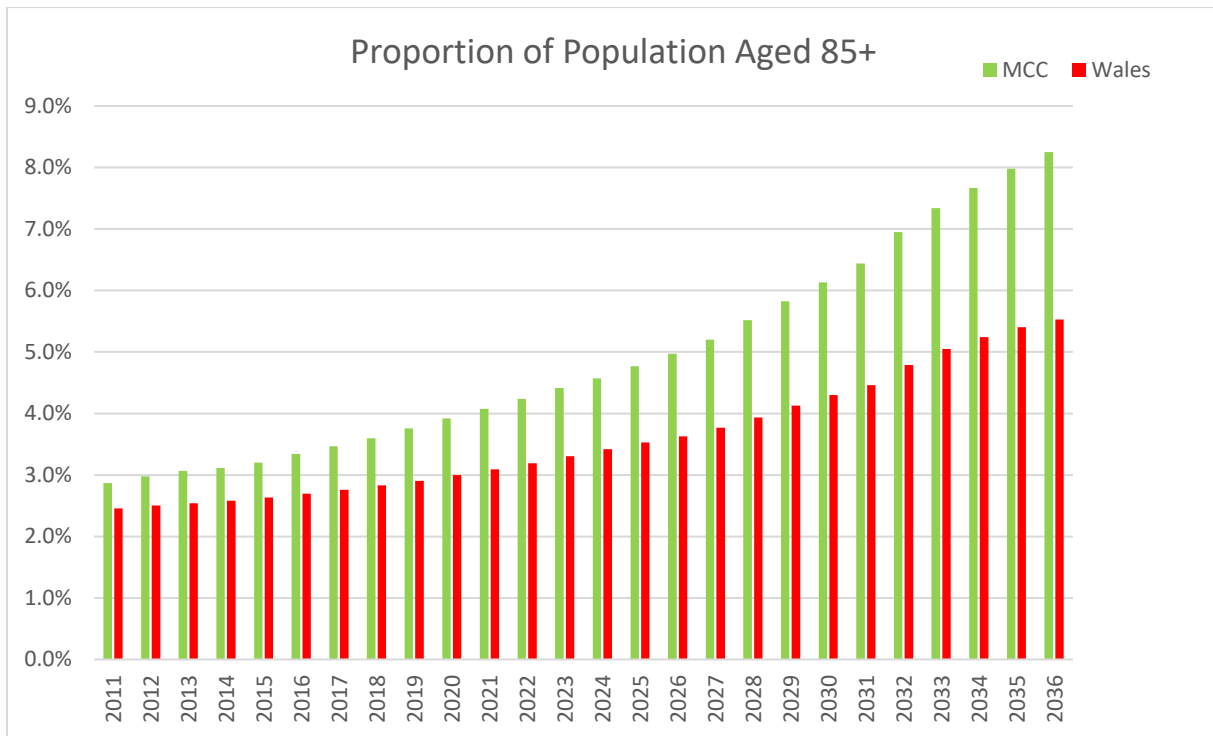
- Taking robust enforcement action against unauthorised development that is unacceptable.
 - Preparing and submitting the Planning Services' Annual Performance Report (APR) to WG which assesses the effectiveness of the Monmouthshire's planning service and benchmarks it against other Councils' performance.
- 2.12 The main customer of the Planning Service is the applicant of any planning application, however there are numerous stakeholders including individuals, communities, businesses, third sector organisations, other Council Services and elected Members.

Local Context

2.13 Located in South East Wales, Monmouthshire occupies a strategic position between the major centres in South Wales, the South West of England and the Midlands. The County shares a border with the neighbouring Local Planning Authorities of Newport, Torfaen and Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP) in Wales and Gloucestershire, the Forest of Dean and Herefordshire in England, with Severn crossing links to South Gloucestershire. The County forms the gateway to South Wales, and is part of the Cardiff Capital City Region. This location gives the County a distinctive identity.

2.14 Our people

- 2.14.1 Monmouthshire covers an area of approximately 88,000 hectares with a population of 91,323 in 2011 (92,843 according to the 2016 mid-year estimate), 7.9% of which resides within the BBNP area of the County. The County has a low population density of 1.1 persons per hectare – significantly lower than the South East Wales average of 5.3 persons per hectare – reflecting the area's rural nature. Only 53% of the population live in wards defined as being urban areas (i.e. with a population of more than 10,000).
- 2.14.2 Our population has been increasing steadily, up 7.6% between 2001 and 2011 compared with the Wales average of 5.5%. This increase is wholly attributable to inward migration, with natural change showing negative growth. The County has a relatively high and increasing proportion of older age groups, and a lower and decreasing proportion of younger adults compared with the UK and Wales averages. This trend is predicted to continue.



Source: Office for National Statistics

2.14.3 This demographic change has significant implications for economic activity and demand for services to enable our citizens to continue to live independent lives. The Council has embarked on a work-stream named ‘Future Monmouthshire’ to consider the needs and aspirations of our communities going forward, and how those will be met in the context of a rapidly changing public sector. The project is also considering the extent to which we are a hostage to fortune of these demographic changes, or if we can and should seek to change trends, for example by seeking to retain younger people in the County and the role of affordable housing and employment opportunities in achieving that. This work will provide important evidence, context and direction to the review of the Local Development Plan and to regional planning.

2.15 Housing and quality of life

2.15.1 The County has three broad categories of settlement:

- The historic market towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth have developed over many years to have a wide range of opportunities for employment, shopping, community facilities and public transport;
- The newer settlements in Severnside of Caldicot/Portskewett, Magor/Undy, Rogiet and Sudbrook where recent high levels of residential growth have taken place without the local jobs and community facilities to match. The area benefits, however, from a strategic location at the ‘Gateway’ to Wales with good access to the employment markets of Newport, Cardiff and Bristol;
- The rural area, containing the small town of Usk, the larger villages of Raglan and Penperlleni, and a large number of smaller villages, widely dispersed around the County.

- 2.15.2 Over the last decade, housing completions in the Monmouthshire LPA area have averaged approximately 245 dwellings per annum, although there have been significant annual variations with just 158 completions in 2009/10. To deliver the LDP housing requirement, 488 completions per annum are required (2013-2021). To date, completions since LDP adoption have averaged approximately 240 per annum. This is discussed in more detail in the LDP Annual Monitoring Report.
- 2.15.3 Average house prices are significantly higher than the Wales average (£299,400 compared to £185,000 average in August 2018) resulting in a significant need for affordable housing (source: Hometrack Housing Intelligence). Of the 3,719 dwellings completed between 2001 and 2013, 15.8% were classed as affordable. Of the 667 dwellings completed since LDP adoption, 19% are affordable units.
- 2.15.4 Monmouthshire is generally a prosperous County offering a high quality of life for its residents. This is reflected in the 2011 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation with none of the lower super output areas (LSOA) in Monmouthshire in the most deprived 10% in Wales. However, poor access to community facilities and declining local service provision is an issue for rural and ageing communities. The health of Monmouthshire's population is generally better than the Wales average, with greater life expectancies and higher proportion of residents classing themselves as being in good health (2011 Census). Fewer residents in the County suffer with a limiting long-term illness compared with Wales as a whole. The rate of reported crime in Monmouthshire tends to be lower than for Wales as a whole.

2.16 **Our economy**

- 2.16.1 The County has a high proportion of working age people in employment (62.8% in 2011) compared to neighbouring Authorities or the Wales average (58.2%). Our economy is reliant on the public sector and services for employment:
- The public administration, education and health sector accounts for 33.3% of jobs;
 - The distribution, retail, hotels and restaurants sector accounts for 27.4% of jobs;
 - Tourism, as part of the services sector, is also important in the County (see 2.16.3 below).
- 2.16.2 The County had 3,720 active enterprises in 2011, 27% of which were in the property and business services sector. Nearly 99% of the County's businesses are classified as small (i.e. up to 49 employees). Monmouthshire has experienced growth in eight of fourteen sectors in the decade to 2011, with the greatest increases in the property business services, hotels and catering and education and health sectors, while there has been a decline in the number of manufacturing businesses. Recent changes in Business Rates by the Welsh Government have disproportionately affected Monmouthshire.
- 2.16.3 Tourism is vital to Monmouthshire's economy and generates income to support a wide range of businesses that benefit from spending by visitors. According to figures supplied by tourism economic indicator STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor), the sector brought in £204.43m to Monmouthshire in 2017 and supported the equivalent of 2,968 full-time jobs, accounting for approximately 10% of the workforce. Each visitor contributing to the county's economy by purchasing food and drink, fuel, services and accommodation spends on average over £66 per day.

- 2.16.4 Monmouthshire's tourism performance over the life of the previous plan displayed an encouraging 10% real growth in terms of economic impact, an increase of 8.7% in visitor numbers and a 1.5% growth in full-time jobs. The newly approved Destination Management Plan has been developed following a review of the previous plan and is based on Monmouthshire's best prospects for tourism growth as well as extensive consultation with stakeholders.
- 2.16.5 The Plan capitalises on key opportunities for Monmouthshire, including its location at the gateway to Wales offering an initial chance to make a great impression, especially now that Severn Bridge tolls are to be phased out. It also recognises Monmouthshire's contribution to the Cardiff Capital Region's City Deal and the overall growth target - set by the Welsh Government's tourism organisation, Visit Wales - of 10% or more in the sector's value by 2020.
- 2.16.6 The 2015 Welsh Government Commuting Statistics indicate that 58.3% of the County's residents work in the area. Although less than the Welsh average of 69.4%, this is an improvement of last year's figure of 54.5%. This suggests that there has been some progress in meeting the aspiration to increase the proportion of resident workforce working within Monmouthshire over the Plan period. However, the same data source suggests that Monmouthshire has a net outflow of 900 commuters – with 17,800 commuting into the Authority to work and 18,700 commuting out. There was significant in-commuting from Torfaen (3,000), Newport (2,900), Blaenau Gwent (2,800) and from outside Wales (8,000). The main areas for out-commuting were Newport (3,900), Bristol (3,400), Cardiff (2,500) and Torfaen (2,100), with a further 6,400 commuting to other areas outside Wales. A relatively high proportion of Monmouthshire's residents travel long distances to work, with a high usage of the private car. Heavy reliance on the private car and limited opportunities for public transport is a particular issue in rural areas. These figures should be treated with caution, however, as the data is based on a small sample survey.

2.17 **Communications**

- 2.17.1 The County is easily accessible from the rest of Wales by the M4, A40, A449 and A4042 and from England by the M4 and M48 Severn Bridges and the A48, A40 and A465. The good road transport links connect the County to major population centres such as Cardiff, Newport and Bristol. Monmouthshire is served by a number of local and national bus routes, with main bus stations in the towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth. In terms of rail provision, Monmouthshire has four railway stations, at Caldicot, Chepstow and Severn Tunnel Junction in the south of the County and Abergavenny in the north. As part of the Cardiff Capital Region, Monmouthshire is set to benefit from the proposed South Wales Metro proposals. The local community in Magor Undy is at an advanced stage of campaigning for a new Magor Undy Walkway Station, close to the Community Hub building that has now received planning permission. The announcement to remove the toll charge on the Severn Bridge has already had a demonstrable impact on house prices and, anecdotally, on speed of sales.

2.17.2 Public rights of way include 1,499km of footpaths, 71km of bridleways, 84.5km of restricted byways and 1.5km of unrestricted byways. These public rights of way are complemented by permissive paths. The County has three long distance regional trails (Usk Valley, Wye Valley and Three Castles) as well as the national trail (Offa's Dyke Path). The County also provides the start of the all-Wales coastal path. There are two national cycle routes within Monmouthshire, both of which run from Chepstow. The countryside access opportunities available in the County are one of its key assets, sustaining tourism and providing opportunities for economic regeneration.

2.17.3 The rural nature of the County and high proportion of SMEs means broadband and mobile communication are both vital and challenging. The Council is part of the Superfast Cymru project rolling out BT broadband. Other local projects to roll out Broadband into less accessible rural areas are being explored.

2.18 Our natural heritage

2.18.1 The County is noted for its rural beauty and has a rich and diverse landscape stretching from the coastline of the Gwent Levels in the south of the County, to the uplands of the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north. In addition, there is the picturesque river corridor of the Wye Valley AONB in the east and the Blaenavon Industrial World Heritage Site to the north-west. The landscape and countryside of Monmouthshire contributes not only to the health and well-being of Monmouthshire's residents but also supports the important tourist economy.

2.18.2 Monmouthshire has significant biodiversity and nature conservation resources, a number of which are internationally or nationally recognised, including:

- The Severn Estuary Special Area for Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ramsar Site (Wetland of international importance);
- The River Wye, River Usk, Wye Valley woodlands and Wye Valley Special Areas of Conservation (bat sites);
- 49 nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – covering some 2,087 hectares. Most are woodland or grassland sites with others designated for their wetland or geological interest;
- Two National Nature Reserves (Fiddler's Elbow (woodland) and Lady Park Wood) and one Local Nature Reserve at Cleddon Bog;
- Approximately 650 non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) predominantly in relation to grassland and ancient and semi-natural woodland areas. The statutory sites cover 6,432 hectares, or 7.6% of the LPA area; 3,664 hectares of which comprises the Severn Estuary SPA.

2.18.3 Other key challenges facing the Planning Service include areas at risk of flooding (including most of the Gwent Levels and the flood plains of the Rivers Usk and Wye and their tributaries). There are, however, flood defences within the towns of Chepstow, Monmouth and Usk.

2.19 Our built heritage

2.19.1 The Monmouthshire LPA area has a rich built heritage and historic environment which includes:

- Approximately 2,400 Listed Buildings, of which 2% are Grade I, 10% are Grade II* and 88% are Grade II. Of note, around 176 Listed Buildings have been identified as being at risk.
- 31 Conservation Areas – designated for their special historic or architectural interest, covering some 1,648 hectares in total;
- 45 Historic Parks and Gardens – identified as having a Special Historic Interest, covering 1,910 hectares;
- 3 Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest identified by Cadw (parts of Blaenavon, the Gwent Levels and the Lower Wye Valley);
- 164 Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

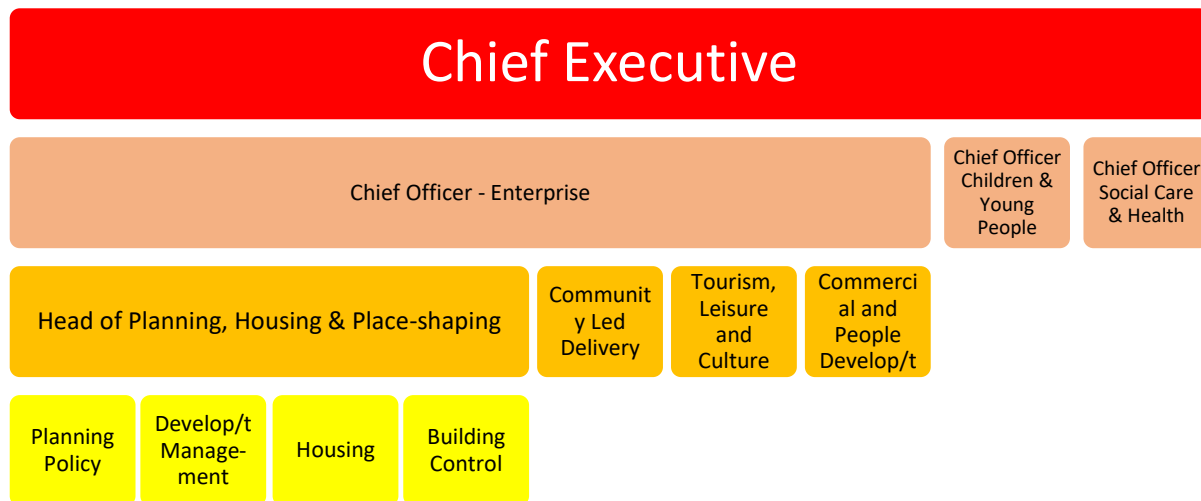
2.20.1 The LDP is heavily reliant on greenfield sites to deliver its development needs due to a lack of brownfield sites. Air quality in Monmouthshire generally meets current standards, although there are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) within the County, where objective levels of nitrogen dioxide may be exceeded. These are at Bridge Street in Usk and Hardwick Hill/Mount Pleasant in Chepstow. The Monmouthshire Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy has not identified any sites as being contaminated.

3.0 PLANNING SERVICE

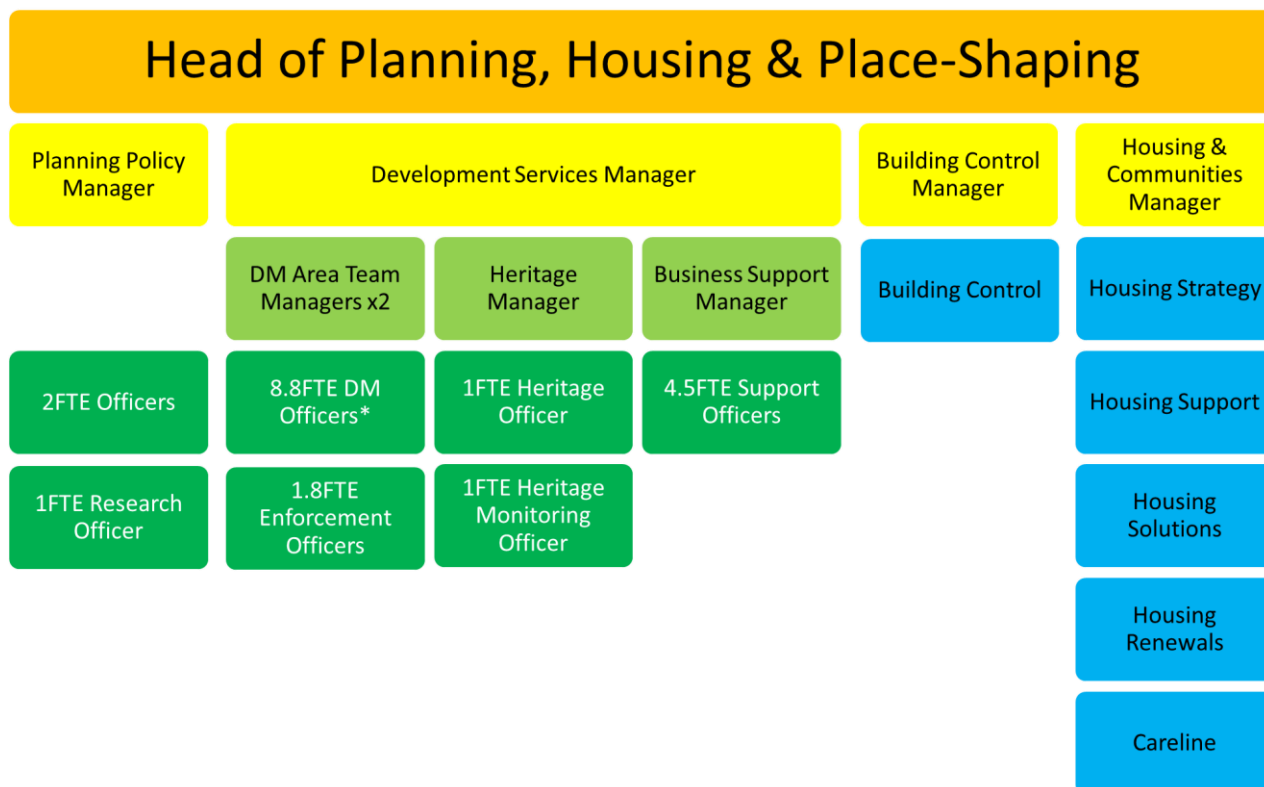
Organisational setting

3.1 During this reporting period, the Planning Service has undergone a number of significant changes, including a restructuring of management responsibilities within Planning Policy and DM. This has resulted in an increase in management capacity as a response to officer feedback, to better support colleagues, to enable succession planning and recognise talent, and to support service delivery improvements. The changes have primarily seen the retirement of the Planning Policy Manager (p/t) and a new full-time Policy Manager being appointed from within the existing Policy team, and the appointment of an additional DM Area Team Manager (Monmouth and South area DM Team), also from within the DM team, thereby rewarding in-house talent and providing career progression. Other changes have seen two staff in DM being away on maternity leave over the latter part of the year, only one of which was replaced owing to financial constraints.

Department structure and reporting lines for the 2017-18 reporting period



3.2 Planning Service staffing structure for the 2017-18 reporting period



Links with other Council projects

3.3 There are a number of wider corporate activities that impact upon the planning service, or that the planning service supports and/or shapes:

3.3.1 Budget management

Local Government budgets have been significantly reduced over recent years, and the Planning Service has had to make savings in the same way as all other unprotected services. This has comprised a combination of reduced expenditure, increased income budget lines, and reduced staffing costs. In 2014-15 and 2015-16, the DM team underspent by around £50k each year through underspends in respect of staff costs (gaps between posts being filled) and the Professional & Specialist Fees budget. In 2016-17 identified budget mandate savings of £40k for DM were not achieved - savings had been anticipated via extra planning application fee income for 2016/17 – however, application fee income fell from £626k for 2015/16 to £506k for 2016/17 owing to economic conditions. Savings (or increased income) for 2017/18 were then identified via an increase in pre-application advice fees (by £5k), a drive towards a paperless system (reducing printing and copying – leading to savings of £5k), the introduction of new fee earning services (fast track planning applications and pre-purchase / completion certificates, anticipated to earn £4k) and a reduction in the DM Professional & Specialist Fees element of the budget by £43k. Planning Policy set budget savings of around £17k for 2017/18, including a reduction in their Professional & Specialist Fees element of the budget. Owing to the reduction in planning application fee income over

2017/18 there was an over spend of £197,000 in the DM Team, whereas the Policy team underspent by £218,000, leaving an overall underspend of £21,000.

3.3.2 The income from major planning applications tailed off in 2017/18, but fee projection work means there will almost certainly be a much higher amount of income from application fees over 2018/19. This is anticipated to be received because of evidence from pre-application enquiries and from applications on the LDP strategic sites that are known to be on the horizon following on-going discussions with landowners and developers. The vast majority of these should be submitted during the 2018/19 financial year. Aside from the drop off in major application fees the service has made savings in terms of staff costs (some staff who left were not immediately replaced because of the need to run through recruitment processes) and because of an under-spend in the professional fees budget.

3.3.2 Service improvement/Systems Thinking

The Council has reviewed a number of its services via a Systems Thinking approach. Planning underwent this review between 2010 and 2012, and it is now fully embedded. The review seeks to strip the service back to basic principles: who is the customer, and what is important to them? As far as is possible (for example taking into account legislative requirements), activities that do not add value to the customer are removed.

In terms of the Planning Service, this has resulted in a high performing, outcome-focussed service. Officers are empowered to make decisions and take responsibility for their caseload from start to end. The outcome focus means that our emphasis is on securing a positive outcome where possible, rather than a focus on arbitrary performance targets. Performance against end-to-end times is monitored via monthly team meetings (also attended by the Head of Planning and from time to time by the Cabinet Member), however this monitoring is in the context that decision speed is only a small part of the wider picture, and is not always important to our customers.

Following the recent management re-structure within the DM service and owing to the degree of change in the planning process and how customers access and use the service since the first review, the team is engaging in a systems thinking 'refresh' or revisit to refocus on where waste is occurring in our systems and where primary causes of variation are taking place so that these can be addressed and resolved, leading to a better customer experience. An Area DM Manager and a Senior DM Officer agreed to lead on this from autumn 2017 although this process has been slowed by the priority given to the introduction of our new planning application processing software which is, in itself, anticipated to reduce waste created by the existing, inefficient software system. This went live in April 2018.

3.3.3 Development Team approach

A fee-paying pre-application advice service was introduced in late 2013 which has been well received by customers and is now embedded. The service was reviewed this year in response to customer feedback and to align with the new mandatory pre-application service introduced in March 2016. This service includes offering a Development Team approach, which seeks to provide an integrated, round-table multi-disciplinary approach to pre-application enquiries. This has helped build positive relationships with other service areas,

and help all parties to understand each other's objectives and priorities, leading to better outcomes.

During this reporting period, we received 599 applications for pre-application advice and closed 619 compared to 503 in 2016/17:

- 77% were determined within the agreed timescale for pre-application advice;
- Over 2017/18, 203 planning applications stemmed from pre-application advice we gave. Of these 97% were approved. There were six applications that received pre-application advice that were subsequently refused or withdrawn. Five of these six applications did not follow the officer advice given at pre-application stage. Consequently, we have a 100% success rate of applications that went to decision stage and followed our pre-application advice.

In 2016/17 we were one of three pilot Authorities, trialling the involvement of Ward Members in pre-application discussions and we are continuing with this trial. Design Panels involving the Planning Committee Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a senior Planning Committee member together with the local ward member were arranged to discuss major proposals in Abergavenny, Caldicot and Monmouth. The first led to positive dialogue and engagement, and also amendments being made to the design proposals at a relatively early stage in the process, followed by a successful outcome at Committee. The other proposals are awaiting determination.

As part of the systems thinking revisit referred to in 3.3.2 above, it is intended to review our pre-application advice service to see how we can make this more effective for the customer and improve the timeliness of our responses. This is particularly important as we are looking to put in place fast track services for more complex proposals that will necessitate the Development Team approach. The Development Team approach is valued by customers as it provides a comprehensive service but it is more challenging to organise given the number of different officers involved.

3.3.4 Best practice benchmarking

We are involved in various regional and all-Wales working groups, which provide an important forum for identifying, learning from and sharing best practice, while recognising Monmouthshire's uniqueness. These groups include:

- Planning Officers' Society for Wales (POSW) (meeting of all Chief Planning Officers from Welsh LPAs; POSW is involved in benchmarking work among all Welsh local planning authorities undertaken for WG by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to understand the costs of running a planning service more accurately and comparably than CIPFA data;
- South East Wales branch of POSW (POS-SEW);
- South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG) (meeting of planning policy lead officers from the ten SE Wales LPAs and the Brecon Beacons National Park together with WG representatives, HBF, NRW and Welsh Water). Monmouthshire and Newport Councils jointly chaired this group during this reporting period, with Monmouthshire becoming the Chair Authority in January 2017;
- South East Wales Heritage Forum. Monmouthshire's Heritage Manager chaired this group during this reporting period.
- South Wales Enforcement Forum

- South Wales Development Management Group (meeting of the South Wales Development Management lead officers)

An informal group of DM officers and managers from the former Gwent Local Planning Authorities has started meeting to share best practice and procedures in the light of new regulations coming into force. The objective is to discuss consistency on a more manageable basis, and feed learning back to all LPAs in Wales.

Monmouthshire's Head of Planning, Housing & Place Shaping sat on the Welsh Government's Positive Planning Advisory Group representing all Welsh Local Planning Authorities working alongside the private sector, Royal Town Planning Institute, Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government to co-ordinate the identification, promotion and dissemination of best practice. This group appears to have been disbanded by the Welsh Government.

In addition, we hold monthly liaison meetings between the Planning Policy and Development Management teams to disseminate policy changes at national and strategic levels, to understand corporate strategies, to aid interpretation and implementation of the adopted Local Development Plan, and to review implementation of the LDP to help inform and shape the replacement LDP. This has provided a valuable forum to ensure a cohesive and consistent planning service is provided.

3.3.5 Asset Management

In response to budget pressures, in addition to a wider desire to use our assets responsibly, the Council is undergoing a process of reviewing its estates portfolio and where appropriate, disposing of those assets. The planning service plays a key role in enabling best use of/return from those assets. As an example, planning permission has been granted for a solar farm on one of our own County farms near Crick. The revenue from energy generation can be reinvested into providing valuable services to our citizens. The Corporate Business Plan includes a commitment to deliver a second solar farm.

The Local Development Plan includes four Council-owned sites as housing allocations. During this reporting period, a revised planning application has been approved for Coed Glas, Abergavenny while in June 2017 the Council's Planning Committee approved the proposed development at Rockfield Farm, Undy; pre-application community consultation was undertaken in relation to Crick Road, Portskewett and Chepstow Road, Raglan.

3.3.6 21st Century Schools

The planning service continues to play a key role in advising on and enabling the delivery of replacement school buildings as part of the 21st Century Schools project. The aim of this project is to give our young people the best possible start in life, and give them the best possible range of opportunities by the time they leave school. Construction has commenced on Caldicot and Monmouth comprehensive schools (approved in 2014 and 2015 respectively) and is now almost complete.

3.3.7 Well-Being Plan

There are four well-being objectives forming part of the Monmouthshire Well-Being Plan, two relating to people and two relating to place:

People/Citizens:

- Provide children and young people with the best possible start in life
- Respond to the challenges associated with demographic change

Place/Communities:

- Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change.
- Develop opportunities for communities and businesses to be part of an economically thriving and well-connected county.

In tandem with the Well-Being Act and the Well-being Plan the Council's Planning Service is committed to securing sustainable development in the public interest for the good of the County's citizens and its environment.

3.3.8 Local Transport Plan and Active Travel

We contributed towards the Council's Local Transport Plan in the previous reporting period, and will continue to work with colleagues to help enable delivery of the identified priorities and compliance with the Active Travel Act, whether this be via LDP allocations, planning application decisions or securing planning contributions. During this reporting period we have been involved in detailed pre-application discussions on the new Llanfoist cycle footpath bridge.

3.3.9 IT improvements and 'channel shift'

The Council has a shared IT resource with Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils, and through this is working towards implementation of a new planning back-office system. Collaboration on reporting functions and training has been undertaken with Torfaen Council. Setting up the new system has been very resource intensive but the system went live in April 2018.

The Planning Service is a key frontline service in terms of visibility and customer access. We have already introduced agile working and electronic document management, and work has been undertaken to improve our website to improve the ability of customers and stakeholders to self-serve where possible, as well as to comply with the Welsh Language Measures, although more work is needed to improve the customer offer in this area.

In 2017/18 we improved the planning applications search functions on our website to allow customers to self-serve more easily. We have also moved towards a paperless office, resulting in printing and postage savings. Going forward we would like to scan old microfiche records so that these are also available via our website, however this is prohibitively expensive at present. We also introduced a Report It function on the web site so that the public could report possible breaches of planning control for the planning enforcement team to investigate.

Operating budget

- 3.4 The operating budget for the service is shown below together with the changes from last year:

	Costs	Income	Net Cost	Change
2013-14	£1,648,800	£601,200	£1,047,600	
2014-15	£1,397,400	£614,900	£782,500	-£265,100 (-25%)
2015-16	£1,360,500	£669,900	£690,600	-£91,900 (-12%)
2016-17	£1,363,600	£572,000	£791,600	+£101,000 (+15%)
2017-18	£1,292,600	£430,100	£862,500	+£70,900 (+9%)
2018-19*	£1,369,500	£681,400	£688,100	-£174,400 (-20%)

*Budgeted figures are shown for 2018-19, actual figures are shown for the other years. The 2018/19 figure excludes Planning Policy's budget for Professional fees.

- 3.5 The two main costs for the service are staff costs and the LDP budget (money is transferred from the above budget to sit in an LDP reserve, built up to fund the next LDP). Income is generated by planning application fees and pre-application advice (the latter amounted to approximately £52,000 over 2017/18) as well as the Planning Service's newer discretionary services that are discussed below.
- 3.6 For 2016/17, planning application fee income had been estimated to rise slightly, given the life cycle of the Local Development Plan and the drop in housing land supply below 5 years'. However, this was not been borne out, possibly in part owing to the new Welsh Government regulations requiring a mandatory Pre-application Community Consultation process for major applications; the impact of Brexit which has caused some economic nervousness and uncertainty in terms of investment as well as lending by banks; the lack of supply caused by skills shortages in the construction industry; the smaller number of volume house builders operating in South Wales (and thus their lack of flexibility to develop several major sites across South Wales concurrently); and challenges regarding the viability of sites allocated in the LDP, not anticipated at the adoption stage.
- 3.7 New regulations are in force allowing applicants to claim a fee refund if their application is not determined within 16 or 24 weeks of validation, or within 8 weeks or 16 weeks of an agreed deadline for household or other applications respectively. Every effort has been and will be made to avoid incurring fee refunds, and where extended deadlines are not agreed by customers, it is likely that applications will have to be refused without further negotiation. This is not the outcome-based focus that we strive to achieve, but is unavoidable if customers will not agree time extensions. No refunds have been paid to date.
- 3.8 The fixed term Landscape Officer post, created for 2015-16 was renewed for a further 12 months to ensure our new Green Infrastructure supplementary planning guidance is

integrated into the planning application process as well as assisting the Heritage Team in responding to consultations for developments in conservation areas. That post is to be made permanent but this would be during the next reporting period.

- 3.9 Research by the Welsh Government identifies that application fees recover approximately 60% of the cost of dealing with planning applications, although work is currently being undertaken with the Planning Advisory Service to provide a more accurate picture of cost recovery across all Welsh planning authorities. Additional costs are incurred through the work involved in the statutory Development Plan, and via other services such as enforcement and heritage management. Increased planning application fee income is used to reduce the net cost of the service to the Council. In-year windfall extra income is used to balance the Council's budgets and offset overspend in other services. Conversely as was the case during 2017/18, underspend in other services was used to offset DM's under-recovery of income, when economic and other circumstances resulted in a sudden drop in fee income, as explained in par 3.6 above.
- 3.10 Application fee income has fluctuated significantly over recent years, and this poses a challenge for budget management going forward. Fee income is heavily influenced by the wider economy, for example house-building (which itself is affected by mortgage lending and development viability) and other funding streams (for example the feed-in tariff for renewable energy schemes).

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Budgeted fee income	£473k	£490k	£525k	£633k	£668k	£694k	£681k
Actual income	£415k	£596k	£584k	£664k	£560k	£430k	

Staff resources

- 3.11 Staffing levels for the reporting period are shown in the chart at paragraph 3.2 above. Staffing levels in the planning service reduced by 5.2FTE between 2013 and the end of 2015/16. Workload increased during this same period (see table at paragraph 4.2). It was been recognised that resources were stretched too thinly and additional fee income was invested in employing a 1.0FTE fixed term Senior Landscape and Green Infrastructure Officer in 2015, a 0.6FTE fixed term DM Officer and a 1.0FTE fixed term Business Support Officer. During 2016/17 the 0.6FTE DM Officer was made permanent, an additional 0.5FTE DM Officer has been recruited, and the 1.0FTE Business Support Officer was made permanent (including upskilling the post-holder to enable her to deal with a caseload of minor applications). During 2017/18 there was an adjustment in management responsibilities to increase capacity in DM (responding to staff feedback for more the need for more day-to-day management in 1:2:1s) creating a new post of DM Area Management (Central & South areas) and re-designating the Planning & Enforcement Manager's post as the other Area Manager (covering the North DM team and the Enforcement function). This allowed succession planning enabling the Planning & Enforcement Manager to work three days per week under the basis of flexible retirement. A 0.5 FTE Support Officer left the Authority and the post was made redundant to help meet DM team's budget savings for

2018/19. Within the Policy team, one of the part time (0.5FTE) Policy Managers left the Authority during the previous reporting period and was replaced by a full time Policy Manager from within the existing team while the remaining part time manager (who is scheduled to retire in 2018/19) takes on a more specialised role focussing on CIL and s106 issues.

- 3.12 For the reporting period, sickness levels were low, with an average of 1.63 days per colleague lost due to sickness in the overall team. Team morale is good despite work pressures, including implementation of the new planning data base software.
- 3.13 Training and development opportunities provided for colleagues during the reporting period included Attendance Management and Well-being (managers), Policy/ DM working groups to review specific LDP policies since their adoption, and Green Infrastructure (the combined approach to landscape, biodiversity and ecology), including working out appropriate development thresholds for consultation with the GI team. This is in addition to in-house development opportunities provided via Development Management and Planning Policy Liaison Meetings. There has also been training for managers regarding the GDPR, cascaded to staff via team meetings. External training and development opportunities included attendance at events run by Frances Taylor Building Law on recent legal changes in planning law, an event to consider Planning Committee structures run by Welsh Government, the Value of Planning toolkit launch run by the RTPI and Arup and the RTPI Wales Planning Conference, June 2017. A Design Tour was held for Planning Committee Members in Spring 2017. An event was held in June 2017 for the new community council cohort (following elections in May 2017) regarding how to engage with the planning process which was run by Planning Aid Wales and supported by senior officers in Planning Policy and DM. A joint Member - Officer seminar was held on Understanding and achieving good modern design and new housing layouts led by the Design Commission for Wales.
- 3.14 100% of colleagues have had an annual appraisal during the reporting period.

4.0 YOUR LOCAL STORY

Workload

4.1 Key projects during the reporting period included:

- Providing a Report It function on our web pages to enable customers to report potential breaches of planning control to our enforcement team;
- Coaching and supporting the two new colleagues within the Heritage team to ensure that team's busy caseload is managed effectively. The Senior Heritage Officer is working towards his ICMH membership and securing Cadw delegation, while the Council's Heritage Manager is working with Cadw to secure delegation for Grade II* Listed Buildings;
- Adopting supplementary planning guidance (SPG) on the interpretation and implementation of LDP policy, including 1) Sustainable tourism accommodation SPG and 2) Rural building conversions
- Developing new bespoke application services including fast track householder planning applications, listed building consent and certificates of lawfulness, as well as pre-purchase certificates and completion certificates;
- Providing more day to day management capacity for the DM team to support officers manage their workload and to provide succession planning;
- Securing planning permissions for three of the LDP's strategic housing sites at Deri Farm, Mardy (near Abergavenny), Fairfield Mabey, Chepstow and Rockfield Farm, Undy, as well as major housing proposals at Oakley Way, Caldicot and land off Rockfield Road, Monmouth, together with approval of a new major storage facility at Magor Brewery.
- Working with a Building Preservation Trust to seek to secure the restoration of a Listed Building at Risk including a CPO;
- Bedding in and implementation of the Green Infrastructure SPG. This SPG is the first of its kind in Wales, and has broken new ground to fill an identified gap in guidance for developers and planners. There is considerable interest in the new SPG from stakeholders, including the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales and other local authorities. Crucially, it is having a tangible positive influence on Monmouthshire's landscapes and GI assets by encouraging higher quality planning applications. A review of 25 planning applications has been undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the SPG which has quite clearly showed the added value, as well some challenges/lessons to be learnt. The Green Infrastructure and Countryside and Planning Policy teams collaborated in the development of the SPG; it was subsequently submitted for the Landscape Institute Awards in November 2015 where it was "Highly Commended" with judges commenting that it is; "A practical and very comprehensive tool to encourage consideration and application of Green Infrastructure in planning." It was also a shortlisted finalist for the 2016 RTPI Wales Planning Awards.
- A new Destination Management Plan has been developed and approved following a review of the previous plan and is based on Monmouthshire's best prospects for tourism growth as well as extensive consultation with stakeholders.

4.2 Application caseload has increased since the previous reporting period, and while the number of applications determined decreased, this can be explained by the fact that applications were not determined for the last two weeks of March owing to the transition to

our new Uniform planning applications data base system. The proportion of approvals remained constant at 95%. During 2017-18, 95% of applications were determined under delegated powers (Wales's average 93%).

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Applications received	987	983	1173	1284	1117	1188
Applications determined	874	852	1053	1085	1087	1071
% within 8 weeks or agreed timescale	45%	70%	76%	79%	90%	91%
% applications approved	94%	93%	95%	95%	96%	95%

- 4.3 During this reporting period, we received 599 applications for pre-application advice and closed 619 compared to 503 in 2016/17. 77% were determined within the agreed timescale for pre-application advice. Over 2017/18, 203 planning applications stemmed from pre-application advice we gave. Of these 97% were approved. There were six applications that received pre-application advice that were subsequently refused or withdrawn. Five of these six applications did not follow the officer advice given at pre-application stage. Consequently, we have a 100% success rate of applications that went to decision stage and followed our pre-application advice. The conclusion is that the pre-application advice service is working well but we need to analyse whether the service is leading to quicker decision making. This will be reviewed as part of the continued Systems Thinking revisit (APR Actions 1 and 3).
- 4.5 A key area of work has been the development of new, bespoke services. The most popular of these has been the Fast Track services for householder applications, lawful development certificates (LDCs) (existing and proposed) and listed building consent.
- 4.5.1 The Fast Track service accelerates the administration and processing of the application for a small additional charge. The offer is that Fast track applications are determined within 28 days following the submission of a valid application. There is an £85.00 additional fee (so £275 in total). A valid application is defined as outlined within Welsh Government Circular 002/12. In the unlikely event of not being able to achieve this target or agree a short extension of time (no more than 5 working days) we will refund the fast track service fee.
- 4.5.2 The Pre-purchase certificate is a discretionary service aimed at people looking to buy a property in Monmouthshire. The application would provide the applicant with i) a planning history search; ii) details of planning permissions; iii) listed building consents and iv) enforcement history relating to identified breaches of planning control (this would not relate to unsubstantiated complaints). This service would include a site visit and identify

whether there are any breaches of planning control and whether or not any breaches would be enforceable. The certificate confirms that any approved development at the site, up to the point of the request, has been carried out in accordance with approved plans and that there is no breach of planning control at the site. The fee for this service is £180 and we aim to provide a written response within 28 days. This service looks at compliance with all types of planning permissions including listed building consent: it does not provide a substitute to Lawful Development Certificates.

4.5.3 The other discretionary service we offer we provide is a Certificate of Completion. The certificate will indicate whether or not the planning permission and/or Listed Building Consent applied for has been carried out in accordance with the approved plans, and also it would confirm the status of all planning conditions and any approved amendments if applicable. The purpose of this service is to offer support to applicants, agents or any other interested party that the works are appropriate and acceptable once they have been built. If there is an issue of noncompliance this will be brought to the applicant's attention and an opportunity provided for the breach of planning control to be rectified. The service includes a site inspection and desk based research and investigation. The fee for this service is £120 for each application number requiring a certificate and we will aim to provide a written response within 28 days. Where a Listed Building and planning application were required for the same development, this will be treated as one application.

4.6 These discretionary services have been in place since 1st July 2017 (they were rolled out slowly but have quickly gathered pace). The below table outlines the take up of these services and the amount of income that the additional services have generated. We are seeking to increase this with wider marketing.

Type of service	Number of applications/enquiries complete 01/07/17 to 31/03/18	Income generated
Fast track householder applications	36 (1 refund to date - Local member called application to Planning Committee)	£3060.00
Fast track certificate of lawful development	Existing - 0 Proposed – 8	£760.00
Pre purchase certificates	5	£900.00
Completion certificates	4	£480.00
Fast track listed building applications	8	£2200.00
	Total	7, 400.00

4.7 Limited meaningful historical trends can be drawn in relation to the enforcement workload due to significant changes to the performance indicator definition since 2014, which

changed what is measured as an enforcement case and the definition of when a case is 'resolved'. While 2016/17 saw a significant rise in workload, the change in definitions suggest that this was a peak, although it is difficult to compare what are two different measures. The appointment of a new manager in the Enforcement Team in the early part of 2018/19 has given us the opportunity to review the service's structure and its work practices to ensure the demand on this small but important team is carefully managed (Action 1).

Annual Monitoring Report

4.8 The Council adopted its Local Development Plan in February 2014 and our third LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) was submitted in October 2017 to cover the 2016-17 period. Our third AMR identified that although good progress had been made in implementing many of the Plan's policies and that overall the strategy remains sound, a number of key housing provision policy targets were not being met which indicated that these policies were not functioning as intended. The continued lack of a 5 year housing land supply remained a matter of concern that needed to be addressed if the Plan's housing requirements are to be met. The AMR recommended an early review of the LDP was necessary because of the housing land supply shortfall. As there were no concerns with other Plan policies at that stage the AMR also concluded that it was not necessary to review other aspects of the Plan at this time.

4.9 For this APR period the Council's housing land supply was below 5.0 years, at 4.0 years. We now know that the supply (as at 1 April 2018) is 3.9 years. To build the 4500 home target in the LDP, 679 completions are required every year from 2017/18 until 2021. This compares with actual completions over the last ten years averaging approximately 250 dwellings per year. There are three main factors causing this problem: allocated sites have been slow to come forward and then secure planning permission; external economic factors affecting site viability, consumer confidence and mortgage availability; and issues with the way TAN1 is calculated. As a result of the issue with housing land availability, we are commencing work on a replacement LDP. Non-allocated housing sites are also being looked at on their merits in accordance with national planning policy, and sites at Rockfield Road, Monmouth and Grove Farm, Llanfoist were been approved (outline) by Members within the reporting period. A site at Mounton Road, Chepstow was refused due primarily to its Green Wedge designation. Further non-allocated sites will inevitably come forward in the next reporting periods, based on their suitability and subject to strict criteria based on environmental / amenity acceptability and deliverability. Our housing trajectory evidence shows that by the end of the adopted LDP's plan period (December 2021), we will be 961 homes below the LDP target, of which 337 are affordable. Given our significant housing prices, affordable housing need, and increasingly imbalanced demography this is of significant concern.

4.10 As at March 2018, the status of the strategic sites is as follows (more detailed information is available in the Council's 2018 JHLAS and AMR):

4.10.1 Deri Farm, Abergavenny (SAH1):

Deri Farm, Abergavenny (SAH1):

Persimmon Homes submitted a full application (DC/2014/01360) for 250 residential units (201 market and 49 affordable units) in November 2014. The progress of the application was slower than anticipated due to significant issues relating to site viability and negotiation with Western Power regarding pylon undergrounding. However, these issues were subsequently resolved, the application was approved during the current monitoring period (January 2018) and works on site have commenced.

The agreed 2017-2018 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 179 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2018/19.

4.10.2 Crick Road, Portskewett (SAH2):

This site is currently owned by the Council and is allocated for 285 residential units and 1ha of serviced land for business and industrial development. A master planning consultation exercise to consider various options for the site was undertaken during the 2015-2016 monitoring period, along with various pre-application meetings over the 2016-2017 monitoring period. Further pre-application meetings and a formal Pre-Application Community Consultation have also taken place over the current monitoring period. The Pre-Application Community Consultation related to up to 300 residential units, of which 25% for affordable housing, along with a care facility. It is intended to replace the employment allocation with the care facility. It is anticipated that an outline planning application will be submitted during the next monitoring period.

The agreed 2017-2018 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 120 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2019/20.

4.10.3 Fairfield Mabey, Chepstow (SAH3):

The landowner submitted an outline application (DC/2014/01290) in October 2014 for up to 600 residential units (350 to be delivered within the Plan period), commercial space including offices and workshops (Use Class B1), small scale retail/food and drink floorspace (Use Classes A1 and A3) and multi-functional green and blue open space. Progress with the application has been slower than anticipated due to various matters, including highways issues (Welsh Government Highways Division had a holding objection on the application for 18 months). However, the outstanding issues have since been resolved and the site gained outline planning permission for 450 units (432 market and approximately 18 affordable units on 1.5 acres of the site) in November 2017.

The agreed 2017-2018 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 150 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2019/20. We are discussing our first Planning Performance Agreement with the site developer.

4.10.4 Wonastow Road, Monmouth (SAH4):

Outline permission was granted for up to 370 dwellings and 6.5ha of employment land in December 2014. The site developers (Barratt/David Wilson and Taylor Wimpey) submitted a Reserved Matters application (DC/2015/00392) for 340 units (238 market and 102 affordable units) which was granted permission during November 2015 with the

first completions (21 dwellings) recorded on the site during the 2016-2017 monitoring period. A further 87 dwellings have been completed during the current monitoring period.

The overall LDP site allocation is for a total of 450 units. The additional units relating to this allocation are to be delivered as an extension to the site at Drewen Farm. An application for this element of this site has not yet been submitted. This part of the site is effectively land-locked until 2019 when the Taylor Wimpey development is sufficiently progressed to allow access through. However, discussions are ongoing in relation to the possibility of providing an alternative access for construction traffic to enable the site to be developed more quickly.

The agreed 2017-2018 JHLAS expects the site to deliver all 450 units within the Plan period.

4.10.5 Rockfield Farm, Undy (SAH5):

This site is currently owned by the Council and is allocated for 270 residential units and 2ha of serviced land for business and industrial use. An outline planning application was submitted in July 2016 (DC/2016/00883) for 266 units and 5,575 sq. m of employment land (B1 use). For the purposes of the AMR 265 units (198 market and 67 affordable units) are recorded as a net gain, the existing farmhouse has a residential use and is being demolished so has been taken off the overall figure. Progress with the site has been slower than anticipated due to various issues, including archaeology. These issues have, however, been resolved and the outline application was approved in March 2018.

The agreed 2017-2018 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 163 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2019/20.

4.10.6 Land at Vinegar Hill, Undy (SAH6):

This site for 225 residential units is linked to the adjacent Rockfield Farm site and was expected to progress in tandem. However, the developer has not yet submitted an application. There has, however, been some progress over the current monitoring period and a pre-application meeting is due to be held to discuss the progress of the site during the next monitoring period.

The agreed 2017-2018 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 110 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2019/20.

4.10.7 Former Paper Mill, Sudbrook (SAH7):

A full planning application (DC/2015/01184) was submitted by Harrow Estates (Redrow confirmed as the developer) in October 2015 for 212 residential units (192 market and 20 affordable units). There had been a number of site viability issues associated with this application meaning that progress with the application has been slower than anticipated. However, these issues were subsequently resolved and the application was approved in the previous monitoring period (November 2016). The site was cleared over the previous monitoring period and is currently under construction. A total of two completions were recorded over the current monitoring period.

The agreed 2017-2018 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 140 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2019/20.

- 4.11 The AMR highlights issues surrounding the delivery of affordable housing, and developers continue to raise viability issues on some of the strategic housing sites above. This is a Wales-wide issue. The Council's approach to viability debates has now been established, and the links between a project management approach to these applications with LDP delivery are understood.
- 4.12 In October 2015 the Council's Economy and Development Select Committee scrutinised the LDP's impact on enabling tourism-related development. As stated above, the tourism industry forms a key part of the County's economy and links directly to what makes Monmouthshire distinctive. This scrutiny identified a need to produce Supplementary Planning Guidance to clarify for customers and officers how the LDP supports different types of tourism development, and also identified a need for future revisions to the policy to allow greater flexibility for agricultural diversification for tourism purposes. The SPG was adopted during this reporting period and is now widely used by DM officers to consider proposals for sustainable rural tourism. The AMR shows that the clarity provided by the SPG has had a positive impact on tourism-related proposals coming forward and being approved.

Service Plan priorities for 2017-18

- 4.13 The Service Plans for the Development Management and Planning Policy areas identified the following priority actions:
- Replace the M3 planning application data base with a new fit for purpose software system – the new Uniform system went live in March/ April 2018
 - Improve the web site experience for our customers. Information regarding the DM team's new discretionary services, including fast-track applications and pre-purchase certificates was added to the team's web pages, as were revisions to the pre-application advice service; changes were also made to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations.
 - Introduce service improvements and enhancements to improve customer experience of the DM service and to generate increased income – including fast track pre-application advice for more complex proposals, fast track householder, listed building consent and certificates of lawfulness applications, a pre-purchase and completion certificate service for those purchasing property in the County – these were made available to customers from July 2017 and take up of the fast-track service for householders has been significant.
 - Review the pre-application advice service to verify it is adding value, reducing waste and is valued by customers – this has been monitored to a degree and suggests the system is working well but more analysis is anticipated in the next reporting period as the Uniform project that was made a priority takes up less of the team's resource.
 - Prepare LDP Review Report - the final Review Report was reported to Full Council on 19th March 2018 where Council approved the commencement of a full revision of the Monmouthshire LDP. At the same meeting, Council endorsed the Draft Delivery Agreement for targeted consultation with specific consultation bodies. Targeted consultation on the Draft Delivery Agreement commenced 21st March 2018. In addition,

at the same Council meeting, Council formally resolved to be part of the South East Wales Strategic Development Plan.

- Prepare, consult and adopt Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). A programme for the preparation of SPG, including prioritisation between different policy areas to reflect available resources was adopted by Planning Committee. SPG has been adopted relating to Sustainable Tourism Accommodation and Rural Building Conversions.
- Work towards adopting a Community Infrastructure Levy. The CIL Draft Charging Schedule was completed during the 2016-17 monitoring period. The findings of the national CIL Review were also published during the 2016-17 monitoring period which recommended fundamental changes to the CIL process. Consequently, the implementation of CIL in Monmouthshire was deferred pending the outcome of the Government's response to the CIL Review. The Chancellor's Autumn Statement (2017) in response to the CIL Review was inconclusive. It suggested some changes to legislation but no fundamental change. In addition, CIL is being devolved to the Welsh Government, which has not yet given any indication of its intentions regarding the measure. CIL adoption/ Implementation is thus still deferred (the progress of the CIL and any subsequent implications for the LDP will be given further consideration in successive AMRs where appropriate);
- Cross-departmental working to ensure corporate plans and activities align with the LDP. This priority is on-going, although significant steps have been taken to improve cross-departmental working relationships, including work on s106 agreements, green infrastructure and the City Deal.

Local pressures

4.14 Key local pressures include:

- Enabling delivery of the County's housing needs: bringing forward allocated LDP sites; site viability; achieving good planning decisions, creating sustainable communities and seeking to achieve a five year housing land supply;
- Consideration of whether to adopt and implement CIL;
- Securing timely consultation responses from consultees, both internal and external;
- The work associated with the review of the adopted LDP having regard to the current Plan's expiry date in 2021;
- The need to help resource and deliver the Strategic Development Plan for SE Wales;
- Constant change caused by successive new legislation, national planning policy and procedures;
- Increasing workload as the economy recovers and customer expectation of the service rises but with limitations on budgets to resource the service;
- Career and training support for staff in the light of limitations on budgets.

4.15 One of our key challenges is balancing our aim of creating quality places in a timely manner while ensuring schemes are viable and help deliver housing numbers. We are, however, clear that quality is more important than quantity. The introduction of a place-making emphasis in the draft PPW10 is welcomed, although it is regrettable that the draft new format results in the loss of the many positives of PPW9, which is clear and user-friendly.

Actions from our previous APR

4.16 Our 2016/17 Annual Performance Report identified three actions:

Action 1: Systems Re-visit to improve customers' experience of our service and to improve our end-to-end performance in dealing with pre-application advice and planning applications

Action 2: Roll out training for our new Development Management database software for all Planning Service staff

Action 3: Streamline enforcement processes following a triage system to reduce the time taken to resolve cases

Action 4: Arrange a training seminar on planning enforcement for Town and Community Councils via the new area-based clusters (to be arranged via Planning Aid Wales)

Action 5: Absorb the results of the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Benchmarking exercise to learn from areas of good practice across Welsh planning authorities and put those into practice, where feasible.

4.17 Actions 1 and 2 resulted from the desire to ensure we provide a timely service for our customers in delivering planning outcomes. Although the performance in 2016/17 was good in determining applications within agreed timescales (moving from amber to green), this was seen as an area for potential improvement and we proposed to undertake a 'Systems Revisit' to assess how much waste was in our processes and to understand if there were common themes as to why applications were not being determined within a timely fashion. There should also be reductions in waste in our systems and time savings to be made by the implementation of our new Idox Uniform database for the DM service (Action 2). Action 5 also overlapped into making our application processing more efficient in that we may have been able to identify good practice from the benchmarking exercise being carried out across Wales in association with the Planning Advisory Service, the results of which had been anticipated expected in Autumn / Winter 2017.

4.18 While our evidence shows that customers prefer a positive outcome than a quick decision, we fully recognise that if customers are going to continue using our pre-application advice service (which streamlines the subsequent stages, improves outcomes and generates fee income), they must receive timely and meaningful responses. In addition, new regulations allow customers to claim an application fee refund if their application is not determined within a given timescale. We can reduce this risk by agreeing extended deadlines, which we do to good effect. Customers, however, will not be willing to agree a time extension if they cannot see a timely conclusion being reached or have previously received poor service.

4.19 Action 1 was commenced and work was carried out to identify where our customer demand was focussed. As a result of this a web team was set up from within the DM team to seek to reduce day-to-day demand on officers by helping customers to self-serve using an improved and more sophisticated web site. This work is on-going in conjunction with the Council's Digital Team and substantial redesign of the DM team's web pages should be implemented within the next reporting period.

- 4.20 Action 2 has been implemented following the Go Live of the new Uniform software from March / April 2018. The Idox Uniform Implementation team made up of members of the DM Team, spent considerable time in developing a series of comprehensive guides to the different stages required to process an application for pre-application advice and planning applications. DM, Heritage and Enforcement officers have all benefited from the training guides and the transition to the new system has been smooth. Feedback from officers is that the system is easier to use and more efficient than the old M3 software (there is more automation and fewer steps to produce documents).
- 4.21 In respect of Action 3, this was instigated following a surge in enforcement cases in 2016/17 and mixed performance under some the previous enforcement measures in that reporting period, which have since been amended following work undertaken by Welsh Government Planning and a POSW officer performance indicator sub-group. Key stages of the triage system, piloted by Swansea Council have been implemented, but in the meantime, following the appointment of a new enforcement manager early in 2018/19 it has been decided to undertake a more holistic systems review of the Council's the Enforcement team in the next reporting period. This should determine whether the structure and working methods are appropriate given the demands of this small but important team. This aspect will be reviewed within the next APR.
- 4.22 Action 4 was delayed given the timing of the local elections in May 2017 and thus the election of a new cohort of community and town councillors who would benefit from enforcement related training – this being arguably the most controversial and misunderstood aspect of Development Management. Monmouthshire volunteered as a pilot authority to undertake the training and took place in May 2018 following Planning Aid Wales's appointment of a new Chief Executive. The training was well attended by over thirty community and town councillors and was well received. It was particularly useful in conveying to the councillors the practical and legalistic aspects of the enforcement system and how protracted timescales can be to reach a positive outcome for the community.
- 4.23 As regards Action 5, the Planning Advisory Service's work on cost benchmarking for the Welsh planning authority services has been delayed and the outcome of Phase 1 of the work has not yet been published. This is intended to be followed up by a phase 2 work area that the Council's Development Services Manager is to be involved in.

5.0 WHAT SERVICE USERS THINK

What matters to our customers/citizens?

- 5.1 Between 2010 and 2012 the Council's DM team 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.
- 5.2 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 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 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/stakeholders value being listened to during the application process.
- 5.3 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.

LDP survey

- 5.4 Following adoption of our Local Development Plan in February 2014, a customer feedback survey was undertaken in November 2014 with 120 responses received. The key headlines from this survey were reported in the 2015/16 APR.

Planning Applications Customer Survey

- 5.5 In 2017-18 we conducted a customer satisfaction survey aimed at assessing the views of people that had received a planning application decision during the year. The survey was sent to 426 people, 9% of whom submitted a whole or partial response. The majority of responses (66%) were from members of the public. 3% of respondents had their most recent planning application refused.
- 5.6 We asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the planning service. They were given the following answer options:
- Strongly agree;
 - Tend to agree;
 - Neither agree nor disagree;

- Tend to disagree; and
- Strongly disagree.

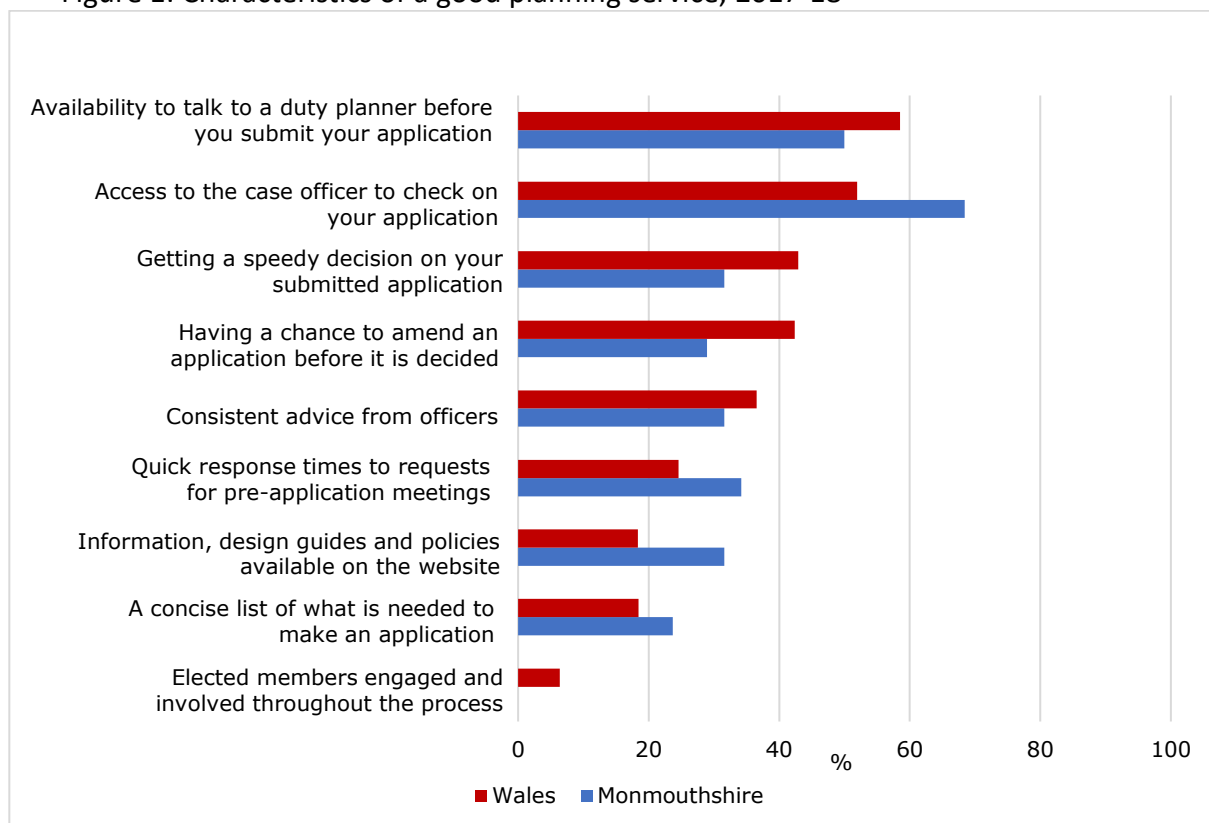
5.7 Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents that selected either ‘tend to agree’ or strongly agree’ for each statement for both our planning authority and Wales.

Table 1: Percentage of respondents who agreed with each statement, 2017-18

Respondents who agreed that:	Monmouthshire LPA %	Wales %
The LPA applies its planning rules fairly and consistently	62	55
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	73	60
The LPA gives help throughout, including with conditions	69	52
The LPA responded promptly when they had questions	69	62
They were listened to about their application	80	60
They were kept informed about their application	71	52
They were satisfied overall with how the LPA handled their application	74	63

We also asked respondents to select three planning service characteristics from a list that they thought would most help them achieve successful developments. Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents that chose each characteristic as one of their three selections. For us, 'having access to the case officer to check on applications' was the most popular choice.

Figure 1: Characteristics of a good planning service, 2017-18



5.8 Direct comparison is not possible because the feedback is from different customers to last year, however overall satisfaction increased slightly to 74% (it was 73% during 2016/17),

well above the Welsh average of 63%. A higher proportion of customers this year considered that we gave good advice to help them make a successful application, and that they were listened to about their application.

- 5.9 The one indicator where satisfaction had declined related to us providing good advice to help the applicant or agent make a successful application. This declined from 80% to 73%. The Welsh average for this question in the 2017/18 survey was 60%, which suggests we are still performing well. The action to review the pre-application advice service will help to conclude whether we can make improvements to this element of the service. Further consideration is needed of this data, because the evidence shows we provided more pre-application advice in this reporting year, and had a 100% success rate where customers followed our advice.
- 5.10 In addition to this customer survey, we seek and act upon customer feedback. We have received some feedback during the year and there is a clear message that communication with customers is key to providing a good service. The feedback has been discussed in team meetings and we are working to improve the service we provide. It should, however, be noted that we score above the Wales average on every indicator, often well above. This reflects our willingness to work with the applicant to try to achieve a positive outcome.
- 5.11 We also asked respondents to select three planning service characteristics from a list that they thought would most help them achieve successful developments. Figure 1 shows how often each characteristic was selected as a percentage of the total number of selections.
- 5.12 The top three characteristics identified by Monmouthshire's customers as being important are:
- Access to the case officer to check on your application
 - Availability to talk to a duty planner before submitting an application, and
 - Quick response times to requests for pre-application meetings
- These results illustrate the areas of most importance to our customers and therefore guide how we should focus our resources and attention. These priorities match very closely the customer priorities identified in 2012 as part of the Systems review (see paragraph 5.2).
- 5.13 Customer feedback has been taken into account when reviewing service delivery, for example when considering the level of duty planning officer service that we are able to sustain. Given the customer feedback, we have sought to maximise the level of service provided.
- 5.14 Customers also had an opportunity to provide further feedback. Comments received include:
- "Approachable and professional."
 - "This past five years has seen 6 applications. All of these have been dealt with efficiently and effectively."
 - "All staff always very helpful and general service is very good - there is one senior planning officer who does not reply to voicemail messages or e mails and you have got to constantly chase him to get information which is extremely frustrating but he is not representative of the general service levels offered by this LPA or its staff."

5.15 In addition to the above survey, the number of formal complaints and letters offering compliments are recorded. There were five complaints received over 2017/18, compared to seven in 2016/17. None led to Stage 2 Complaint recommendations to remedy justified complaint. The one Ombudsman complaint stemmed from a long-running enforcement case which the Council had been seeking to resolve regarding disposal of manure at a riding stable. The matter has since been resolved in an Inspector's appeal decision where the waste was considered to be acceptable in situ. We received two recorded compliments over 2017/18 compared to nine over the previous period.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Number of Stage 1 formal complaints received	17	9	5	5	4
Number of Stage 2 formal complaints investigations received	11	5	2	2	1
Number of Stage 2 complaints upheld or partially upheld	4 partially upheld	3 partially upheld	0 upheld	0 upheld	0 upheld
Number of Ombudsman complaints upheld or partially upheld	1 partially upheld	0	0	0	1 upheld
Number of compliments received	3	4	2	9	2

5.16 Overall, customer satisfaction has improved and we rank above the Wales average in every category of the customer survey, the number of formal complaints received has dropped over the last three reporting periods, with none upheld for the last three years. These are very good results, but quality customer service continues to be a service and organisation priority so the momentum and desire to improve remain.

6.0 OUR PERFORMANCE 2017-18

6.1 This section details our performance in 2017-18. It considers both the Planning Performance Framework indicators and other available data to help paint a comprehensive picture of performance. Where appropriate we make comparisons between our performance and the all Wales picture.

6.2 Performance is analysed across the five key aspects of planning service delivery as set out in the Planning Performance Framework:

- Plan making;
- Efficiency;
- Quality;
- Engagement; and
- Enforcement.

Plan making

6.3 As at 31 March 2018, we were one of 22 LPAs that had a current development plan in place. We are required to submit an Annual Monitoring Report in October 2018. This document has been prepared and is being submitted to Welsh Government by 31st October 2018.

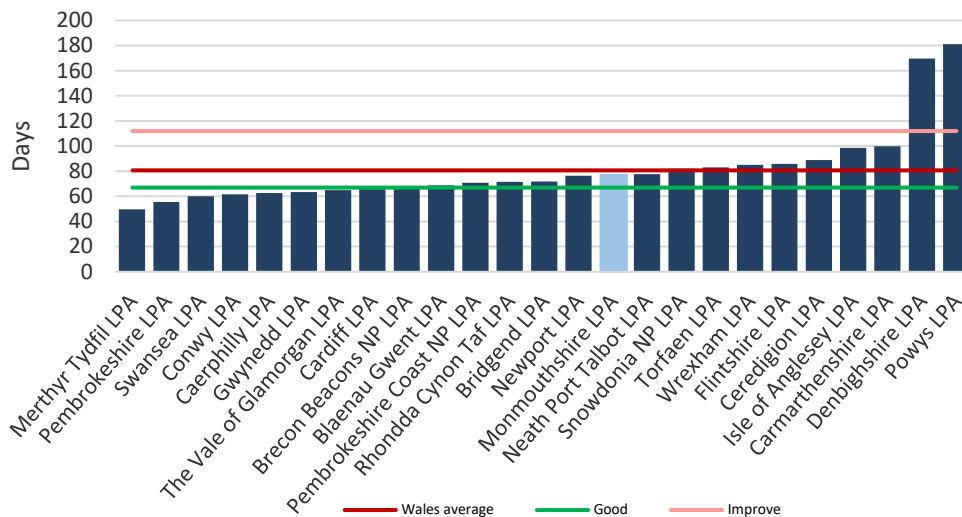
6.4 During the APR period we had 4.0 years of housing land supply identified, making us one of 18 Welsh LPAs without the required 5 years supply. We now know that our housing land supply has since dropped to 3.9 years: this is a common theme for Authorities throughout Wales and a matter that requires investigation. Part of the problem is structural issues in the supply of land, development finance and the house building industry. In Monmouthshire our issue is primarily that sites have not come forward as quickly as anticipated: we do not have a notable issue with land-banking by developers nor do we have any sites that are wholly unviable. Some of our smaller 60% affordable housing sites in Main Villages have not come forward due to land-owners having unrealistic aspirations for their land value. While this has impacted upon delivery of that rural affordable housing policy, it has not impacted significantly on overall housing supply due to the low numbers in question. Welsh Government has now embarked on a review of the delivery of housing in Wales to investigate ways of speeding up new quality housing. Further commentary on our land supply is provided in the Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report.

Efficiency

6.5 In 2017-18 we determined 1,071 planning applications, each taking, on average, 77 days (11 weeks) to determine. This compares to an average of 81 days (12 weeks) across Wales. Figure 2 shows the average time taken by each LPA to determine an application during the year. Following engagement with customers and stakeholders, Monmouthshire County Council has made the evidence-based decision that the outcome of planning applications is far more important than the speed of decision-making. Within reason, customers would prefer to continue working with us to secure an acceptable scheme and obtain planning permission, with as few pre-commencement conditions as possible, than simply have a decision made

within an arbitrary 8 week deadline. The impact of planning decisions is long-lived and, while it is recognised that timely decisions can assist the economy, developers and investors also seek clarity and certainty and ultimately want planning permission. Our focus is therefore on the outcome, although we still perform better than the Welsh average for end-to-end performance in determining all applications.

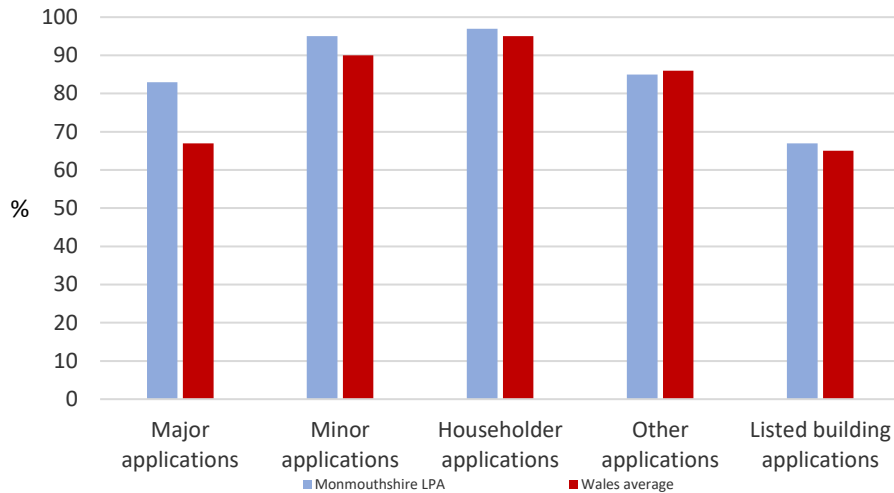
Figure 2: Average time taken (days) to determine applications, 2017-18



6.6 91% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This compared to 89% across Wales and we were one of 22 LPAs that had reached the 80% target.

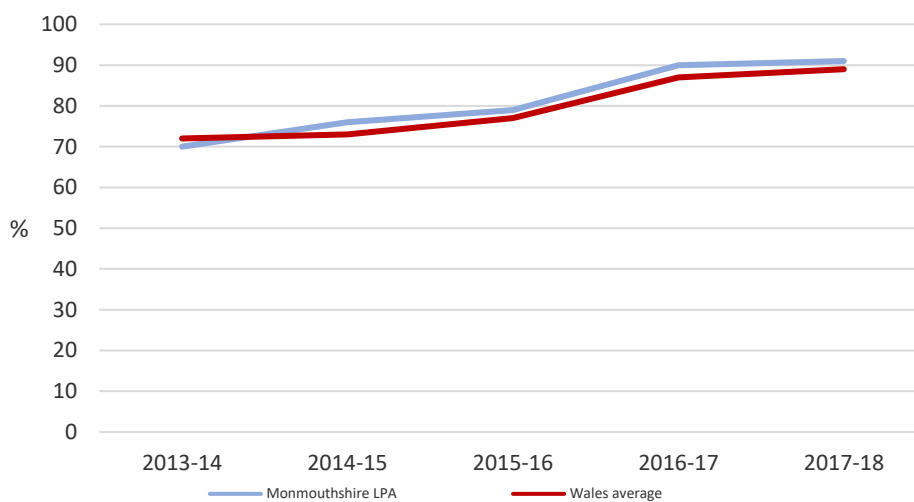
Figure 3 shows the percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales across the four main types of application for our LPA and Wales. It shows that we determined 97% of householder applications within the required timescales. We also determined 67% of Listed Building Consent applications within the required timescales.

Figure 3: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales, by type, 2017-18



6.7 Between 2016/17 and 2017-18, as Figure 4 shows, the percentage of planning applications we determined within the required timescales increased from 90%. Wales also saw an increase this year.

Figure 4: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales



Over the same period:

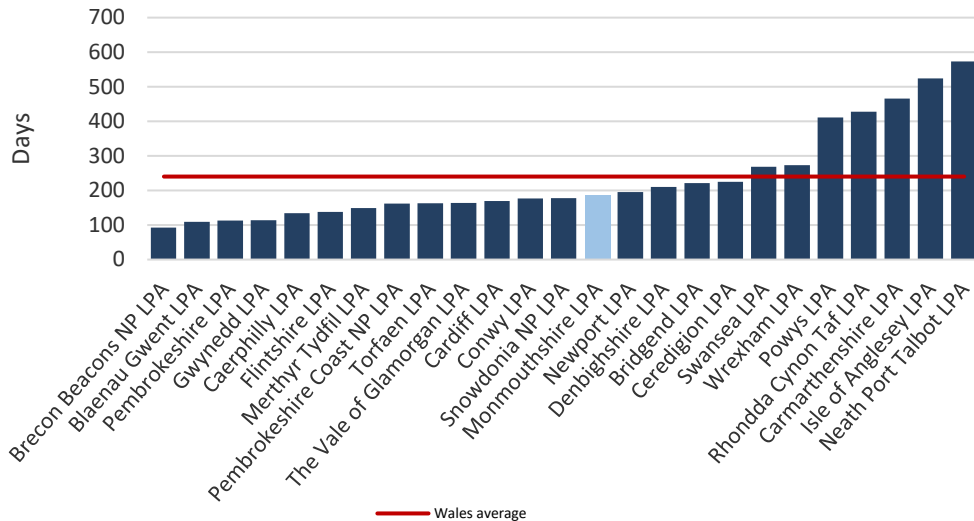
- The number of applications we received increased by 71 applications;
- The number of applications we determined decreased by 16 applications; and
- The number of applications we approved increased.

6.8 The slight drop in the number of planning applications we determined can be explained by the fact that for the final two weeks of March 2018, no planning applications were determined because the Planning Service's new planning application database was being implemented.

Major applications

6.9 We determined 12 major planning applications in 2017-18, none of which were subject to an EIA. Each application took, on average, 188 days (27 weeks) to determine. This compares to 321 days over 2016/17 so is a substantial improvement. As Figure 5 shows, this was shorter than the Wales average of 240 days (34 weeks).

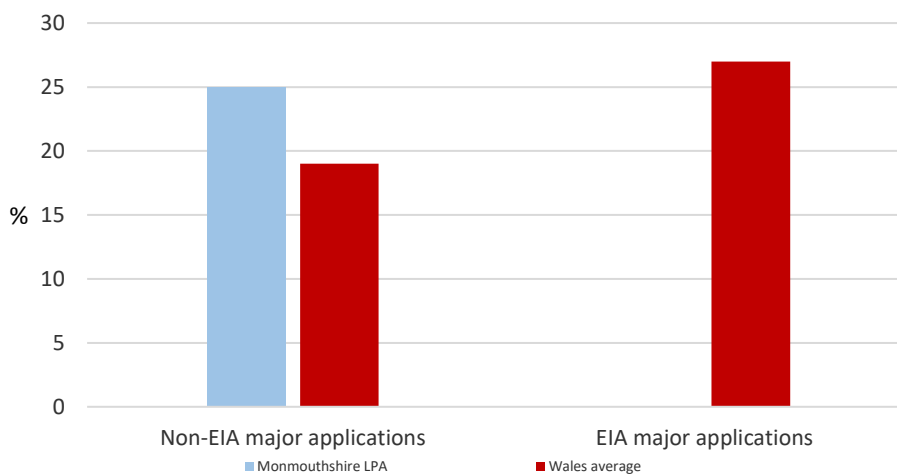
Figure 5: Average time (days) taken to determine a major application, 2017-18



6.10 83% of these major applications were determined within the required timescales, compared to 69% across Wales.

6.11 Figure 6 shows the percentage of major applications determined within the statutory 8 week timescales by the type of major application. 25% of our ‘standard’ major applications i.e. those not requiring an EIA, were determined within that period during the year.

Figure 6: Percentage of Major applications determined within the required timescales during the year, by type, 2017-18

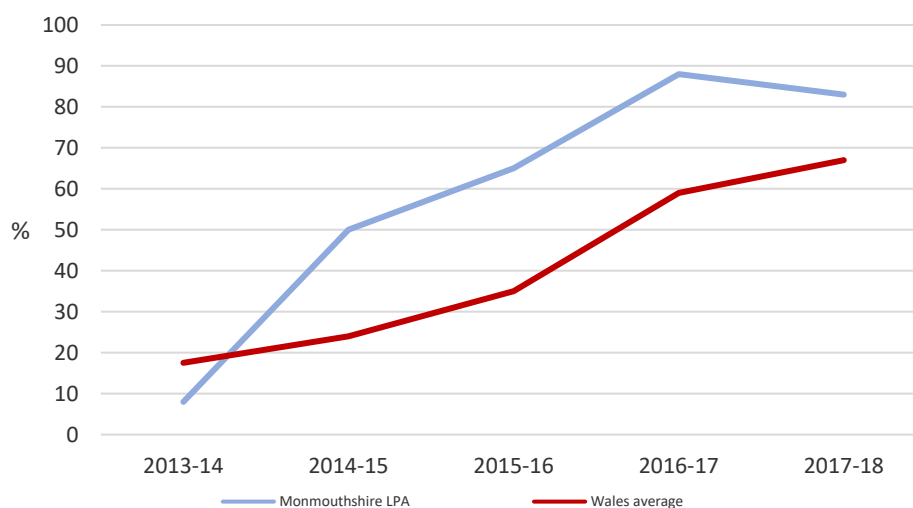


6.12 Since 2016-17 the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales had decreased from 88% to 83%. Similarly, the number of major applications determined decreased as had the number of applications subject to an EIA determined during the year. The figure of 83% determined within the agreed period was well above the Welsh average of 67.4%.

6.13 Figure 7 shows the trend in the percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales in recent years and how this compares to Wales.

6.14 It can be seen that we have consistently performed above the Welsh average on this measure since 2013/14. Our particularly strong performance for major applications is due to a combination of an effective pre-application service, and a good working relationship with customers ensuring agreement to an extension of time.

Figure 7: Percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales



6.15 Over the same period:

- The percentage of minor applications determined within the required timescales increased from 92% to 95%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales increased from 95% to 97%; and
- The percentage of other applications determined within required timescales decreased slightly from 86% to 85%.
- The level of approvals remained high at 95% (over 2016/17 it was 96%)

6.16 This shows a very good level of performance over the period.

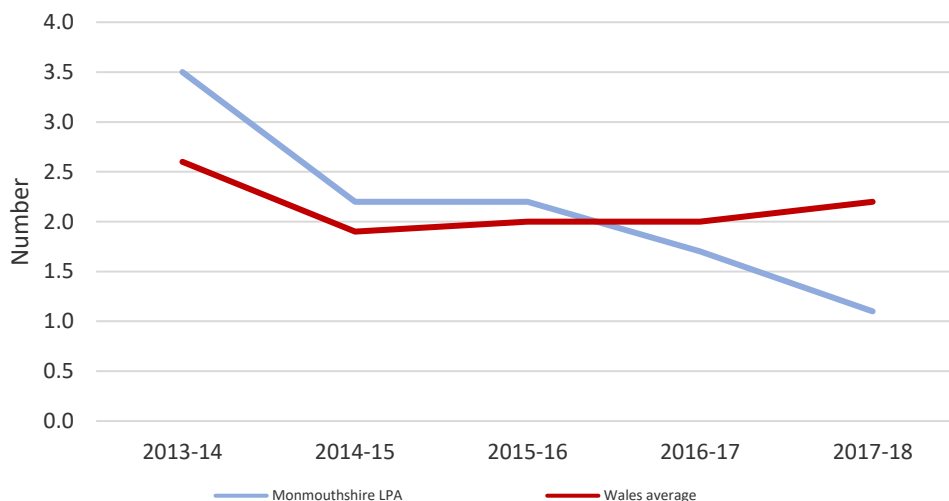
Quality

6.17 In 2017-18, our Planning Committee made 55 planning application decisions during the year, which equated to 5% of all planning applications determined. Across Wales 7% of all planning application decisions were made by planning committee. Unlike most Authorities, Monmouthshire has a Delegated Panel system in operation whereby most applications with between 1 and 4 objections are reviewed by a group comprising the three lead Planning

Committee Members. This system works effectively in reducing the number of applications referred to Committee while ensuring interested parties are reassured that their concerns have been heard and reviewed before a decision is made.

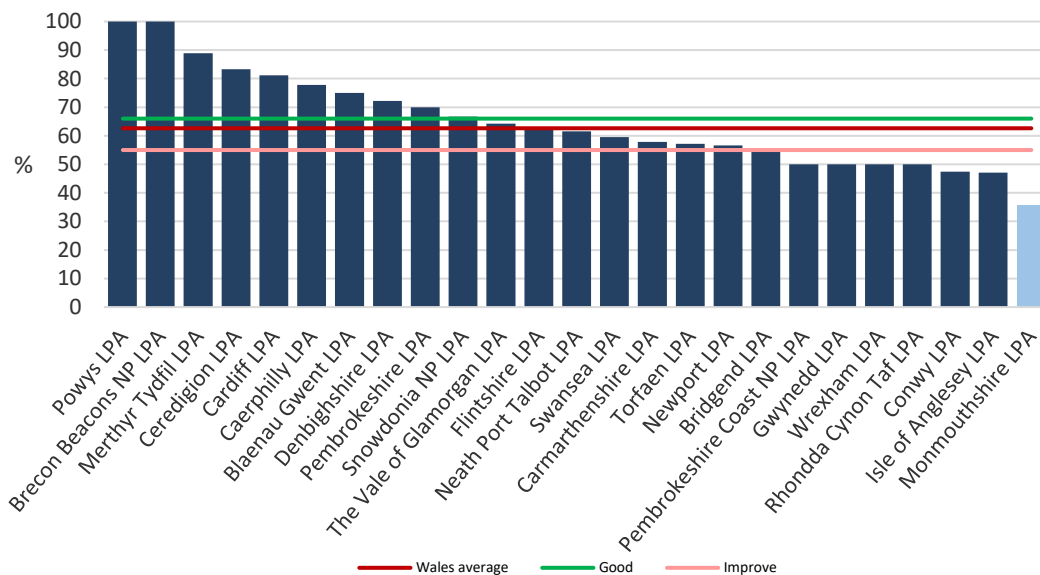
- 6.18 7% of these Committee-made decisions went against officer advice. This compared to 9% of member-made decisions across Wales. This equated to 0.4% of all planning application decisions going against officer advice; 0.6% across Wales. The relatively low proportion of Committee overturns is testament to an effective Member-Officer working relationship, the added value of Planning Committee visiting every site before making a decision, and an experienced Planning Committee provided with appropriate development training.
- 6.19 The four overturned applications in question related to a mix of developments including a conversion of a rural building to a dwelling (approved contrary to officer advice), a new rural enterprise dwelling, a large domestic garage in the AONB and an annexe in a suburban cul-de-sac on design grounds (the three refused applications were all subsequently allowed on appeal).
- 6.20 In 2017-18 we received 13 appeals against our planning decisions, which equated to 1.1 appeals for every 100 applications received. This was the third lowest ratio of appeals to applications in Wales indicating our willingness to negotiate proposals to a positive outcome and the strength of our policy framework. Figure 8 shows how the volume of appeals received has changed since 2013-14 and how this compares to Wales.

Figure 8: Number of appeals received per 100 planning applications



- 6.21 Of the 14 appeals that were decided during the year, 36% were dismissed. As Figure 9 shows, this was the lowest percentage of appeals dismissed in Wales and was below the 55% threshold. This was because of poor performance in Quarter 1 of 2017/18 where none out of six appeals was dismissed. These were a mix of officer (four), Member (one) decision and an appeal against non-determination (which we would have recommended for approval had the application run its course). It is difficult to judge performance on one quarter. Performance improved over the three later quarters of 2017/18 whereby five out of eight appeals (63%) were dismissed. This position will be monitored over 2018/19.

Figure 9: Percentage of appeals dismissed, 2017-18



6.22 During 2017-18 we had no applications for costs at a section 78 appeal upheld.

Engagement

6.23 We are:

- one of 24 LPAs that allowed members of the public to address the Planning Committee; and
- one of 21 LPAs that had an online register of planning applications.

6.24 As Table 2 shows, 73% of respondents to our 2017-18 customer survey agreed that the LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application, although this fell from 80% in 2016/17. The 73% is still well above the Welsh average, though. Moreover, the success rate of our pre-application advice service is commented upon above.

Table 2: Feedback from our 2017-18 customer survey

Respondents who agreed that:	Monmouthshire LPA %	Wales %
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	73	60
They were listened to about their application	80	60

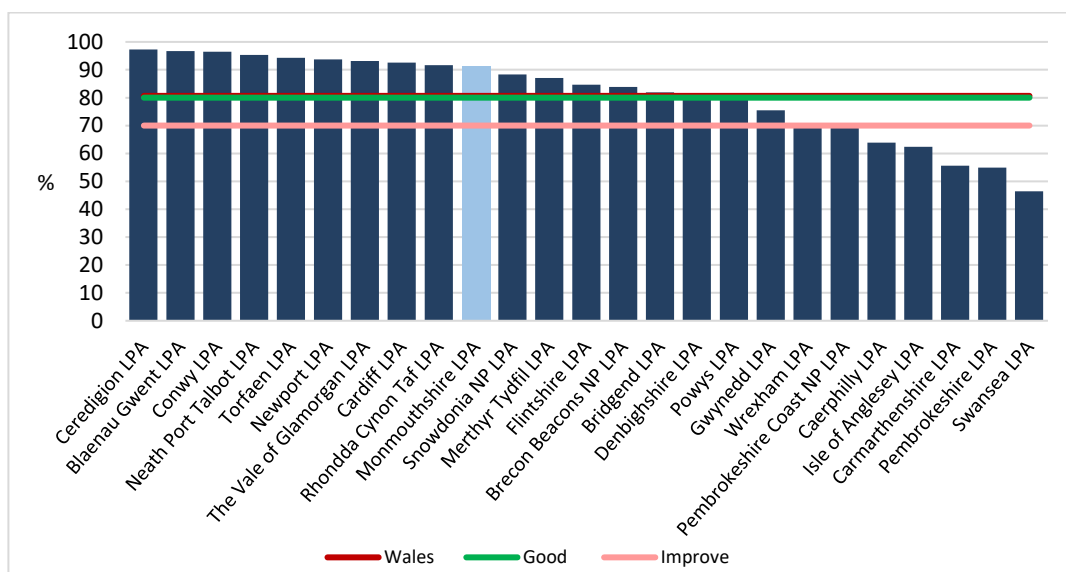
Enforcement

6.25 In 2017-18 we investigated 289 enforcement cases, which equated to 3.1 per 1,000 population. This compared to 2 enforcement cases investigated per 1,000 population across Wales.

6.26 We investigated 91% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. Across Wales 81% were investigated within 84 days. Figure 10 shows the percentage of enforcement cases that were investigated within 84 days across all Welsh LPAs. This represents a good performance for our

Enforcement team of 2.8 FTE staff (including the area manager during this reporting period, who is also responsible for the Applications function in the Abergavenny area team).

Figure 10: Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days, 2017-18



6.27 The average time taken to pursue positive enforcement action was 96 days, which was a significant improvement on last year’s performance of 227 days (although many older, longstanding cases were cleared over 2016/17). Given the need to manage this small team’s sizeable workload, the team will be carefully managed and it is intended to undertake a systems review of the Enforcement function to see if we can drive out waste and sharpen our practices, leading to further improvement (Action1).

7.0 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Based on the customer feedback in Section 5 and the performance information in Section 6 and Appendix A, we can be proud of the service we deliver. During this period:

- The proportion of all applications determined within 8 weeks or an agreed timescale increased;
- The proportion of major applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed timescales remained well above 80%, well above the Welsh average. The average time taken has improved significantly;
- The number of applications we determined slightly decreased (by 1.5%) but the last two weeks of the reporting period were not available for determination of applications due to the implementation of the new planning application computer database;
- The proportion of applications we approved remained high at 95%;
- Of those applications that had gone through our pre-application advice service, 97% were approved; and
- The proportion of respondents to our customer survey who were satisfied overall was well above the Welsh average.

This shows that, despite a challenging workload, our performance and levels of customer satisfaction have improved and our pre-application advice service is effective.

7.2 A summary table of our performance can be found in Appendix A of the APR. One of the 17 indicators (progress against LDP delivery timetable) is not applicable to Monmouthshire because we have already adopted our LDP. It will be applicable in the next reporting period as the Council reviews its LDP. Of the 16 applicable indicators:

- 13 have targets set by the Welsh Government. Monmouthshire's performance is ranked 'good' against 9, 'fair' against 2 and 'in need of improvement' against 2. The 'fair' results relate to: i) the proportion of planning applications determined by Members that were contrary to the officer recommendation, where we achieved 7%, narrowly missing the 'good' target of 5% or less; and ii), the average time taken to determine applications (77 days) which missed the 'good' target of 67 days but was below the Welsh average of 81.7 days. The two measures that were in need of improvement were the five-year supply of housing land that has fallen to 4.0 years. In addition, our appeal performance declined with just 36% of appeals being dismissed.

	Number of indicators
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance is 'good'	9
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance is 'fair'	2
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance 'needs improvement'	2

- We performed above or at the Wales average in 14 of the 15 comparable indicators. The indicator for which performance was below Wales average related to appeal performance as referred to immediately above. Further commentary on the performance against these measures is set out in Section 6.

No target has been set but our performance is above the Wales average	3
No target has been set but our performance is slightly below the Wales average	0
No target has been set but our performance is significantly below the Wales average	0

- Our performance declined against three indicators:

Indicator	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	Wales average	WG target
5 year housing land supply	5.0 years'	4.1 years'	4.0 years'	years'	5.0 years'
Average time taken to determine all applications	68 days	73 days	77 days	80.7 days	<67 days
% of Appeals dismissed	70	71	36	62.5	>66

- However, it should be noted that in the measures for average time to determine all applications, our performance remains well above the Wales average. Where a target was set by the Welsh Government, we are still ranked 'good' or 'fair' except for the appeal performance and the five year housing land supply measure, which had fallen to 4.0 years' supply (and we know has dropped further to 3.9 years' at March 2018) below the required 5 year supply. This is discussed in detail in the LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2018.

7.3 Five actions are identified going forwards.

Speed of determining applications

7.4 91% of applications were determined within agreed timescales, against a Welsh Government target threshold for good performance standing at 80%. The average time taken to determine all applications was 73 days, narrowly missing the 'good' target of 67 days (but below the Welsh average of 80.7 days). While it is accepted that timely decisions can have economic benefits, of greater importance to investors is clarity and certainty, and our evidence is that, within reason, customers are happy to have a slightly slower decision if it is a favourable one. We therefore place greater importance on securing a positive outcome.

7.5 However, this is an area for potential improvement and we have been undertaking a 'Systems Revisit' to assess how much waste is in our processes and to understand if there are common themes as to why applications are not being determined within a timely fashion. There should also be reductions in waste in our systems and time-savings to be made by the implementation of our new Idox Uniform database for the DM service. Opportunities are there to ensure our pre-application advice service is contributing effectively to reducing planning application determination periods by providing clear, professional and respected advice. In addition, our web site offer to customers was already identified by the Systems Revisit actioned in last year's APR, as needing to be improved, enabling customers to self-serve and to reduce the proportion of invalid applications. Project management for major planning applications can be improved by resourcing their processing properly via planning performance agreements with the applicant to deliver a

timelier decision by best endeavours. The fee from such an agreement can be used to back-fill and allow the case officer to be freed up to be a more dedicated resource. Thus, Actions 1 - 4 below are identified.

Action 1 - Systems review to be reinvigorated to identify what matters today and how we meet that demand as well as identifying causes of variation in our system that lead to delays in reaching a positive outcome. This includes a review of the enforcement team and their processes to verify if we have the right resources and we are providing a good service for our customers.

Action 2 - Consolidate the department's use of the new Idox Uniform planning application database software system

Action 3 - Monitor the effectiveness of the Council's bespoke pre-application advice service and our fast track application services, while rolling out the use of Planning Performance Agreements, where appropriate.

Action 4 – Improve the Planning Service's web pages to deliver relevant, accessible and legible information so that customers can self-serve.

Speed of resolving enforcement cases

7.6 While the performance of the Council's Planning Enforcement team is very good in relation to the two enforcement measures in the Performance Framework, customer feedback and complaints often relate to perceived delays in enforcement cases. 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 which has been addressed in some way by the training on enforcement that took place in May 2018 for community and town councillors. There remains, however, scope for further improvement. The systems review of the Planning Enforcement team will help to improve this team's practices and drive out waste. The triage system identified in last year's APR has been partially implemented to systematically prioritise cases, but this can be reviewed as part of the wider systems approach (Action 1).

Collaborative Working

7.7 Monmouthshire has a wealth of heritage assets and has long invested in its heritage team to manage these assets in the public interest. It is becoming apparent that opportunities exist to work collaboratively with neighbouring Councils to provide a shared heritage resource. The opportunity arises to address issues of coverage, availability of officer's advice and consistency of advice between Authorities. In addition, it is proposed that collaboration will provide an opportunity to increase resilience, knowledge and the skills base of aspects of Historic Environment Management through building and sharing of expertise and experience. This is expected to provide an enhanced level of service delivery within current budget requirements. It also acknowledges the agenda for collaboration in the delivery of local government services being promoted by Welsh Government.

Action 5 – Pursue an agenda of collaboration in relation to heritage services with neighbouring local authorities.

Opportunities going forward:

- 7.8 The following opportunities for the coming year have been identified as a result of this Annual Performance Report, our LDP, AMR and our Service Improvement Plans:
- To improve the speed of our responses to pre-application advice requests and determining planning applications via a Systems revisit in order to remove waste from our system and to focus our work on areas valued by our customers (Actions 1 and 3). This will include workshops with the Green Infrastructure and Highways teams;
 - In tandem with the Systems 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 (Action 1);
 - Consider 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 (Action 3);
 - To improve the speed with which we deal with enforcement cases via a systems review of the Enforcement function (Action 1);
 - To consolidate the use of the more efficient replacement database for planning applications to reduce waste for staff, including the production of standard letters and monitoring reports. Stage 2 of the Idox project will include the conditions monitoring module and enhancements to the public access module which will provide a better service to the public when they search applications online; these include providing an online measuring tool and the ability to track changes to an application (Action 2);
 - To improve the web site experience for customers and increase the amount of information available via GIS, which would drive out waste and enable channel shift so that more customers can self-serve (Action 4);
 - To pursue a the potential for collaborative working to deliver a Built Heritage Management Service with neighbouring local authorities, providing resilience, shared learning and consistency across those areas(Action 5);
 - Continue with an early review of the Monmouthshire LDP because of the need to address the shortfall in the housing land supply and facilitate the identification/ allocation of additional housing land. This will involve the production of a Review Report, which will set out and explain the scope of the Plan revision required;
 - 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.
- 7.9 Progress will be measured via our 2018/19 Annual Performance Report, 2018/19 LDP Annual Monitoring Report, and our 2018/20 Service Improvement Plans.

ANNEX A - PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE	WALES AVERAGE	Monmouths hire LPA LAST YEAR	Monmouths hire LPA THIS YEAR
Plan making						
Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes
LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<12	13-17	18+	67	N/A	N/A
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes
The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	>5		<5	7 of 25	4.1	4
Efficiency						
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	>60	50-59.9	<50	67.4	88	83
Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set	240.1	321	188
Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	>80	70-79.9	<70	88.5	90	91
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	<67	67-111	112+	80.7	73	77
Percentage of Listed Building Consent applications determined within time periods required	Not set	Not set	Not set	65.4	-	67
Quality						
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	<5	5-9	9+	8.6	7	7
Percentage of appeals dismissed	>66	55-65.9	<55	62.6	71	36
Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0	1	2+	0	0	0
Engagement						
Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes		No
Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access, track their progress (and view their content)?	Yes	Partial	No
Enforcement			
Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days	>80	70-79.9	<70
Average time taken to take positive enforcement action	Not set	Not set	Not set

WALES AVERAGE	Monmouths hire LPA LAST YEAR	Monmouths hire LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes
80.6	83	91
184.6	227	96

SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING

Indicator	01. Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
A development plan (LDP or UDP) is in place and within the plan period	N/A	No development plan is in place (including where the plan has expired)

Authority’s performance	Yes
The Council adopted its Local Development Plan in February 2014.	

Indicator	02. LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
The LDP is being progressed within 12 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed within between 12 and 18 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed more than 18 months later than the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement

Authority’s performance	N/A
The Council has adopted its LDP and therefore this indicator is not applicable. This indicator will become relevant during the next reporting period as the Council has now commenced a formal review of the LDP.	

Indicator	03. Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
An AMR is due, and has been prepared		An AMR is due, and has not been prepared

Authority’s performance	Yes
The Council’s third AMR was submitted to the Welsh Government in October 2017.	

Indicator	04. The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	
"Good"		"Improvement needed"
The authority has a housing land supply of more than 5 years		The authority has a housing land supply of less than 5 years

Authority's performance	4
<p>The 2017 Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS) was agreed by an independent Inspector in August 2017 and shows that we now have 4.0 years' housing land supply. This matter is considered in detail in the 2017-18 LDP Annual Monitoring Report.</p>	

SECTION 2 - EFFICIENCY

Indicator	05. Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 60% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 50% and 60% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 50% of applications are determined within the statutory time period

Authority's performance	83
<p>While the team's performance has declined slightly from 88% over 2016/17, the performance remains strong over 2017/18 and is well above the Welsh average of 67.4%. To prioritise resources for major planning applications, planning performance agreements will be adopted with applicants for suitable planning applications, leading to better project management of these generally more complex applications.</p>	

Indicator	06. Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority's performance	188
<p>The Council's performance is good compared to the Welsh average of 240 days and has improved substantially from the previous reporting period. As noted above, there is room for improvement and the actions identified should lead to timelier decisions on major planning applications.</p>	

Indicator	07. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 70% and 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 70% of applications are determined within the statutory time period

Authority's performance	91
<p>91% of all planning applications we dealt with were determined within the required timescales, which is well above the 80% threshold for the 'Good' performance ranking. This compared to 88.5% across Wales and is a small improvement on our performance last year (90%).</p> <p>The improved figure represents a willingness to work with our customers to reach a positive outcome within agreed timescales.</p>	

Indicator	08. Average time taken to determine all applications in days	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Less than 67 days	Between 67 and 111 days	112 days or more

Authority's performance	77
<p>In 2017-18 we determined 1071 planning applications, each taking, on average, 77 days (just over 10 weeks) to determine. This compares to an average of 81 days (just under 11 weeks) across Wales but narrowly misses the 'good' target of 67 days. Given our focus on outcome rather than speed, this is a very good achievement and suggests we have struck the right balance between these two objectives.</p> <p>This is a very slight reduction in output compared to last year and a slight worsening in terms of average time taken (1087 applications determined taking an average of 73 days in 2016/17). The small fall in output is explained by the Council's application database being unavailable to process applications during final the two weeks of 2017/18. The measures identified should improve end-to-end times for determination.</p>	

Indicator	08a. Percentage of Listed Building Consent applications determined within time periods required	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority’s performance	67
<p>This is the first year of its inclusion as an indicator. The Council’s Heritage team has worked reasonably well at improving its turnaround of listed building applications. 88 applications for listed building consent were determined over 2017/18 each taking an average of 67 days compared to the Welsh average of 65.4 days. The team of three officers (including a monitoring officer) also contributes to the pre-application advice process, the handling of appeals and provides consultation responses on planning applications in conservation areas. The Authority has Cadw accredited delegation arrangements for grade II buildings only. Grade II* delegation is currently being sought.</p>	

SECTION 3 - QUALITY

Indicator	09. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Less than 5% of decisions	Between 5% and 9% of decisions	9% or more of decisions

Authority's performance	7
<p>Monmouthshire's performance shows that 7% of Committee decisions go against officer recommendation, which equated to 4 planning application during 2017/18 which is the same percentage as 2016/17.</p> <p>This compares favourably to the 8.6% average in Wales and is just below the 5% or less threshold to be rated 'Good'.</p> <p>Provided that Committee decisions are based on good planning judgement and material planning considerations, overturned recommendations are a perfectly acceptable part of the planning process. The difficulty only arises where decisions are made that cannot be substantiated at appeal.</p> <p>The four overturned applications in question related to a mix of developments including: i) a conversion of a rural building to a dwelling (approved contrary to officer advice); ii) a new rural enterprise dwelling (refused as there was not considered to be an agricultural need for the proposed dwelling), iii) a large domestic garage in the AONB and iv) an annexe in a suburban cul-de-sac, the latter two applications were refused on design grounds. The three refused applications were all allowed on appeal although there were no awards of costs on any of the appeals.</p>	

Indicator	10. Percentage of appeals dismissed	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 66% (two thirds) of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Between 55% and 66% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Less than 55% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal

Authority's performance	36
<p>This was the most disappointing of the measures in the Performance Framework owing to a poor Quarter 1 performance where none out of six appeals were dismissed. These six appeals varied between officer (four) and Member (two) decisions and were based on a variety of issues with the common one being design. One decision was an infill plot in Llangybi which was considered an over development but was found acceptable by the Inspector. Another related to the enlargement of a bungalow with a first floor extension in Mitchel Troy which was considered to be overly bulky and excessive in scale but was also allowed. The decisions are reviewed in the</p>	

Planning Service's monthly Policy / DM Liaison meetings and detailed issues are shared and discussed.

It is noteworthy that the performance improved over the remaining three quarters with 5 out of 8 appeals being dismissed. Reviews will continue at our monthly meeting to learn from these decisions.

Indicator	11. Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
The authority has not had costs awarded against it at appeal	The authority has had costs awarded against it in one appeal case	The authority has had costs awarded against it in two or more appeal cases

Authority’s performance	0
<p>No awards of costs for unreasonable behaviour have been made against us this year. There were also no awards of costs during the two previous reporting periods.</p> <p>An action identified in the first APR was to report appeal decisions to Planning Committee every month for learning and discussion. This action has been implemented and has been welcomed by the Committee as useful. Committee Members are also encouraged to sit in on appeal hearings or inquiries as further development training and to assist this the appeals we receive are also reported to Committee. They are also expected to represent the Authority in situations where the appeal has led from a planning application determined contrary to the officer recommendation.</p>	

SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT

Indicator	12. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	
“Good”		“Improvement needed”
Members of the public are able to address the Planning Committee		Members of the public are not able to address the Planning Committee

Authority’s performance	Yes	
<p>Monmouthshire has an established and effective Public Speaking Protocol and also allows applicants, objectors, supports and community and town councils to speak at the Delegation Panel site visits. This has proven to be a valuable exercise in terms of making informed decisions and improved customer and community satisfaction, even if the final decision is not the one they hoped for. The public speaking protocol was amended during the previous reporting period to enable the applicant to be notified earlier that an objector had registered to speak; this provides the applicant with earlier notice and more time to organise a right of reply and after review it appears to be working well.</p> <p>The Size and Composition of Local Planning Authority Committees (Wales) Regulations 2017 did not seek to control the public speaking element of a planning committee. If any future national protocol seeking consistency throughout Wales is published it is hoped it is provided as best practice guidance and does not curtail the successful delegation and public speaking system we already employ.</p>		

Indicator	13. Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	
“Good”		“Improvement needed”
Members of the public can seek advice from a duty planning officer		There is no duty planning officer available

Authority’s performance	Yes	
<p>We have a duty officer available every day from 9am to 5pm and although this is resource intensive, we recognise from feedback that this is a service that customers value.</p>		

Indicator	14. Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access track their progress (and view their content)?	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
All documents are available online	Only the planning application details are available online, and access to other documents must be sought directly	No planning application information is published online

Authority's performance	Yes
<p>Our website allows customers to view all public documents and plans relating to applications including officer reports and decision notices, and also allows customers to comment online. We were going live with a new back office system at the end of this reporting period and anticipate that this will allow for improved functionality. For example, if customers can search on application descriptions and decision dates / status they may be able to resolve many enquiries without needing to contact the case officer or daily duty officer, freeing up time for us to improve our performance on decision speed.</p> <p>Navigational and functional improvements to the Idox public access module (e.g. to enable a customer to track changes to an application) are anticipated during the next reporting period.</p>	

SECTION 5 – ENFORCEMENT

Indicator	15. Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
More than 80% of enforcement cases are investigated in 84 days	Between 70% and 80% of enforcement cases are investigated in 84 days	Less than 70% of enforcement cases are investigated in 84 days

Authority’s performance	91
<p>This was a good performance by our Enforcement Team over 2017/18, well above the Welsh average of 80.6%. This has also improved from 83% during the last reporting period. We would like to move closer to 100% for this measure and thus the action to review the Enforcement Team is recommended.</p>	

Indicator	16. Average time taken to take positive enforcement action	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority’s performance	96
<p>Again, this was a good performance and 96 days was almost half that of the Welsh average of 184.6 days. This was a significant improvement on the 227 days taken over 2016/17. The partial implementation of the triage system has helped reduce times but a review of the enforcement service will see if we can identify areas of waste and smarter ways of working to reduce these times further.</p>	

SECTION 6 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

The purpose of the Sustainable Development Indicators is to measure the contribution the planning system makes to sustainable development in Wales.

The Sustainable Development Indicators will be used to measure the progress against national planning sustainability objectives, set out in Planning Policy Wales, and can be used to demonstrate to our stakeholders the role and scope of the planning system in delivering wider objectives. The information will also be useful to local planning authorities to understand more about the outcomes of the planning system and help inform future decisions.

Authority's returns	A Full return was provided
<p>Monmouthshire Council provided full statistical returns for these indicators. However, it should be noted that this work had to be undertaken manually because our back office IT system at the time cannot store or retrieve most of the data. This is a common problem throughout Wales, the resolution of which has proven to be very time consuming. The Council has procured a new IT system that went 'live' in April 2018 so it is hoped that the time and resource spent manually collecting this data will be reduced.</p> <p>It is worth noting that, in many cases, the sustainable development (SD) indicator definition is different to information collected in the LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), and therefore the results are different in some cases. For example, in terms of housing approvals, the SD indicator records only detailed or final Reserved Matters approvals, whereas the LDP AMR quite rightly (for that context) also includes outline applications as evidence that allocated sites are coming forward.</p> <p>These discrepancies have been checked and properly accounted for. Going forward, where appropriate, consideration will be given to amending the LDP AMR monitoring indicators slightly to reflect the SD indicators, so that similar data is only captured once, reducing duplicated effort and potential confusion. In other cases, such as reviewing progress on the delivery of LDP housing sites, the AMR monitoring indicator will remain unchanged.</p>	

Indicator	SD1. The floorspace (square metres) granted and refused planning permission for new economic development on allocated employment sites during the year.
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Granted (square metres)	
Authority's data	3,660

Refused (square metres)	
Authority's data	0

The planning system should support economic development and steer such development to the most appropriate locations. This indicator provides information on the contribution the planning system is making to delivering traditional economic development in identified employment sites.

This performance indicator measures new buildings in square metres approved on allocated and protected employment sites. It now also includes extensions and change of use consents where vacant buildings have been brought back into employment-generating use. It is also limited to measuring only 'B' use classes, and so excludes supporting employment uses such as hotels. Consequently, this data shows a small proportion of the decisions made to support economic growth in the County. More information can be found in the AMR.

The developments approved for this indicator included a 1,220 sq.m extension at Magor Brewery, a 700 sq.m extension to Unit 16A, Norman Way, Severn Bridge Industrial Estate, Portskewett, a 500 sq.m extension to a laundry business at Bulwark Business Park, Bulwark, Chepstow and smaller B1/ B2 developments at Rogiet, Monmouth and Abergavenny.

During the previous monitoring period, 2,237 sq m of new economic development (as defined by this indicator) was approved on allocated employment sites, although previously extensions were not counted as they now are so the figures are not directly comparable.

Indicator	SD2. Planning permission granted for renewable and low carbon energy development during the year.
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Granted permission (number of applications)	
Authority's data	0

Granted permission (MW energy generation)	
Authority's data	0

The planning system can optimise renewable and low carbon energy generation. This indicator tells us part of the contribution the planning system is making to delivering renewable and low carbon energy generation and moving towards a low carbon economy.

Small scale renewables are now mostly permitted development and, because they do not need planning permission, will never appear in these stats returns. The indicator records only stand-alone schemes for the purpose of generating energy from renewables: it does not record, for example, solar panels on the roof of a new barn or on new dwellings.

During the previous reporting period, three applications were approved for on-site renewable energy generation. One of the schemes related to a 6MW solar development at a farm at Parkhouse, near Trellech. Approval was granted for a combined heat and power plant providing 7.2MW at Trostrey Court Farm, near Usk and a biomass development (up to 1MW) was approved on a farm near Dingestow, Monmouth.

This reporting period has shown no planning applications being submitted for significant stand-alone renewable energy, although several smaller schemes of a domestic scale have been approved including two on farm buildings. This drop off in activity, particularly in solar proposals, is due to changes to Feed in Tariffs (for instance in 2015/16 year we approved 4 schemes likely to generate 17MW). This illustrates that factors outside of the planning system have the greatest influence on the delivery of renewable energy.

Indicator	SD3. The number of dwellings granted planning permission during the year.
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Market housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	300

Affordable housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	84

The planning system can facilitate the provision of market and affordable housing to meet local housing requirements. This indicator provides information on the contribution of the planning system to delivering new housing.

It is worth noting that this data differs significantly from the LDP AMR data due to differences between the indicator definitions. In particular, this sustainable development indicator records only full planning permission and Reserved Matters approvals: outline consents are excluded.

Over the previous reporting period we approved 346 market dwelling units and 77 affordable housing units.

It is well understood that there is an issue with the LDP strategic housing sites coming forward in a timely fashion and this has affected our housing land supply. The need to review the Plan is recognised and is underway. The strategic housing sites are progressing with approvals being granted during 2017/18 at Deri Farm, Fairfield Mabey, Chepstow (outline) and Rockfield Farm, Undy (outline) together with the strategic site at Fairfield Mabey, Chepstow, but the latter is also an outline permission. Progress is slower than is desired.

A detailed commentary on housing approvals is provided in the LDP AMR.

Indicator	SD4. Planning permission granted and refused for development in C1 and C2 floodplain areas during the year.
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Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) which were GRANTED permission	
Authority's data	2 dwelling units; 9.2 ha of non-residential development

Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) which were REFUSED permission on flood risk grounds	
Authority's data	0

The planning system has an important role in ensuring that new development is not exposed unnecessarily to flooding and can guide development to locations at little or no risk from flooding. This indicator provides information on how planning applications for development in floodplain areas are being managed.

During this reporting period, two dwellings were approved within flood zone C2 – this was a site in Pwllmeyric where one dwelling was to be replaced by two new units. The applicant had the ability to initiate the re-modelling of land to ensure the two new dwellings would not be at flood risk, and the situation was a betterment in relation to the existing dwelling that would be replaced.

The non-residential development related to two Dwr Cymru-Welsh Water infrastructure developments close to the River Usk, upgrading i) an existing water treatment works at Llanfoist and ii) a pumping station at Prioress Mill that ensures the water supply to a large proportion of the population of S.E Wales. They were site specific by their nature and flood consequences were properly evaluated and managed in both cases.

Indicator	SD5. The area of land (ha) granted planning permission for new development on previously developed land and greenfield land during the year.
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Previously developed land (hectares)	
Authority's data	10

Greenfield land (hectares)	
Authority's data	9

The planning system can ensure that, wherever possible, previously developed land is used in preference to greenfield sites, particularly those of high agricultural or ecological value. This indicator tells us where the planning system is directing new development.

The performance against this indicator normally reflects the rural nature of Monmouthshire as a County, with very little brownfield land available for development. Usually, the majority of development is on greenfield land. However, this reporting period saw a good proportion of approved development on brownfield sites including Oakley Way, Caldicot, the Magor Brewery extension, other employment sites at Bulwark, Roget, Monmouth and Abergavenny, and to a lesser extent the development of domestic gardens for new housing.

The greenfield development relates to the strategic site at Deri Farm, Mardy, Abergavenny.

It is worth noting that the data provided above differs significantly from that recorded in our LDP AMR, because the definition for the SD indicator reported upon here excludes outline planning permissions, and therefore significant sites which secured outline planning permission during the reporting period, are not recorded here. Such schemes, including the Fairfield Mabey and Rockfield Farm sites will be reported in future APRs when detailed planning permission or Reserved Matters consent is given.

Indicator	SD6. The area of public open space (ha) that would be lost and gained as a result of development granted planning permission during the quarter.
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Open space lost (hectares)	
Authority's data	0

Open space gained (hectares)	
Authority's data	4

Open spaces can provide recreational, amenity and environmental value as well as having a role in climate protection and adaptation to the impacts of climate change. This indicator measures how the planning system is protecting existing, and facilitating the provision of new, open spaces.

During the monitoring period no permissions were approved that would result in the loss of public open space.

As a result of the planning permission at the Deri Farm strategic site, 4ha of new open space have been created.

Indicator	SD7. The total financial contributions (£) agreed from new development granted planning permission during the quarter for the provision of community infrastructure.
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Gained via Section 106 agreements (£)	
Authority's data	2,982,764

Gained via Community Infrastructure Levy (£)	
Authority's data	0

Financial contributions can be used to fund the provision of community infrastructure required to support sustainable development. This indicator measures the level of financial contributions agreed for the provision of community infrastructure.

This reporting period saw considerably more contributions being secured compared to the previous period (£1.35M worth of Section 106 contributions were secured during 2016/17)

This is because of the three strategic housing sites approved as discussed above. The contributions range in respect of providing affordable housing, education / community facilities, green transport and public open space.

The Council is working towards adopting a CIL, subject to potential changes to Central Government policy.