

SUBJECT:	MONMOUTHSHIRE PLANNING SERVICE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR)
MEETING:	PERFORMANCE & OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE
DATE:	13 October 2026
DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide the committee with a report on the performance of the Council's Planning Service for the financial year period **2025/26**.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1 To scrutinise the contents of the Planning Service's Annual Performance Report 2025/26 prior to its endorsement by the Cabinet Member for Planning & Economic Development on 31 October 2026 for submission to the Welsh Government.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Welsh Government (WG) requires all Local Planning Authorities in Wales to prepare and submit an Annual Performance Report (APR) and Capacity and Capability Survey by the end of October each year. The requirement forms part of the Planning Performance Framework and supports Welsh Government's objective of creating a positive, responsive and enabling planning service. The APR provides an opportunity to review performance, identify areas of good practice, understand service pressures and challenges, and establish actions for continued improvement. The 2025/26 reporting period is also the first since 2018/19 for which all-Wales comparator performance data has been available, enabling more meaningful benchmarking against other Welsh planning authorities.
- 3.2 This is the twelfth Annual Performance Report (APR). The report to a scrutiny committee provides the opportunity to review and discuss performance and was welcomed by previous Committees, which requested that it become an annual item.
- 3.3 The APR looks at the performance of the Planning Service against nationally set performance indicators, Welsh Government (WG) targets, the Wales average performance, and Monmouthshire's performance over the previous year. The results are considered in the context of the challenges, opportunities, priorities and resources (staffing and financial) available. The objective of the APR is to reflect on and celebrate good performance, identify areas for improvement, and look across Wales to identify potential areas of best practice that Monmouthshire could learn from or share with others.

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

- Plan making (omitted from the APR in recent years as no performance data was provided by WG and given the work now being concentrated on replacing the current LDP);
- Efficiency;
- Quality;
- Engagement; and
- Enforcement.

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

3.5 The Annual Performance Report and the related Performance Framework is provided at Appendix 1.

4.0 KEY ISSUES

4.1 The purpose of the Planning Service is 'To plan for, advise on, give permission for and ensure the best possible development', that links directly to all six of the Council's Corporate objectives. The service is an enabling tool to help address some of the challenges and issues identified corporately.

4.2 Key areas of work for the Planning Service include:

- Carrying out a replacement of the Monmouthshire LDP.
- Preparing and co-ordinating thematic supplementary planning guidance to help to foster the interpretation and implementation of LDP policy.
- Implementing the Council's LDP through engaging and working with communities, and partnership working with both internal and external partners.
- 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.
- 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 National Landscape and the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park;
- Providing a heritage service for our neighbouring colleagues in Blaenau County Borough that works in a manner that is consistent and as well-resourced as the one provided for Monmouthshire.
- Taking robust enforcement action against unauthorised development that is unacceptable in the public interest.

5.0 MAJOR PROJECTS FROM 2024/25

5.1 During the reporting period these included:

- A significant proportion of the Planning Service's workload during 2025/26 related to the progression of the Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). The RLDP was submitted to the Welsh Government in November 2025 for Examination during the reporting period, representing a major milestone in the plan-making process. Following submission, the Examination was temporarily suspended in December 2025 to allow additional work to be undertaken in relation to phosphorus and nutrient neutrality matters, reflecting the significance of water quality considerations within the River Wye and River Usk catchments.
- The Council worked collaboratively with Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) and other stakeholders during the suspension period to progress the evidence base and identify appropriate solutions. This enabled the Examination to recommence, with hearing sessions taking place throughout September and October 2026. The Examination remains one of the most resource-intensive workstreams undertaken by the Planning Service and has required significant officer input across both Planning Policy and Development Management functions.
- A restructuring of the Development Management service was implemented during the reporting period and is now beginning to take shape. The revised structure provides clearer career pathways, improved progression opportunities and enhanced professional development prospects for officers at all stages of their careers. In addition to supporting recruitment and retention, the new structure is intended to strengthen the overall resilience of the service by improving capacity, creating additional succession planning opportunities and reducing reliance on a small number of experienced officers.
- During 2025/26, the Council determined four major planning applications, comprising two residential developments, a strategic employment proposal and a significant renewable energy scheme. Collectively, these applications will support the delivery of new homes, economic growth and renewable energy generation across Monmouthshire, whilst securing associated infrastructure and community benefits through the planning process. Notwithstanding the scale and complexity of these developments, 100% of major applications were determined within agreed timescales.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF OUR 2025/26 APR

6.1 Based on the performance information in Section 6 and Appendix A of the APR, we can be pleased with the service we deliver. During this period:

- The proportion of major applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed timescales improved from 89% to 100% (7 out of 7 applications). This maintains our performance well above the 'Good' target of 60%
- The end-to-end period for determining major planning applications continued its trend, falling from, 436 days in 2023/24 to 267 days in 2024/25 to 163.7 days;
- The proportion of all applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed timescales remained high at 93% (increasing from 92% in 2024/25), and remaining above the Welsh average of 91.6%
- The proportion of applications we approved remained high at 97% (up from 95% in 2024/25)
- In seven out of nine appeals (73%) against our decisions to refuse planning permission, MCC's decision was confirmed, well above the 'Good' standard of 66% or more;
- We dealt with a large number of applications for listed building consent (54 applications) and 70%. This dipped slightly from 78% due to changes in staff and periods of vacant posts between new officers starting.
- Enforcement performance remained strong for the measure relating to the percentage of enforcement cases investigated in 84 days, 81% which is rated 'Good'. It is acknowledged that the time taken to take positive enforcement action increased to 191 days, rated 'Fair', this was still well below the Welsh average in 2025/26 of 275 days. This was primarily because we closed a small number of long-standing, complex cases which inflated the average figure. The number of enforcement cases received increased in 2025/26 and we served 6 notices. With regards to appeals against enforcement notices issues, the Council were successful in 100% of appeals being upheld (5 out of 5).
- S106 monies (£244,450) were received towards important community infrastructure schemes. Whilst this figure has reduced from 2024/25 (approximately £1m) this reflects the lifetime of the current Local Development Plan.
- During 2025/26, the Council continued to use Section 106 planning obligations to support the delivery of infrastructure and community benefits arising from development. Examples included investment in the Caldicot Greenway/Multi-User Route, local play and recreation facilities, community infrastructure and affordable housing projects across Monmouthshire. These projects demonstrate the practical role of planning obligations in mitigating development impacts and securing benefits for local communities.

6.2 A summary table of our performance can be found in Appendix A of the APR. Of the 20 ranked indicators, 8 are ranked 'Good', while 4 are 'Fair' and 3 'need improvement'.

- The three indicators recorded as requiring improvement relate to plan-making measures that were introduced as part of the revised Planning Performance Framework and were therefore not assessed as part of previous Annual Performance

Reports. These indicators should also be considered within the wider Welsh context, where many authorities are engaged in the review or replacement of their development plans. At the end of the reporting period, fewer than half of Welsh planning authorities had a development plan that remained within its plan period. During 2025/26, Monmouthshire's principal planning policy priority was the progression of the Replacement Local Development Plan through submission and Examination. Given the scale and significance of that work programme, resources were appropriately focused on supporting the Examination process, responding to Inspector-led matters and progressing the Plan towards adoption.

	Number of indicators*
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance is 'good'	8
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance is 'fair'	4
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance 'needs improvement'	3

*Performance standards are not set for 5 of the ranked indicators.

6.3 Four actions are identified going forwards:

Action 1 – Continue the digitisation of historic planning records and Tree Preservation Order information to improve data quality, public access to information and opportunities for customer self-service.

Action 2 – Continue implementation of the Buildings at Risk (BAR) Strategy into other settlements, prioritising interventions that secure the long-term conservation, sustainable reuse and enhancement of Monmouthshire's heritage assets.

Action 3 – Explore and embed the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the Planning Service to support productivity, improve customer service, reduce administrative workloads and enable officers to focus more time on professional planning, place-making and decision-making activities.

Action 4 – a) To adopt a Planning Enforcement Plan to provide a clear process and procedures to how the planning enforcement service operates within the county.
b) – Elected Member & Community/Town Council Training on planning enforcement and overview of the Planning Enforcement Plan.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

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

8.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS:

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

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

9.0 OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 There is a requirement for Local Planning Authorities to prepare and submit an Annual Performance Report (APR) and Capacity and Capability Survey to the Welsh Government each autumn. The 2025/26 reporting cycle is particularly significant as it is the first since 2018/19 for which comprehensive all-Wales comparator data has been made available, enabling meaningful benchmarking of Monmouthshire's planning performance against other Welsh authorities. The APR provides an opportunity to review service performance, identify strengths and areas for improvement, understand current pressures and challenges, and establish actions to support the continued delivery of a high-quality planning service.

In considering the APR, the following options were identified:

Recommend the APR for submission to the Welsh Government without amendment.
Recommend the APR for submission to the Welsh Government, subject to amendments to the proposed actions for the forthcoming year.

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

10.0 HOW WILL SUCCESS BE MEASURED?

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

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

11.0 CONSULTEES

- Planning Committee and the Performance & Overview Scrutiny Committee
- Cabinet Member for Sustainable Economy

- SLT
- Communities and Place DMT

12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS:

None

13.0 AUTHOR & CONTACT DETAILS:

Andrew Jones
Head of Planning
01633 644808
Andrewjones3@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Appendices

1. Annual Performance Report including appendix (Performance Framework)
2. Equality and Future Generations Evaluation