

Agenda Item 13

Item/Min Ref: Item 13	Title of Report: The Northern Ireland Planning Statistics - 2015/16 First Quarterly Bulletin	Officer presenting: Principal Planning Officer (Acting) Author: Principal Planning Officer (acting)
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To appraise Members that on 19 November, the Department of the Environment published the Northern Ireland Planning Statistics - 2015/16 First Quarterly Bulletin. These are the first quarterly provisional figures to be released since the transfer of planning powers to Councils and cover the period of 1st April - 30 June 2015.
- 1.2 This first year will provide the base year for the reporting of performance related data at Council level, with comparative trend data then building from that point onwards.
- 1.3 As Members will be aware, a new classification hierarchy for planning applications came into effect on 1st April 2014 in advance of planning functions to local government from 1st April 2015. The new development categories are - Major and Local Development applications processed by Councils and Regionally Significant Development applications processed within the Department.
- 1.4 There are three new legislative performance targets covered in the Report related to the processing of Local Development decisions within an average of 15 weeks; Major Development decisions within an average of 30 weeks; and processing 70% of enforcement cases to target conclusion within 39 weeks.
- 1.5 The average processing times for Local Development decisions across all Councils in this first quarter is 19 weeks. Nine of the eleven Councils were not meeting the 15 week statutory processing during this first quarter. Derry City and Strabane District Council achieved an average processing time for Local Development decisions of 16.6 weeks. It is important to be aware, however, that many of the applications that had a decision issued during this period will have previously been processed to some extent within the Department before being transferred to Councils for completion.

2 Background

- 2.1 The number of planning applications received in Northern Ireland in the period April to June 2015 was 3,188. Derry City and Strabane District Council received 238 applications in the first quarter. 150 planning applications were issued, 147 of which were approved.
- 2.2 The average processing time to decide Major Development applications was 37.6 weeks across all Councils. Derry City and Strabane District Council processed Major Development applications in 22.2 weeks in the first quarter.
- 2.3 The average processing time to decide Local Development applications was 19.0 weeks across all councils. Derry City and Strabane District Council processed Local Development applications in 16.6 weeks in the first quarter.
- 2.4 The time taken to process 70% of enforcement cases to target conclusion across all councils was 33.6 weeks, over five weeks better than the 39 week target and an improvement of just over three weeks on the 36.8 weeks achieved in the equivalent quarter last year for Northern Ireland. Derry City and Strabane District Council processed 70% of enforcement cases to target conclusion in 31.3 weeks in the first quarter.
- 2.5 The overall approval rate for all planning applications in Northern Ireland dropped by just under one percentage point to 94.5% compared to the equivalent quarter last year. Derry City and Strabane District Council approval rate is 98%.
- 2.6 At a Northern Ireland level, the number of live applications greater than one year old at the end of June 2015 was 1,128. This continues the five year downward trend in the proportion of older applications. Derry City and Strabane District Council have approximately 154 planning applications greater than 1 year old at the end of June. This equates to 26.6% of all planning applications in this District

3 Key Issues

- 3.1 Derry City and Strabane District Council's performance in the first quarter has been good considering the major transition of Planning functions which took place during this reporting period. However, we will continue to strive to improve on performance to date and especially in relation to older "legacy" applications which would have transferred to Council from DOE.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR and Other Implications

- 4.1 There are not considered to be financial, equality, legal, HR or other implications.

5 Recommendations

- 5.1 That Members note the content of this report and the attached Appendix 14.