

Title of Report: Item 11 NI Planning Statistics 2016/17 – Development Management Performance Update	Officer Presenting: Head of Planning Author: Maura Fox
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

To advise Members that on 29 September 2016, the Department for Infrastructure Northern Ireland Planning Statistics - 2016/17 First Quarterly Statistical Bulletin was released and can be accessed at the link below:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-april-june-2016>

Previous reports on Publication of Statistics covering performance previous quarters are enclosed (Appendices 12 and 13).

The first quarter figures will provide a baseline year for reporting performance and can be compared with quarters and overall performance for previous year.

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 which are processed by Councils and Regionally Significant Development applications which are processed within the Department for Infrastructure.

There are three new legislative performance targets which the Council will be measured on covered in the Report, Local planning application decisions target is 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.

2 Background

The number of planning applications received in Northern Ireland in the period April 2016 to June 2016 was 3,438 (3,097 in January/March 2016). Of these, Derry City and Strabane District Council received 236 (213 in January/March 2016), the second lowest in Northern Ireland. In this quarter 189 were decided, 236 in previous quarter, 175 were approved with an approval rate of 92%, January-March 98.7%. Northern Ireland approval rate at 94.5% and 92.6% respectively.

The average processing time to decide Major planning applications is at 67.1 weeks for the first quarter in NI. Derry City and Strabane District Council processed Major applications in 45.2 weeks. Although outside the 30 week target, this was the highest performance for this quarter across NI and with a 100% approval rate.

The average processing time to decide Local applications across all Councils in this quarter was 18.0 weeks, to the 15 week target. Derry City and Strabane District Council processed Local applications in an average of 16.9 weeks. This was 1.9 weeks outside the target but better than average and in 5th best performance compared to all other 11 Councils. This figure has been fluctuating slightly outside this target from last year, first quarter 2015 - 16.0, second quarter - 17.2, third quarter - 16.6, fourth quarter - 18.8 and now 16.9 weeks.

As Members have been advised in the past, it is important to highlight, when DOE Legacy applications are separated in the statistics from the new Council applications, the performance in this quarter for new applications is 15.6, only missing by 0.6, however DOE legacy applications local applications, processing time is 117.4%.

The time taken to process 70% of enforcement cases to target conclusion across all Councils sits at 26.3 weeks in the first quarter of 2016/2017 and the percentage of all cases concluded within 39 weeks is 81.3%. Derry City and Strabane District Council processed 75% of all cases within the 39 week target and therefore meeting the 70% target.

At a Northern Ireland level, the number of live applications greater than one year old at the end of June 2016 was 1,056. Derry City and Strabane District Council still has a large proportion of one year plus applications which is 157. This equates to 30.3% of overall caseload. In terms of withdrawals in January-March, Derry City and Strabane District Council had 6 withdrawals which was the lowest in Northern Ireland and this first quarter of 2016/2017 Derry City and Strabane District Council had 9 withdrawals which is within the lower quartile for Northern Ireland.

Also worth noting is that in the last 2 quarters April/June, Derry City and Strabane District Council had the highest receipt (8) of new Major applications across Northern Ireland.

3 Key Issues

Derry City and Strabane District Council's performance remains steady for the first quarter of 2016/2017 with an improvement in Major performance which was the highest in Northern Ireland. Local planning application performance continues to fluctuate just outside the 15 week target. Enforcement target has been met again as per all previous 4 quarters of previous year. DOE Legacy applications continue to be a challenge, however I can report from the 525 caseload inherited in April 2015, last quarter statistics indicated a figure of 157 of the end of June 2016. Internal assessment of statistical reports indicate that this figure has been further reduced to 94 by end of September 2016. This meets the Department's Service Plan's objective of reducing legacy applications of 187 in April 2016 in 6 months by 50%.

Moving forward, the objective and focus shall remain on reducing the number of DOE legacy applications, the team will aim to conclude a further 50% by year end. Further to this, the team will concentrate on minimising the percentage of applications that have not been concluded within a year, as outlined above, these cases currently make up 30.3% of caseload.

4 Financial, Equality, Legal, HR and Other Implications

There are no significant financial, equality, legal, HR or other implications.

5 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the content of this report and the attached appendices and associated link at 1.1.

Background Papers

Previous reports on Publication of Statistics covering performance previous quarters are enclosed (Appendices 12 and 13).