

Item 12: Final Annual NI Planning Statistics 2020/21 – Development Management Performance Update	Officer Presenting: Head of Planning Author: Head of Planning
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1 Purpose of Report/Recommendations

- 1.1 To update and advise Members that on 01 July 2021, the Department for Infrastructure Northern Ireland Planning Statistics - Annual Statistical Bulletin was published and can be accessed at the link below and provides an update on Planning statistics/targets:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-planning-statistics-april-2020-march-2021>

2 Background

- 2.1 As Members will be aware, classification hierarchy for planning applications came into effect on 1st April 2014 in advance of transfer of planning functions to local government from 1st April 2015. The development categories are Major and Local Development which are processed by Councils and Regionally Significant Development applications which are processed within the Department for Infrastructure.
- 2.2 There are three current legislative performance targets which the Council will be measured on covered in the Report, Local planning application decisions target of processing 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.

3 Key Issues

Highlights from the 20/21 Annual Statistics

- Our Council has experienced the highest increase in the number of new planning applications in NI last year, a rise of 14.2%.
- We also experienced the highest number of new Local Applications across NI, 14.9%.
- We are one of only three Councils who met their Local target during the pandemic.
- We managed to achieve the highest reduction in 12 month cases in NI from 26.2% to 18.2%.
- We had the highest increase in the number of enforcement case closures in NI (Up 13%).
- We were one of only 6 Councils who have met their enforcement closure time target during the pandemic.
- We are reporting the second highest improvement in our Major target by 30 weeks, from 96.0 to 65.2 weeks. No Councils met this target.
- We still remain the second highest approval rate in NI – 98.6%.

3.1 The number of planning applications received in Northern Ireland in this year, period April 2020 to March 2021, was 12,833; an increase in 5.1% on the previous year. Derry City and Strabane District Council received 959 planning applications reporting an increase of 14.2% on last year. The approval rate in NI was 95.7%, up from 94.0% last year. DCSDC had an average approval rate of 98.6% which compares to 97.6% in the previous year.

3.2 The average processing time to decide Major planning applications across NI in this year is 61.4 weeks. Derry City and Strabane District Council issued 14 Major applications in this period which compares to 11 the previous year. This is the third highest Council number of Majors to issue. DCSDC Major processing target was 65.2 weeks which compares to 96.0 weeks the year before and 154.2 weeks the previous year. This is a pattern of improvement with this year improving by 30 weeks. DCSDC also received a further new 11 major applications in this year.

3.3 The average processing time to decide Local applications across all Councils in this year was 14.2 weeks, within and below the 15 week DFI target. DCSDC was only one of three Councils to achieve this target in this year. Derry City and Strabane District Council has performed well in the first quarters, 13.3 weeks in Quarter 1 and 13.8 weeks in Quarter 2, leaving a Year to Date performance of 14.0 weeks, well within Local target. This compares to 14.0 weeks last year and 14.1 weeks in the previous year. Also to note is that DCSDC also received the highest percentage of new applications in N.I up 14.9%.

3.4 At a Northern Ireland level, the number of live applications greater than a year old at the end of March 2021 was 8,188 or 19.2%. Derry City and Strabane District Council 12 month plus figure is now 108 and reported the largest reduction in 12 month caseload, decreasing from 26.2% last year to 18.2% this year. This compares to 26.2% in March 2020 and in March 2019 was 19.1%.

3.5 Across NI, in terms of enforcement cases 69.9% of cases were concluded within 39 weeks target which is below the target of 70%. Derry City & Strabane District Council only one of 6 Councils who managed to meet the target, processed 73.3% of all cases within the target. This compares to a conclusion time the previous year of 78.1 % which is only slightly lower. To note is that the team have had the highest percentage increase in overall closure targets from last year, up 13%.

3.6 In summary, given the challenges which the Department faced with the COVID pandemic and the significant adaptations which had to be made to the service and impact on staff, this has been overall a very successful performance. Even within the backdrop of a 14% rise in planning applications, we have managed to meet 2 of the main targets which is an excellent achievement when benchmarked across NI. Clearly the improvement in our Major target is noteworthy, however, this will continue to be a challenge for this and other Councils moving forward. Within that context also, it should be recognized that we have achieved the largest reduction in 12 month plus cases which is a significant achievement in the year we had to manage.

4 Implications

Equality, Rural Needs, Climate Change and Data Protection

4.1 Not Applicable

Financial, Legal, HR, Improvement and Other

4.2 There are no significant financial, legal, HR or other implication

5 Recommendation

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

Background Papers

None