

Quarterly Performance Report – Planning

Report Author Andy Farrow
Report Date August 2012
Report Period **Quarter 1:** 1st April,2012 to 30th June,2012

Introduction

The report is produced on a quarterly basis and provided to Cabinet members for review and assurance and will be available for Overview and Scrutiny Committees as part of their Forward Work Programmes.

The report consists of an overview of the key messages to highlight across all work streams in Planning, which is followed by highlights from each service area. Parts 2 and 3 of the report include an assessment of performance in the quarter from the following sources:

- Improvement Plan Monitoring
- Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges
- Performance Indicators and Outcome Measures
- Improvement Target Action Plan Monitoring
- Key Actions from Service Plan Monitoring
- Internal and external regulatory reports
- Customer satisfaction and feedback
- Awards and accreditations
- Resource Management (HR, ICT, Finance, Assets)

1. Foreword

Report highlights for this quarter are the following items: -

Planning Strategy and Built Conservation	<p>The Unitary Development Plan was adopted in September 2011 and its use as the sole policy basis for recommendations made at planning committee has now been established. This should now provide the Planning and Development Control Committee with a sound and up to date basis on which to make decisions.</p> <p>A Development Brief for the housing allocation in Sychdyn has been prepared and consulted on, and will be presented to the Council for approval as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in September.</p> <p>The Local Planning Guidance Note which updates the current approach to seeking developer contributions to address school capacity has been adopted by Council. It will now form the basis of discussions with developers within Flintshire when appropriate.</p> <p>The formal Order has been received from Welsh Government to allow the Council to commence with work on its Local Development Plan (LDP). An outline programme will be presented to Cabinet in September.</p> <p>A significant amount of good work and positive outcomes have been achieved both by the Conservation and Design officer, and the team in general. This work includes a temporary consent to allow the proposed development at Pen y Bont Farm, Mold to go ahead; Bryn Awel in Pentre Halkyn where the Conservation and Design officer is ensuring that this significantly damaged and neglected grade II Georgian Welsh farmhouse will be repaired and restored to a beneficial residential use. There are a number of other historic buildings which are classified as being 'at risk' where the Conservation and Design officer is negotiating with the owners or their agents to secure appropriate and pragmatic solutions to preserve these important buildings.</p> <p>A new procedure for the designation of Buildings of Local Interest has been drawn up for agreement by the Cabinet in the near future. Whilst not up to Listing standards, there are nevertheless a significant number of locally important buildings which this new procedure aims to protect to prevent their loss to the local scene.</p> <p>In relation to the excellent work being done on the Townscape Heritage Schemes in Holywell and Flint, the longer running of the two schemes in Holywell is due to be completed by the end of September 2012. In Flint, the scheme began slowly as its approval coincided with the economic recession. Despite this, a new four year programme of work has been agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund, running from September 2011 until September 2015. This will target a common fund of £1.6m on the repair and restoration of 28 target properties in the town.</p>
---	---

<p>Development Management</p>	<p>The number of planning applications received within Quarter 1 (270) is up on the preceding quarter, Q4 (253) and shows no significant change in relation to the corresponding Q1 in 2011/12 (271), which would have given a clearer indication of any signs of an economic upturn .</p> <p>The number of planning permissions granted during Quarter 1 (212) does not compare favourably with the corresponding quarter in 2011 (231), although the number of major residential permissions is the same in each quarter. This includes the major application for part of the Northern Gateway site where it was resolved to grant planning permission at a Special Planning Committee in April.</p> <p>All Members and substitutes for the Planning and Development Control Committee have undertaken Phase 1 training prior to their sitting on the Committee and Phases 2 and 3 are now programmed for later in 2012.</p>
<p>Countryside</p>	<p>Greenspace strategy - A visioning exercise was held in June for all internal and external stakeholders, this first stage consultation will guide the main principles of the strategy, ensuring that the framework meets the needs of all stakeholders. A draft document was available for further consultation in August, to be adopted in October.</p> <p>Discussions are ongoing with relevant officers on the management of FCC tree stock following formation of the single tree unit. An H&S funding application is to be made to enable a full risk assessment to be carried out.</p> <p>An application to WG is being put together which could see £80K of funding directed towards tree planting to improve visual and environmental quality.</p> <p>Green Infrastructure action plan for the Lower River Dee is complete and will go forward with the Flintshire Coast action plan to Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>The first claim for the final 'Year 6' of All Wales Coastal Improvement Programme was made on budget. Work is now underway by CCW to look at options for path management and maintenance post 2012, and the team has fed into that process to ensure Flintshire needs are considered.</p> <p>The Wepre Park Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application is on target to be submitted by the end of August. The development officer is finalizing documentation such as visitor centre extension plans, 10yr management plan, activity plan, conservation statements. The officer was successful in attracting £20K of Tidy-towns funding to improve the main car park environs which were not eligible under the HLF bid.</p> <p>Halkyn - The limekiln consolidation and interpretation project is ongoing and a conservation architect and project manager have been appointed following the submission of tenders with an inception meeting in July. The CADW application is still awaiting a decision, but CCW and the Grosvenor Estate have confirmed their funding for the next two years and there have been positive discussions with Cadwyn Clwyd for RDP funding.</p>

	<p>A Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee working group has been established and has met to consider options for governance of the AONB following extension. These recommendations will be put to the next JAC for consideration.</p> <p>Key figures: £9,200 -sponsorship, £35,000 -Coastal claim, £20,000 –Tidy-towns, £2312 -Misc. 552 volunteer hours managed 9 School groups and 445 children on our countryside education programme.</p>
<p>Minerals and Waste Shared Service for North Wales</p>	<p>The Minerals and Waste Planning Service for North Wales commenced with Flintshire as the lead authority on 1st April 2011 and has now been operational for 15 months.</p> <p>The Service has been active in every partner authority area, including Powys and Snowdonia National Park. Operational activity within the minerals aggregates sector remains depressed. However, reviews, changes in legislation, the introduction of legislation derived from the Mining Waste Directive, quarry closures and reactivation of quarries to replace closed units, and site restoration continues to generate planning work. Interest in specialist rock types is bucking the trend, and planning applications have been submitted for extensions to slate quarries in Gwynedd, and a Scoping Opinion has been requested for a gritstone quarry in Powys.</p> <p>Periodic and stalled mineral reviews continue to be progressed, and Environmental Impact Assessments for those quarries which are likely to continue working are being prepared or are under consideration. A programme for Prohibition and Suspension Orders will be rolled out this financial year to eliminate those sites where the resumption of working is considered unlikely. A number of such sites which have ceased to be operational have, or are, seeking alternative development proposals, such as housing, or landfill.</p> <p>There has been an increase in planning activity as a result of national legislative changes in the Environmental Permitting regime administered by the Environment Agency Wales. A number of waste management operations which previously benefited from “exemptions” to permitting now have to apply for a formal permit, and in many instances these lack planning permission. In some cases, applications are being submitted to retrospectively apply for planning permission or obtain Certificates of Lawful use to “regularise” the activity, and in other instances Environment Agency Wales prosecutions and planning enforcement proceedings are being commenced. This is likely to continue during the transitional period as unauthorised activity comes to light. Of particular note, an unauthorised waste recycling operation in Snowdonia National Park has just been refused planning permission, leading the way for enforcement proceedings.</p>

The removal of “exemptions” described above will reduce the availability of sites for the disposal of waste in golf courses, landscaping, land reclamation and agricultural improvement schemes, and closes the landfill tax exemption “loophole”. This has resulted in renewed interest in backfilling old quarries, including three sites in Flintshire, Wrexham and Denbighshire.

Interest in skip hire and materials recycling remains strong, and there are also signs that major investment in larger waste processing and treatment will take place this financial year.

Emphasis is being placed on the restoration and aftercare of former quarry and landfill sites, and biodiversity, geodiversity and recreational objectives are promoted where possible.

The Service has secured a 4 year contract for the North Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party from the Welsh Government, and there is the possibility of reviewing the Regional Waste Plan. The Service has provided a detailed consultation response to the Welsh Government’s Capacity, Infrastructure and Markets Sector Plan, which is part of the Welsh Government’s Zero Waste Strategy, and continues to have direct dialogue to achieve the best policy outcome.

The Service has commenced chargeable monitoring and reporting visits across North Wales and Flintshire, and is also carrying out other non-chargeable activities such as blast monitoring. These exercises will help raise compliance standards at operational quarry and landfill sites, and provide constructive dialogue to remedy any breaches of planning control that may be evident. A performance standard to be developed is to ensure that each site is monitored at least once in a given financial year.

The Service has also continued to provide support to Conwy, Denbighshire and Wrexham Planning Policy in preparation for their respective Local Development Plans.

The service also assists with queries and advice relating to the Aggregates Sustainability Levy Fund (which is derived from a tax on aggregate production), and a number of community-led projects across North Wales, and in particular, Flintshire, have been successful in securing funding as a result of sound advice provided by the Shared Service Team. Projects have included a BMX track and Community Hall at Treuddyn, to funding for rangers and the future preservation of Limekilns on Halkyn and Brynford Commons.

2. Performance Summary

2.1 Improvement Plan Monitoring

The following table summarises the progress made to date and progress against the desired outcome of the Council Improvement Priorities on which the Planning Service lead.





KEYS

Progress RAG

R	Limited Progress - delay in scheduled activity; not on track
A	Satisfactory Progress - some delay in scheduled activity, but broadly on track
G	Good Progress - activities completed on schedule, on track

Outcome RAG

R	Low - lower level of confidence in the achievement of outcome(s)
A	Medium - uncertain level of confidence in the achievement of the outcome(s)
G	High - full confidence in the achievement of the outcome(s)

	Target Date	Progress RAG	Outcome RAG	Commentary
6. To protect and grow the local and regional economy, to be a prosperous County and to provide help and support for those vulnerable to poverty				
6.1 Adoption of UDP	09.11			Section 3.1
8. To meet housing need in the County and to work with partners to ensure a sufficient supply of quality and affordable homes and housing services in the social , mixed tenure and private sector housing markets				
8.6 Implement Section 106 funding policy	On-going			Section 3.1

2.2 Strategic Assessment of Risks and Challenges (SARC)







The table below summarises the position of SARCS at the end of the reporting period.

KEY

R	High Risk
A	Medium Risk
G	Low Risk




Commentary is included in section 3 for those SARCS: -

- that are showing a Red RAG status
- where the RAG status has changed since the last reporting period
- where the Green Predictive Date has changed since the last reporting period
- where there has been considerable change or additions of secondary risks and activity

SARC	Previous RAG Status	Current RAG Status	Green Predictive
CL08 Climate Change and Flood Risk Management			TBC
CD03 Transition from UDP to LDP See 3.2			Sept 2017
CD04 Planning Protocol See 3.2			March 2012





2.3.1 Performance Indicators and Outcome Measures



Key

	Target missed
	Target missed but within an acceptable level
	Target achieved or exceeded

The status of the indicators are summarised for this quarter below:

 2  3  1

Indicator	Annual Target	Previous Quarter Outturn	Current Quarter Target	Current Quarter Outturn	RAG	Change e.g. Improved / Downturned
PLA/003 No. of Planning Appeals determined during quarter	66%	60%	66%	60%		Maintained
* PLA/004a % Major applications determined within 13 weeks during quarter	39%	15.38%	39%	50%		Improved
* PLA/004b % Minor applications determined within 8 weeks during quarter See section 3.3	65%	42.31%	65%	50%		Improved
PLA/004c % Householder applications determined within 8 weeks during quarter	90%	89.47%	90%	74.8%		Downturn

PLA/004d % Other applications determined within 8 weeks during the quarter	80%	42.86%	80%	44.44%		Improved
* PLA/005 % Enforcement cases resolved within 12 weeks See section 3.3	73%	77.61%	73%	62.59%		Downturn

* *Improvement Target*

2.3.2 Improvement Target Action Plan Monitoring

Key - ✓ on track, ✘ behind schedule, **C** completed

Ref	Action	Progress
PLA/004a	Performance monitoring on a 'case by case' basis	✓
	Improving extensive nature of pre-application discussions and adopting a Development Team approach to major projects	✓
PLA/004b	Performance monitoring on a 'case by case' basis	✓
	Review delegated scheme/ S106 procedures – partly completed	✓
PLA/005	LEAN review of Enforcement procedures completed	C
	Implement recommendations of LEAN review – partly completed	✓

2.4 Key Actions from Service Plan Monitoring

The following table shows the progress made against key areas of improvement/actions in the Planning service plan. A ✘ indicates those areas which have incurred slippage or have been subject to a revised timetable and references the page number where commentary can be found to further explain the slippage/revised timescales: -

Key - ✓ on track, ✘ behind schedule, **C** completed

Improvement Area	Progress	Commentary
Implementation of Development Management Manual	C	Although this is subject to continual review
Review of Enforcement Policy and Procedures	✓	See Section 3.4
Review of compliance with adopted procedures	✓	See Section 3.4

The following internal or external audit/regulatory work has been completed during the quarter and the outcome of the work can be summarised as follows. Negative outcomes are discussed in more detail in section 3 and page numbers are referenced in the table below.

Undertaken By	Title & Date Report Received	Overall Report Status
Internal Audit	CD0200P1 – Performance Indicators	✓

3. Exception Reporting

3.1 Improvement Plan Monitoring

6.1 – Adoption of UDP – Adopted at Council in September 2011. Commencement Order on Local Development Plan granted by Council in March 2012 and formal Order received from Welsh Government in June 2012.

8.6 – Implement Section 106 funding policy – Work in association with other North Wales authorities on S106 work and Community infrastructure Levy has resulted in finalised reports which identified best practice for both methods of securing community benefits. Local Planning Guidance Note on educational contributions now adopted by Flintshire County Council.

3.2 SARC

CD03 - Transition from UDP to LDP

The Green Predictive date has changed from the previously reported Dec 2011 to Sept 2017 as we are now clearer (following adoption of the UDP) when work on the LDP can be completed by. The September 2017 date will be referred to in our LDP Delivery Agreement with the Welsh Government which is due to be in place by the end of 2012.

3.3 Improvement Targets

The Planning Service has three **Improvement Targets** identified for 2012/13 and it will be noted that in relation to **PLA/004a** (Major applications determined within 13 weeks) the Quarter 1 performance (**50%**) is a significant improvement on Q4 (15.38%) and exceeds the current target. This indicator is, however, sensitive to being influenced by individual cases because of the low denominator (only eight major applications determined within the quarter, four of which were within the 13 weeks).

In relation to **PLA/004b** (Minor applications determined within 8 weeks), Q1 performance (**50%**) has improved in relation to Q4 (42.31%) but remains short of the target. Performance within this category has been influenced by a number of diverse factors, including the disruption to the schedule of Chairman's Delegation Panel meetings in the run up and in the aftermath to the local government elections, which also had an adverse impact on performance within the Householder category (PLA/004c).

In relation to the other Improvement Target, **PLA/005** (Enforcement cases resolved within 12 weeks), the performance within Quarter 1 (**62.59%**) has fallen in relation to the previous quarter (77.61%) and in relation to the target. Again, this is influenced by the relatively low number of cases resolved in June (24), many of them being long standing cases, which adversely affected the figure for the quarter.

3.4 Key Actions from Service Plan Monitoring

The robustness of the Enforcement procedures have been tested through the LEAN report (referred to in section 2.3.2) and compliance with them through the Audit report (referred to in section 2.5). It will be noted, however, that performance against the Improvement Target (PLA/005 –cases closed within 12 weeks) fell in Q1 as the team concentrated on resolving more complex, and therefore more time-consuming, cases.

The Development Management Manual (formerly DC Manual) is subject to continual review to reflect evolving procedure and changes emanating from Government policy and/or new legislation.