

# **Report of the Head of Economic Regeneration and Planning**

**Planning Committee – 10 November 2015**

## **PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Annual Performance Report (APR) was first proposed by Welsh Government as a result of their 'Positive Planning' consultation in December 2013, associated with proposals to modernise the planning system and improve the delivery of planning services in Wales.
- 1.2 The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 subsequently came into force on the 6<sup>th</sup> July 2015 and the APR is seen by Welsh Government as an important mechanism for the monitoring of Local Planning Authority performance against a key set of National performance indicators. The APR also provides the opportunity for Local Planning Authorities to set their performance in context, to articulate what it has done well and what steps it proposes to take to address areas of performance in need to improvement.
- 1.3 In this respect the APR represents an important tool for benchmarking the performance of Authorities across Wales but importantly must also be seen in the context of Welsh Government proposals to intervene where Local Planning Authorities exhibit consistent underperformance.
- 1.4 This Authority's APR, reviewing performance for the period 2014-15, is attached as Appendix 1 to this report for Member consideration and must be submitted to Welsh Government by 20<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

### **2.0 Context**

- 2.1 The Authority underwent a significant change process during 2014-15, partly as a result of budgetary pressures, and partly in response to Welsh Government proposals associated with the Planning (Wales) Act 2015.
- 2.2 In this respect the Planning Control Service underwent restructuring in August 2014 to accommodate the implications of ER/VR and a comprehensive review of its enforcement function and planning application process was also undertaken following the introduction of the Idox electronic document management system.
- 2.3 The Authority's Committee structures and scheme of delegation were also amended in January 2015 to broadly align with the recommendations of Welsh Government contained within its consultation document entitled 'Planning Committees, Delegation and Joint Planning Boards (October 2014)'.

### **3.0 Performance:**

- 3.1 The positive changes introduced during 2014-15 have significantly improved the Authority's development management performance in both qualitative and quantitative terms. This is not, however, fully reflected in returns for the APR given the timescales involved and the interim measures in place both prior to restructuring of the Planning Control service and following amendments to the Committee size, structures and scheme of delegation in January 2015.
- 3.2 That said, the average time taken to determine all planning applications at 64 days was significantly below the Welsh average of 74 days with the percentage of all applications determined within 8 weeks for Q3 and Q4 2014-15 being 80% compared to a Welsh average of 72%.
- 3.3 Similarly significant progress has been made in terms of reducing the backlog of outstanding enforcement cases, however, this has influenced performance relating to the speed of investigation and resolution of cases as the historic caseload is reduced.
- 3.3 The percentage of Member made decisions contrary to officer advice appears high and the percentage of appeals dismissed is also low compared to the Welsh average, however, Committee restructuring has resulted in an increase in delegation and a reduction in the total number of decisions made contrary to officer advice. This is not, however, reflected in performance in 2014/15 given the transitional measures in place during the last quarter of the last recording year.
- 3.2 LDP progress has been delayed over the past year whilst engaging with the public and hearing petitions on proposed sites to be allocated in the Plan. Whilst this has provided a robust basis on which to move forward it has added some 9 months to the process. The ongoing failure to identify a gypsy and traveller site under the provisions of the UDP has, however, had a knock-on effect on the LDP which will be found unsound if advanced without meeting gypsy and traveller needs.

### **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 This year's APR provides a useful tool to benchmark the Authority's performance against other Authorities in Wales and to monitor progress in future years. It also demonstrates that the Authority has already made significant progress in addressing areas of performance that were in need of improvement and in embracing the Welsh Government's agenda for the modernisation of the planning system in Wales.
- 4.2 Moving forward the Authority faces significant budgetary pressures at a time of transformational change for the City and its region and it is inevitable that difficult decisions will have to be made regarding the Authority's priorities and service levels in the future.

## **Background papers:**

Draft Planning (Wales) Bill and Positive Planning: proposals to reform the planning system in Wales published 04/12/2013 -

<http://gov.wales/consultations/planning/draft-planning-wales-bill/?lang=en>

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