



## Swansea Local Planning Authority (LPA)

### PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) – 2015-2016

#### PREFACE

Introduction to the report by the Cabinet Member responsible for the planning service, or equivalent.

*I have the pleasure of introducing the first Annual Performance Report (APR) for the City and County of Swansea's Planning Service. APR's have been introduced as part of Welsh Government proposals, embodied with the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, to modernise the planning system and improve local delivery of planning services. The Council's Planning Service is responsible for protecting the amenity and environment of our city and countryside in the public interest and facilitating sustainable development and the economic regeneration of our urban and rural areas. This is achieved though having an up to date planning policy framework in place which sets out a clear vision for future growth and development of the City and County against which planning applications can be determined. The Council's planning policy framework is currently being reviewed and, at a time of transformational change in the Swansea Bay and City Region, the APR provides a mechanism for ensuring that the Planning Service is responding positively to the challenges of evolving national planning guidance and the goals of sustainable development. The Planning Service presents the most tangible means of translating the Council's corporate objectives and regeneration agenda into development on the ground with the overall aim of improving the quality of life for local residents and building more sustainable communities.*

**Councillor Robert Francis-Davies, Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development and Regeneration**

#### CONTEXT

- 1.0 This section sets out the planning context within which the local planning authority operates.**
- 1.1 The City and County of Swansea covers an area of 378 square kilometres (about 2% of the area of Wales), approximately 66% of which is rural and 34% urban. The City is the second largest in Wales and the regional centre for South West Wales.
- 1.2 Latest population estimates stand at 241,300 (2014), which represents almost 8% of the total population of Wales. The population is growing by around 1300 per annum.
- 1.3 Swansea contains around 110,100 dwellings, with 67% of all stock owner-occupied. The 2014 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation identified 12% of Swansea's local areas as falling within the top 10% most deprived in Wales.
- 1.4 Swansea is a centre of learning - home to Swansea University, University of Wales Trinity St. David and Gower College Swansea, which in total support around 20,000 full-time students.

1.5 GVA (Gross Value Added) per head in Swansea stands at £17,445, slightly above the Wales level but over 25% below the UK average. 75% of Swansea's working age residents are economically active and 106,000 people work in Swansea, mostly in the service sectors, with over 30% employed in the public sector. Over 29,000 people commute into Swansea each day.

1.6 Estimates suggest 4.47 million people visited Swansea Bay in 2014 spending £390 million.

## **2.0 Planning background, including previous adopted or abandoned development plans.**

2.1 City and County of Swansea Unitary Development Plan (UDP) adopted 2008, covers the period 2001 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016.

2.2 The replacement Local Development Plan (LDP), currently at Deposit Stage, will provide the future policy context for the period up to 2025

## **3.0 Place and fit within the community strategy and/or wider strategic and operational activity of the authority.**

3.1 A Single Integrated Plan (SIP) known as the One Swansea Plan has replaced the community strategy and the plans for community safety; health, social care and wellbeing; and children and young people. The SIP, which is reviewed and updated annually by the Swansea Local Service Board, has adopted the LDP vision as its vision for Swansea as a place to live, work and visit. The planning system is specifically identified as the mechanism for delivering this vision.

3.2 The SIP has six identified outcomes linked to services and projects, all of which are supported by the planning system, including ensuring people have good places to live and work, have a decent standard of living and can live healthy, safe and independent lives.

3.3 The current UDP and emerging LDP also seek to deliver the land use objectives expressed in other Council strategies, plans and programmes, whilst the evidence gathered for the LDP, such as household projections, retail impact assessment, strategic transport modelling, etc is being used to inform other strategies and wider corporate action, such as the Local Housing Strategy, City Centre Strategic Framework Review, and the Local Transport Plan.

## **4.0 Existing and previous major influences on land use (e.g. heavy industrial, agricultural, energy, transport).**

4.1 Swansea had a pioneering role in Britain's Industrial Revolution. It was a world leader in the smelting of copper, and a centre for the mining of coal and manufacture of tinplate, steel and other metals. Since the decline of these heavy industries, the area has suffered a loss of identity.

- 4.2 National policy supports employment growth within the Swansea Bay region, and there is a requirement to align jobs with housing and infrastructure to reduce the need to travel, especially by car. Current local policy focuses on generating wealth by diversifying the economy away from public sector employment and growing a higher value knowledge economy (life sciences, technology and engineering) that offers higher skilled and better paid employment opportunities. There are a number of projects to help deliver these objectives which are likely to be continued throughout the LDP period, with initiatives such as the ongoing transformation of Swansea's Fabian Way corridor by two universities, plans for the redevelopment of the City Centre and Waterfront area, together with the Tidal Lagoon and new super-hospital proposals.
- 4.3 Between 2001 and 2011 the average property price in Swansea rose by 124.8%. The West of the County now contains some of the more expensive dwellings in South Wales, whilst the North and East of the County contain generally much lower house prices. Since 2006, the average house price to average household income/earnings ratio in Swansea has reduced from over 7 times income to less than 6. However, despite this improvement, the lower availability of mortgage finance for first time buyers means that aspiring households still cannot afford to buy. Almost half of the 35% of households in Swansea that are non-homeowners have annual incomes of under £10,000, and three-quarters have incomes of less than £20,000 per annum. These households can realistically only afford social rented accommodation and in most cases need Housing Benefit support to meet the cost of social rent.
- 4.4 As a result, many developers have put schemes on hold and/or scaled down their building activities. In recent years new house build completions are down by around a third of the average for the past decade. Combined with this, a shortfall in supply of market and affordable housing across Wales has resulted in an intensification of needs, the growth of the private rented sector in response to the fall in supply of other sectors and increasing numbers of conversions of existing housing stock to HMOs.

## **5.0 Historic/landscape setting of the area, including AONBs, conservation areas etc.**

- 5.1 Over 50% of the County's area is identified as being of significant ecological interest. Nearly 70% of the habitats and at least 20% of species identified as being of importance for biodiversity conservation in the UK can be found in the County, and approximately 17% of the County's area is protected by designations at a European (SAC, SPA, RAMSAR) or National (SSSI, NNR) level.
- 5.2 The landscape is of critical importance within the County, as it provides a striking setting for the City and at least 40% of the County (the Gower AONB) is recognised as being landscape of national importance. Most of the AONB coastline is also designated as Heritage Coast which extends for 59km. Gower attracts large numbers of visitors and tourism is very important for the local economy.

- 5.3 There are currently 31 Conservation Areas and 519 Listed Buildings within the County, many of which are characterised as having good authentic surviving historic features that still contribute to the distinctive, special character of the area. However, some Conservation Areas have been degraded in character due to inappropriate alterations to the external features of buildings, or new developments that are out of keeping with the character of the area. The character and size of Conservation Areas can vary greatly, from very small rural hamlets with a cluster of buildings around a church, to urban areas of buildings originally constructed for industrial and commercial purposes.
- 5.4 Most of Swansea's Conservation Areas were designated in the late 1960's and 1970's and therefore, the published documentation supporting these earlier Conservation Areas is often limited. This limits the amount of information available upon which development management decisions in Conservation Areas can be based. A programme of Conservation Areas Review is therefore underway

## **6.0 Urban rural mix and major settlements.**

- 6.1 The County can be broadly divided into four physical areas: the open moorlands of the Lliw Uplands in the north; the rural Gower Peninsula in the west, containing a number of rural villages, contrasting coasts and the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); the suburban area stretching from the edge of Swansea towards settlements in the west and along the M4 corridor; and the coastal strip around Swansea Bay, which includes the city centre and adjacent district centres.
- 6.2 Some two-thirds of the county's boundary is with the sea - the Burry Inlet, Bristol Channel and Swansea Bay.
- 6.3 Most of the population live within the urban areas radiating from the City Centre and in the surrounding nearby urban settlements. There are also rural / semi-rural settlements in and around the edges of Gower and to the north.
- 6.4 The Northern, Eastern and Central parts of the County have historically supported significant levels of housebuilding. The regeneration of the retail heart of the City Centre through mixed use development, including the reintroduction of residential units into the central area, has been seen as a particularly important means of breathing life back into the City. There has been major investment in infrastructure and environmental improvements, and these areas are well located for access to a wide range of employment opportunities. Development has been encouraged within the Maritime Quarter, SA1 and Lower Swansea Valley riverfront areas to reinforce the image and role of Swansea as a 'Waterfront City'.
- 6.5 Within the North West part of the County development has been concentrated on the settlements of Gorseinon, Loughor, Penllergaer and Pontarddulais in support of regeneration initiatives and local employment centres. This has included significant levels of housebuilding over the past decade.

6.6 West Swansea was the focus for the greatest boom in post war building and is now largely built-out to its environmental limits. Beyond this area the Gower Fringe is characterised by rural and semi-rural areas, including the settlements of Penclawdd, Crofty, Dunvant, Three Crosses, Upper Killay and Bishopston, where development has historically been limited to infill and small scale rounding off. Within the Gower AONB restrictive housing policies have historically been applied, however small-scale affordable housing development required to satisfy the overriding economic or social needs of a local community may be permitted.

## **7.0 Population change and influence on LDP/forthcoming revisions.**

7.1 The County has a population of 241,300 (mid-2014, ONS estimates) - the second largest unitary authority in Wales. Official estimates suggest that between 2004 and 2014, Swansea's population increased by 13,100 - an average annual growth of around 1,300 people (0.6%). 104,800 households live in Swansea, with an average household size of approximately 2.25 people. A falling average household size can be attributed to the significant rise of single-person households who now account for a third of all households.

7.2 Comparison of the age structure for Swansea against the Wales average shows a higher proportion of young adults, which is largely associated with the significant local student population. Numbers of those of pensionable age are comparable with the Welsh average; however the older population is projected to grow as a result of better health and associated improvements in life expectancy. Life expectancy at birth in Swansea now stands at 77.6 years for males (Wales 78.3) and 82.1 for females (Wales 82.3)

7.3 78% of the population were born in Wales, with 11.4% of people aged three and over able to speak Welsh. The latest official estimates suggest a non-white ethnic population of around 14,300 - 6.0% of Swansea's total population. 34.9% of Swansea's residents (aged 16-64) are qualified to NVQ level 4 (Degree level) and above.

7.4 The population of Swansea is projected to grow to over 250,000 by 2025 as a result of birth rates exceeding death rates and net in-migration. The County will need sufficient new homes, additional employment opportunities and improved infrastructure and community facilities to support this level of growth and raise standards of living.

7.5 Key influences on the LDP include:

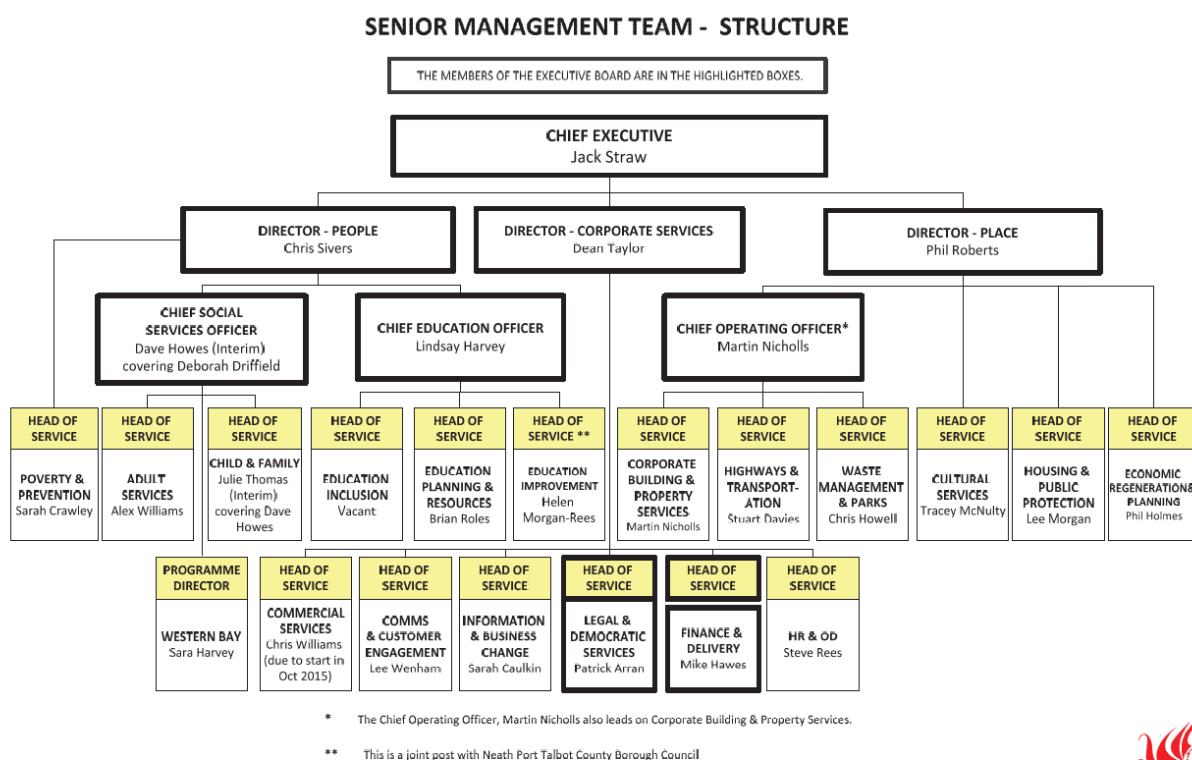
- The link between housing land supply and support for local economic growth - the LDP seeks to provide for over 17000 new dwellings and support 14000 new jobs,
- Supply of new house building not keeping pace with demand as the local population grows,
- A shortfall of affordable housing across the County with the recession increasing the demand for such housing,
- Need for greater variety of size and tenure mix within new housing developments to contribute towards sustainable balanced communities,
- The age and condition of the current social, and to a lesser extent, private housing stock means that substantial improvement is required, particularly in relation to energy efficiency,
- Designing houses to meet the needs of an increasingly elderly population to live independently for as long as possible,
- The lack of suitable alternative accommodation for the elderly.

## PLANNING SERVICE

This section should in the main be drawn from sections prepared and approved for department's internal service report.

- 8.0 Setting within wider organisation, including organisation chart. How is the department structured? What is the reporting line to the Chief Executive? Are the development management and forward planning team co-located? Are they headed by a single separate head of service? If not, do they report along the same lines?

Chart 1 - Organisational Structure

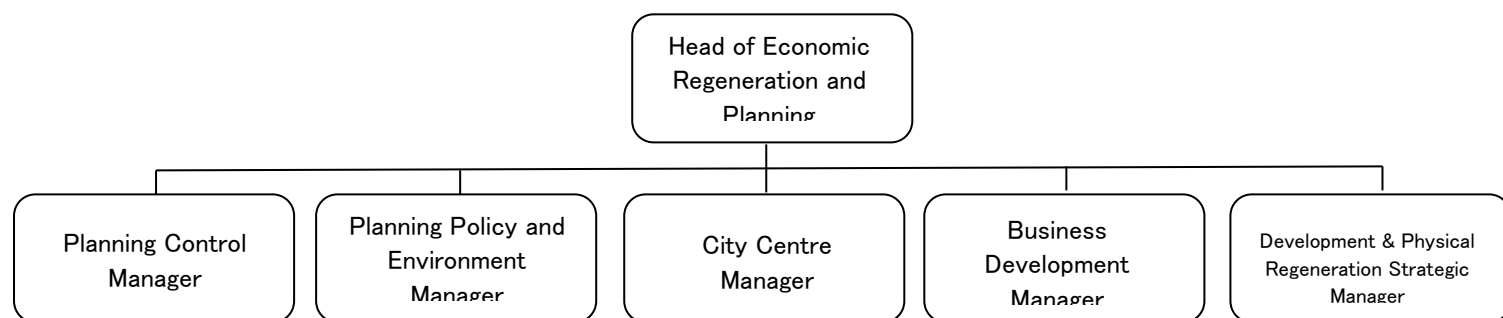


City and County of Swansea  
Dinas a Sir Abertawe



- 8.1 The Council is organised into three Corporate Directorates reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer, as detailed in Chart 1 above. Both the development management and forward planning functions sit within the Economic Regeneration and Planning Service under a single Head of Service who reports to the Director of Place.
- 8.2 As detailed in Chart 2 below the Economic Regeneration and Planning Section, itself, is organised into 5 separate service areas namely Planning Control, Planning Policy and Environment, City Centre Management, Business Development and Development and Physical Regeneration.

**Chart 2 – Organisational Structure**



**9.0 Wider organisational activities impacting on the service – how has the department responded to financial constraints imposed during budget setting? What cross departmental activities has the department been involved in or been affected by, e.g. closer joint working in advance of Williams implementation, IT changes, real estate rationalisation?**

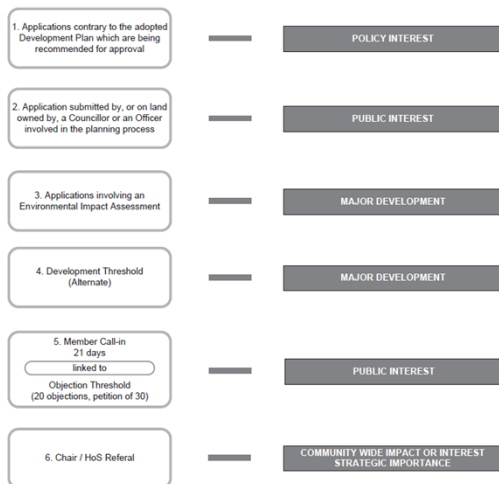
- 9.1 The planned budget savings target for Economic Regeneration and Planning Section for the period 2014/15-2017/18 is £1,190,000. This target is currently under review with the aim of providing up to 50% savings over the next 3 financial years.
- 9.2 The Planning Policy and Environment Service is also currently undergoing a review of its structure in response to these budgetary pressures, to accommodate the retirement of the Planning Policy and Environment Manager at the end of February 2016 and to meet current planned budget savings of £1110,000 over the period 2014/15-2017/18.
- 9.3 With a view to meeting this target the Planning Control Service has undergone a significant change process in an attempt to address current planned budgets savings of in excess of £460,000 over the same period.
- 9.4 This includes an ongoing year on year reduction of staff costs in the Planning Control service of £230k including, to-date, the loss of a Team Leader post, 4 Administration Officer posts and a Conservation Officer in the Urban Design and Conservation Team. Fee income targets in the budget have been increased for planning applications (+£50k) and fees were introduced for pre-application advice (+£50k target) and S106 monitoring (+£10k target) on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. Costs associated with the loss of the Planning Improvement Fund grant (£70k) have also been absorbed within the budget. In addition to efficiency savings detailed below, press advertising costs have also been reduced through contract re-negotiation (£25k saving).
- 9.5 Within the Planning Control Service an electronic document management system has been introduced to improve efficiency and processes and procedures have been reviewed using “Systems Thinking” methodology to remove blockages and double handling in the system.
- 9.6 The Planning Control Service was also restructured in August 2014 and job descriptions were rationalised to accommodate staff savings and ER/VR and to provide flexible working for example, planning and enforcement officers now have the same job descriptions, as do all technicians and all administrative staff on the same grade.

- 9.7 Historically the Service area was organised into two separate Area Development Control Teams, a Major Projects Team, a separate Enforcement and Appeals Team, a team of Technicians, DC Admin and a General Admin Teams, together with an Urban Design and Conservation Team.
- 9.8 The new structure detailed in Chart 4 at paragraph 11.1 below comprises of three self-contained Area Teams incorporating development control, enforcement and technical staff, a single Business Support Ream providing administrative support and a rationalised Urban Design and Conservation Team.
- 9.9 The Council’s Committee structure was also amended in January 2015 to align with the recommendations of Welsh Government contained within its consultation document entitled “Planning Committees, Delegation and Joint Planning Boards (October 2014)”. In this respect the two former Area Planning Control Committees, the Rights of Way Sub-Committee and the Development, and Management and Control Committee comprising of all 72 Councillors have been amalgamated to form one single Planning Committee of 12 members dealing with all planning and rights of way issues.
- 9.10 In addition the Authority’s scheme of delegation has also been amended broadly in line with the National Scheme of Delegation recommended in the above referenced Welsh Government consultation document and as detailed in Chart 3 below. The Chair of Planning Committee, however, has referral and veto powers in certain circumstances and the Head of Service can also refer applications of strategic significant to Committee for decision.

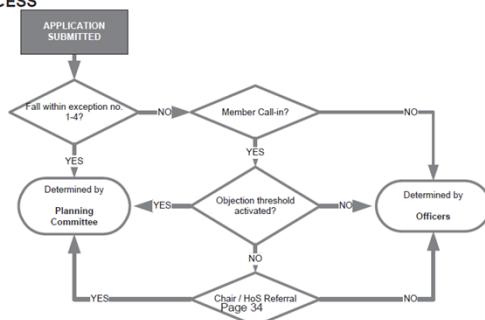
**Chart 3 – Scheme of Delegation**

Member Call-In linked to objection threshold:

**STRUCTURE**



**PROCESS**





9.11 The Authority is currently in dialogue with Neath Port Talbot CBC following the procurement of the Idox replacement back office system by both Authorities with shared hosting facilities. This will provide further opportunities for efficiency savings and shared working.

**10.0 Operating budget – including budget trend over 3 years, and fee income. Does the planning department retain fee income? Is this used to calculate its operating budget? Has a discrepancy between expected fee income and actuals affected the forward planning or operational activity of the department?**

10.1 The operating budget dedicated specifically to the development management and forward planning functions is difficult to establish as staff within the Planning Control and Planning Policy and Environment Service areas input into a range of functions including central administration for the Section as a whole, Rights of Way, Sustainability, Ecology and AONB functions and land charges for which fee income is not retained.

10.2 Whilst the overall budget for Planning Control and Planning Policy and Environment has reduced over the past three years fee income has risen since 2010/11 as illustrated in Table 1 below:

**Table 1 – Planning Application Fee Income**

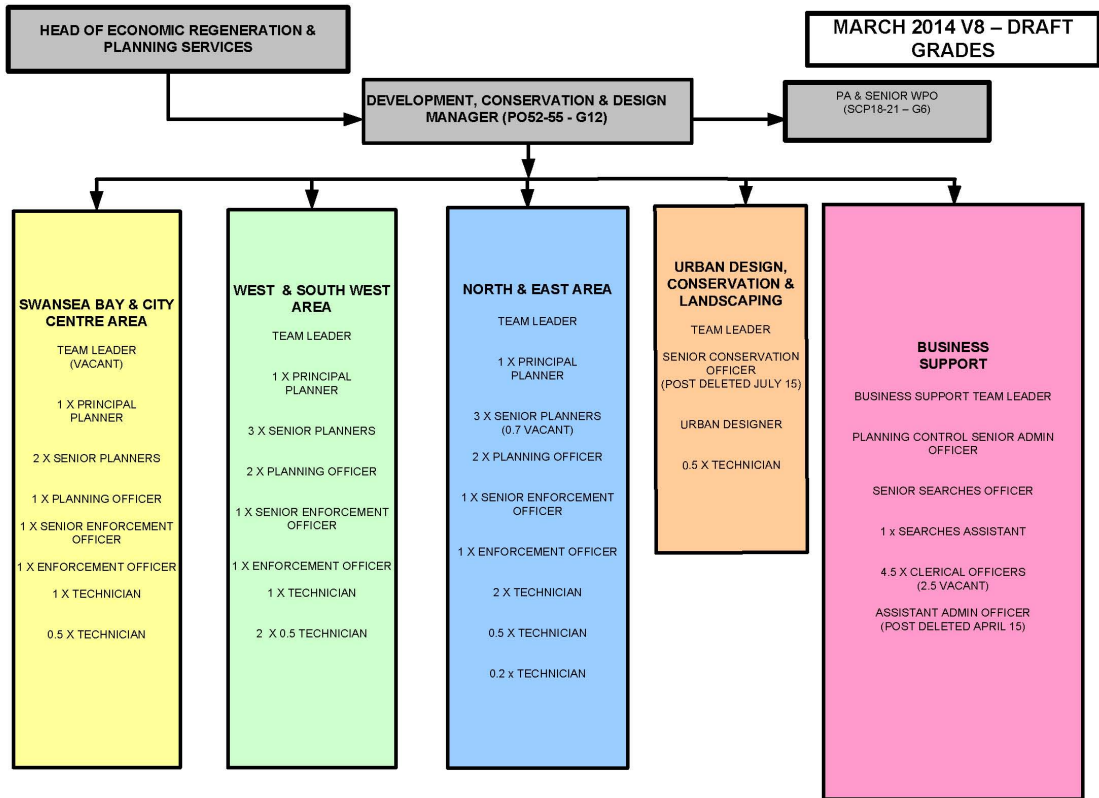
Income (£)	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Target	1,010,000	780,000	639,000	639,000	689,000	787,600
Actual	870,572	589,069	670,199	908,679	841,171	957,352

10.3 Fee income is retained within the Planning Control Section budget which is, however, set demanding fee income targets for each financial year to cover a growing proportion of the costs of the Service. This places a heavy emphasis on fee income as a means of sustaining the core business of the Service and represents a significant risk to service delivery should fee income fall or fee income targets be increased further to accommodate budget savings.

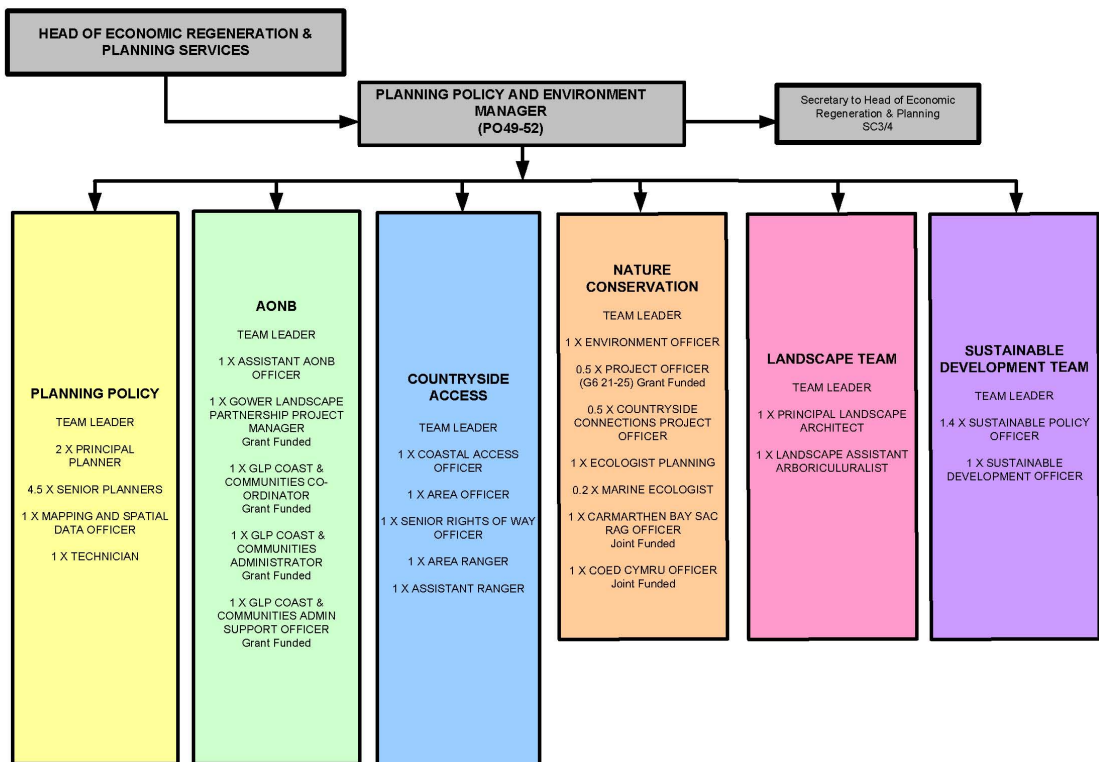
**11.0 Staff issues – what is the current staffing level of the department? What are the current plans for staff skills development and succession planning? Are any vacancies being carried? Has the service had to manage with redundancies (with reference to budget section above)? Has a loss of skills through sickness absence or other reasons, adversely affected the department? What are the coping mechanisms for this?**

11.1 The current staffing structure for Planning Control and Planning Policy and Environment is summarised in Chart 4 and 5 below respectively:

**Chart 4 – Planning Control Structure**



**Chart 5 – Planning Policy & Environment Structure**



- 11.2 As part of previous rounds of budget savings the Planning Control Section carries a vacancy provision in its budget equivalent to 12.5% of its total staff costs to be met through holding posts vacant on an ongoing basis. It currently carries one vacant Team Leader post, 2.5 vacant posts and two members of staff on temporary contracts in its Business Support Team. It also has a number of staff members working reduced or family friendly hours.
- 11.3 As detailed above the Section has been restructured and job descriptions rationalised to provide more flexible working. Through on the job training, staff from previously discrete teams e.g. DC Admin. and General Admin. carry out a much wider range of functions. An Urban Design post and Buildings Conservation Officer post have been merged to form a single post with the loss of heritage skills now being carried by the Team Leader.
- 11.4 Responsibility and authority has also been delegated further down the staff structure to accommodate a reduction in Team Leaders as a result of restructuring and to help facilitate change.
- 11.5 Upskilling and reskilling of staff in this way is an ongoing process but is seen as a robust mechanism to manage the risk to the Service as ongoing budget cuts bite deeper and harder.

#### **YOUR LOCAL STORY**

- 12.0 Workload. What are the current planning pressures the service is facing? What is the status of the LDP? Is development/monitoring/revision proceeding as planned? What is the impact on support of development management services, e.g. for master planning? What is the DM workload per officer?**
- 12.1 Development management pressures stem from a year on year increase in the number of planning applications received from 1482 in 2012/13 to 1832 in 2014/15 reflecting both an upturn in the development industry but also the additional number of applications submitted under the new non material amendment procedure introduced by Welsh Government. This has had the effect of increasing applications but reducing fee income for some developments which would previously have required the submission of a revised planning application. The number of planning applications received per case officer (FTE) was 146 per annum in 2014/15. This excludes the provision of pre-application advice, and appeals and input into the change process described above, enforcement cases, corporate projects and initiative and policy/SPG formulation.
- 12.2 The Planning Control Service was also under interim management arrangements until restructuring in August 2014 which has had an impact upon performance during the first and second quarters of 2014/15.
- 12.3 There has also been a review of the enforcement service by Scrutiny Working Group and significant political pressure to resolve an historic underinvestment in the enforcement service which had resulted in a build up of a significant enforcement backlog, with 674 outstanding cases being investigated by the Authority in July 2014.

- 12.4 Unpredictable workload associated with the submission of NSIP applications such as the Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon and Abergelli Power, significant appeals and a compensation claim in respect of an Article 4 Direction has also had a significant impact upon available staff resources and the Planning Control budget.
- 12.5 Significant planning policy pressures include the current UDP approaching the end of the plan period; the lack of a five year housing land supply; advancing strategic LDP sites ahead of adoption of the plan; and the viability of introducing a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- 12.6 The UDP covers the period until the end of 2016, after which time, and until the adoption of the LDP (anticipated late 2017), there will be a local planning policy vacuum. Coupled with a housing land supply shortage, this could potentially result in speculative planning applications being submitted for housing development on currently unallocated Greenfield land outside settlement boundaries. To attempt to address this, a guidance note for developers on 'departure' applications is currently being prepared. The note, which is due to be reported to Planning Committee for endorsement in November, puts in place a clear strategy for dealing with the housing land shortfall and prioritises early applications on appropriate LDP Sites, and in particular on Strategic Sites and sites for affordable housing.
- 12.7 Most of the Strategic Sites will deliver wider physical infrastructure improvements and are in the process of being master-planned. However there may be some gaps in infrastructure provision, particularly in relation to highways improvements that may need to be funded by CIL. Further research needs to be undertaken to establish whether CIL would be viable.
- 13.0 Reference to the Annual Monitoring Report (as an attachment). In the absence of an AMR, the authority should report on its progress towards adoption of the LDP, and any key issues arising in the year.**
- 13.1 LDP progress has been significantly delayed over the past year whilst engaging with the public on proposed sites to be allocated in the Plan. Members heard petitioners, visited sites and considered representations during a process which lasted 9 months. In addition, the ongoing failure to identify a gypsy and traveller site under the provisions of the UDP has had a knock-on effect on the LDP which will be found unsound if advanced without meeting gypsy and traveller needs.
- 13.2 Progress has however been made on LDP background evidence, including:
- Strategic Highway Network Capacity Study and assessment of impact of proposed Strategic Sites
  - 2014 & 2015 Joint Housing Land Availability Studies (JHLAS) published
  - Green Wedge/settlement boundary review completed
  - Ongoing Strategic Site Master planning including preparation of cross-boundary SPG for Fabian Way Innovation Corridor
  - Swansea City Centre Strategic Framework Review completed
  - Retail & Leisure Capacity Study completed
  - Housing Market Assessment Updated
  - Sustainability Appraisal of all LDP Candidate Sites

- 14.0 Current projects. Any specific items of research, best practice development or other initiatives being undertaken within the planning service. Examples could include a “development team” approach to major applications, work on a Local Development Order or process reviews.**
- 14.1 Joint Supplementary Planning Guidance has been drafted with Neath Port Talbot BC for the Fabian Way innovation corridor. It is a strategic site in the LDP and is due to be subject of public consultation later this year. Masterplans are also being produced for the other proposed LDP Strategic Sites.
- 14.2 Joint working with NPT and the agreement of a Memorandum of Understanding with Tidal Lagoon Swansea has assisted effective working between the relevant service areas from both Authorities and Natural Resources Wales.
- 14.3 Introduction of the Idox back office system to replace Northgate M3 and associated process change with potential for joint working with Neath Port Talbot CBC.
- 14.4 Review of the enforcement process in conjunction with Legal Services to reduce failure demand and improve efficiency.
- 15.0 Local pressures. Major applications or other planning issues having a disproportionate impact on the efficiency of the service. Could include specific development pressures, enforcement issues such as major site restoration issues, monitoring compliance of conditions with non-devolved consents (e.g. wind energy applications) or applications of national significance (e.g. LNG storage site).**
- 15.1 Responding to the Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon NSIP application has had a significant impact on the Service and the Authority as whole. One Team Leader plus support staff were dedicated to furnishing the application process within Planning Control alone with significant input from colleagues in Services such as Pollution Control, Ecology, Highways. Significant external specialist expertise also had to be commissioned and resourced from existing budget.
- 16.0 Service improvement. What were the recommendations of the previous service improvement plan? In future years, this will also refer to actions identified in the previous Annual Performance Report (ideally they will share actions). For each of these:**
- 1. Have they been implemented?**
  - 2. If no, what are the obstacles and what is being done to overcome them?**
  - 3. If yes, have positive changes been observed as a result?**
  - 4. Have any secondary or new issues emerged to be addressed?**
  - 5. What are the next steps, if any?**

- 16.1 The Services Business Plan identified a number of key actions for Planning Control which are Summarised as follows:
- Planning Improvement Services project,
  - Continued review of the democratic processes in line with the findings of the Wales Audit Office AIR & follow-up work,
  - Address Burry Inlet constraint to Development,
  - Member Training,
  - Completion of Corporate Property's Universal Asset Review,
  - Implementation of the Section 106 Register,
  - Deliver an agreed programme of Conservation Area Appraisals,
  - Implement Buildings at Risk Strategy.
- 16.2 The Planning Improvement Services Project included the restructuring of the Service which was complete in August 2014 and the introduction of revised business processes which were completed by January 2015. This has facilitated significant improvement to key elements of performance of the development management and enforcement functions in Quarter 3 and 4 of 2014/15.
- 16.3 The Authority's democratic processes were reviewed, structures amended and scheme of delegation changed in January 2015 broadly in line with Welsh Government recommendations contained within its consultation document entitled "Planning Committees, Delegation and Joint Planning Boards (October 2014)". External training has also been provided for Members of the new Planning Committee. This has facilitated an increase in delegation and reduction in the levels of Member overturns although not fully reflected in performance for 2014/15 given the transitional arrangement in place for the final quarter of that year.
- 16.4 Burry Inlet issues remain a significant potential constraint to development and is being addressed through a Memorandum of Understanding between Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water, Natural Resources Wales, Carmarthen and Swansea Council's. This is subject to review to provide a focus on capacity issues.
- 16.5 A Housing Land Availability, CIL and Section 106 Monitoring Database has been procured and populated. Revised processes have also been established and have been subject to internal Audit and scrutiny by Audit Committee to ensure that a robust mechanism is in place for the monitoring of Obligations. The Authority's Universal Property Review, which provides advice on Council sites subject to asset disposal, has also been completed.
- 16.6 Progress on delivering a programme of Conservation Area Appraisals has been delayed as a result of staff restructuring and the loss of one FTE within this small Team of specialists. The Fynone Conservation Appraisal is, however, at an advanced stage and is scheduled for adoption in December 2015.
- 16.7 Significant work has been completed on the Buildings at Risk Strategy with grant funding secured and work to key listed buildings at risk, including at the Hafod/Morfa Copperworks, Palace Theatre, Danbert House, Scotts Pit and Roman Bridge, completed or progressed during the year. A summary of the work to-date is summarised below:

**Table 2- Listed Buildings at Risk**

Listed buildings repaired and no longer at risk	7
Listed buildings still at risk that have been subject to urgent repairs	7
Vulnerable listed buildings that have been repaired	11
Current number of listed buildings at risk	40 (7.8%)
Current number of vulnerable listed buildings	80 (15.5%)
Listed buildings not at risk	(76.7%)

16.8 The Services Business Plan identified a number of key actions for the Planning Policy and Environment Section which are reproduced below:

- Progress the preparation of the Local Development Plan,
- Undertake and complete assessments to inform the evidence base for LDP.

16.9 LDP preparation is progressing behind the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, however, an amended Delivery Agreement was agreed with Welsh Government in June 2013.

**17.0 Performance Framework. What are the identified areas for improvement set out in Annex A? What steps will the authority take to address these? How will they be resourced? How will success be measured?**

17.1 The Delivery Agreement was reviewed in 2013 and the LDP is being progressed within 12 months of the revised date. A further revision is currently being prepared.

17.2 Once a Delivery Agreement has been revised beyond 18 months of the original dates specified there is little possibility of recovering slippage time, and the original agreement is in any superseded. It is considered that the performance measure should be refined to follow the most recent Delivery Agreement.

17.3 The Councils current land supply stands at 3 years. Given that the Council is currently preparing the LDP, it does not consider it necessary at this stage to produce a formal review of the UDP housing land supply (e.g. by producing an Interim Housing Land Policy Statement). Furthermore this would cause confusion with, and ultimately delay, the LDP preparation process. However, in the interim, the Council is seeking to bring forward certain sites identified in the LDP Preferred Strategy which are recommended for inclusion in the Deposit LDP. This applies to sites that represent a departure to the adopted UDP policy framework which will not prejudice the Council's future growth strategy, as well as sites within the current settlement boundary. In particular the Council will prioritise strategic sites and also 'exception' sites that will deliver a high proportion of affordable housing. Prioritising Strategic Sites is necessary to ensure the high unit numbers attributed to these sites can be fully delivered over the Plan period up to 2025.

- 17.4 In efficiency terms the Authority has seen a significant improvement in performance since restructuring in August 2014 with the percentage of all applications determined within 8 weeks rising to 84% in Q3 and 75% in Q4 2014/15.
- 17.5 The Authority sets a local target of 13 weeks for the determination of major applications which is considered to be a more realistic target given the average time to determine major applications in Wales last year was 206 days. 34% of all major applications were determined within this time whilst the average time for the determination of all major applications at 247 days was heavily influenced by the determination of a number of very old applications.
- 17.6 More accurately recording of timescales in relation to applications subject to S106 Planning Obligations and taking fuller advantage of provisions for the extension of time will help improve performance against this measure.
- 17.7 The Authority proposes to carry out a further review of its processes and procedures as part of the introduction of a replacement back office system in April 2016. Whilst this may have a short term impact upon performance it is anticipated that this will reduce the administrative burden associated with current incompatible systems and bring about opportunities further efficiency savings.
- 17.8 The percentage of Member made decisions contrary to officer advice appears high compared to the Welsh average although the way this is measured has changed since the previous year which appeared to represent a percentage of all decisions rather than those decision made by Members.
- 17.9 As detailed above the Authority amended its Committee structures and scheme of delegation in January 2015 to broadly align with Welsh Government proposals. This 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 this recording year.
- 17.10 Enforcement performance has been under significant scrutiny by the Authority and through the Authorities Scrutiny Working Group following the build-up of a significant backlog of enforcement cases as a result of historic under resourcing of the section.
- 17.11 Following restructuring in August 2014 additional staff resources have been allocated to the enforcement of planning control resulting in a significant reduction in the backlog of outstanding enforcement cases from in excess of 650 cases in August 2014 to some 500 in April 2015. This has had an impact upon the percentage of cases resolved within the required timescales.
- 17.12 The enforcement process and procedures are, however, currently subject to further review, in conjunction with Legal Services, with a view to removing blockages and failure demand in the system and improving efficiency.
- 17.13 The above improvements will have to be resourced from existing budget with difficult decisions having to be made regarding priorities to accommodate identified budget savings with improvement measured against existing suite of measures and Pl's.



## WHAT SERVICE USERS THINK

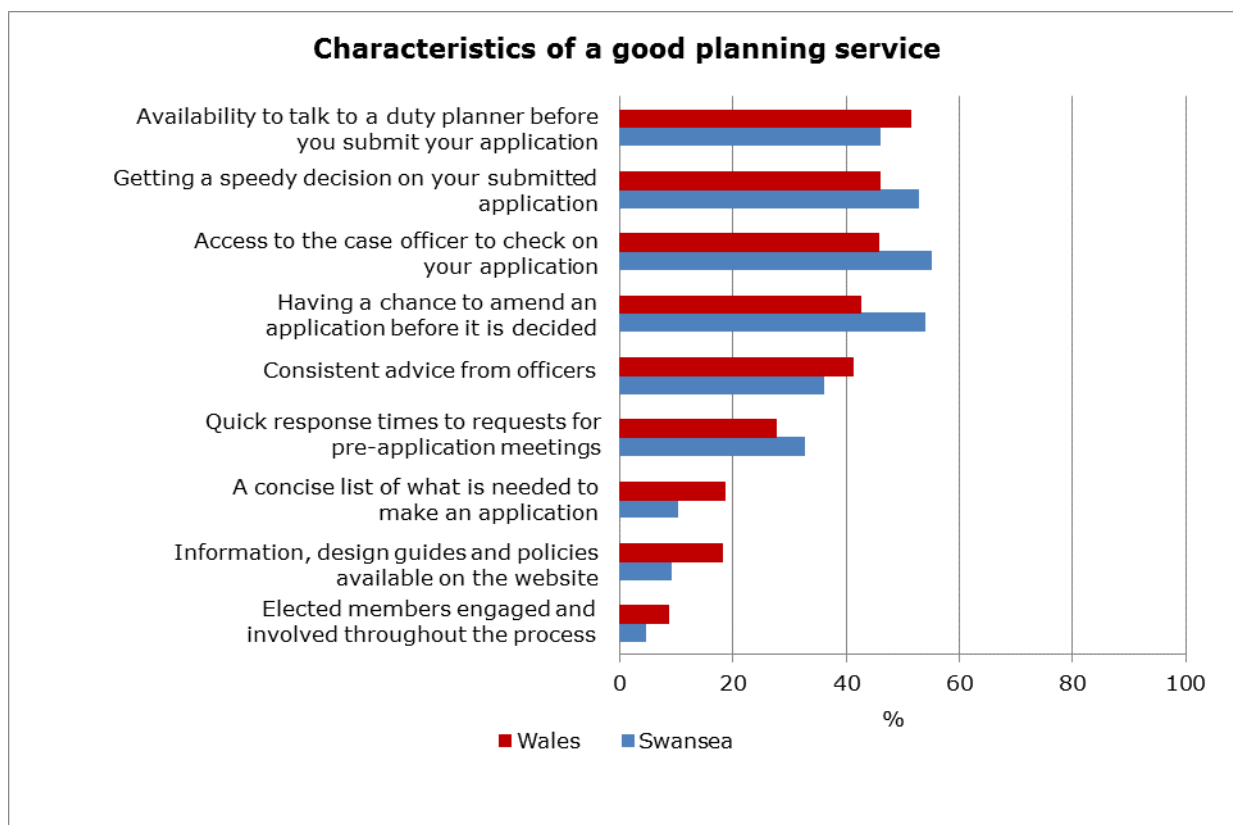
- 17.14 In 2014-15 the Wales Data Unit conducted two customer satisfaction surveys on behalf of the Planning Officers Society Wales aimed at assessing the views of people that had received a planning application decision during the period. The first covered the period April 2014 – September 2014 and the second covered the period October 2014 – March 2015. The following feedback is based on the combined results of both surveys.
- 17.15 The surveys were sent to 554 people, 19% of whom submitted a whole or partial response. The majority of responses (64%) were from local agents. 21% were from members of the public. 12% of respondents had their most recent planning application refused.
- 17.16 We asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the planning service. They were given the following answer options:
- Strongly agree;
  - Tend to agree;
  - Neither agree nor disagree;
  - Tend to disagree; and
  - Strongly disagree.
- 17.17 Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents that selected either ‘tend to agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ for each statement for both our planning authority and Wales.

**Table 1: The percentage of respondents who agreed with each statement, 2014-15**

	<b>%</b>	
<b>Percentage of respondents who agreed that:</b>	<b>Swansea LPA</b>	<b>Wales</b>
The LPA enforces its planning rules fairly and consistently	46	45
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	58	57
The LPA gives help throughout, including with conditions	51	48
The LPA responded promptly when they had questions	52	55
They were listened to about their application	58	56
They were kept informed about their application	40	46
They were satisfied overall with how the LPA handled their application	52	57

- 17.18 Respondents were also asked to select three planning service characteristics from a list that they thought would most help them achieve successful developments. Figure 1 shows how often each characteristic was selected as a percentage of the total number of selections. For us, ‘having access to the case officer to check on applications’ was the most popular choice.

**Figure 1: Characteristics of a good planning service, Swansea LPA, 2014-15**



Comments received include:

"Swansea is an efficient planning authority."

"Speed of response needs to be greatly improved"

"I do notice some inconsistency of approach and interpretation of policy between some officers."

17.19 Against this background the Authority also carried out its own customer satisfaction survey of applicants and agents. Of the 175 respondents 96% stated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service provided by the Authority.

**OUR PERFORMANCE 2014-15**

17.20 This section details our performance in 2014-15. It considers both the Planning Performance Framework indicators and other available data to help paint a comprehensive picture of performance. Where appropriate we make comparisons between our performance and the all Wales picture.

17.21 Performance is analysed across the five key aspects of planning service delivery as set out in the Planning Performance Framework:

- Plan making;
- Efficiency;

- Quality;
- Engagement; and
- Enforcement.

## Plan making

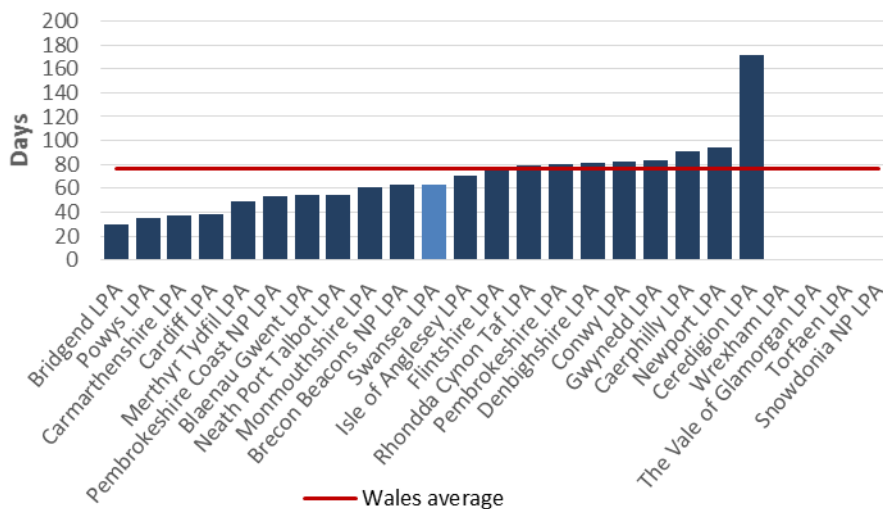
17.22 As at 31 March 2015, we were one of 21 LPAs that had a current development plan in place. We are currently working towards adopting our LDP/updating our LDP. So far, we are 30 months behind the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement.

17.23 During the APR period we had 3.0 years of housing land supply identified (2015 JHLAS), making us one of 18 Welsh LPAs without the required 5 years supply.

## Efficiency

17.24 In 2014-15 we determined 1,734 planning applications, each taking, on average, 64 days (9 weeks) to determine. This compares to an average of 76 days (11 weeks) across Wales. Figure 2 shows the average time taken by each LPA to determine an application during the year.

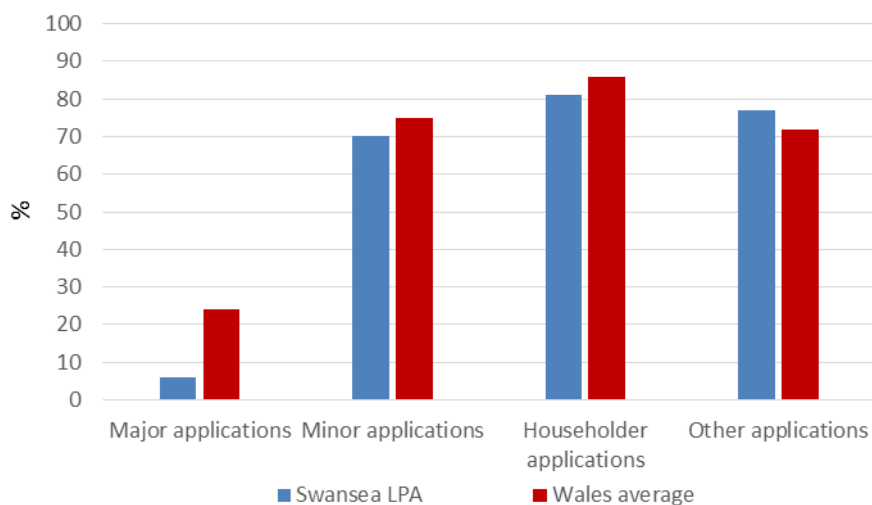
**Figure 2: Average time taken (days) to determine applications, 2014-15**



17.25 71% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This compared to 73% across Wales and was below the 80% target. Only 5 out of 25 LPAs met the 80% target.

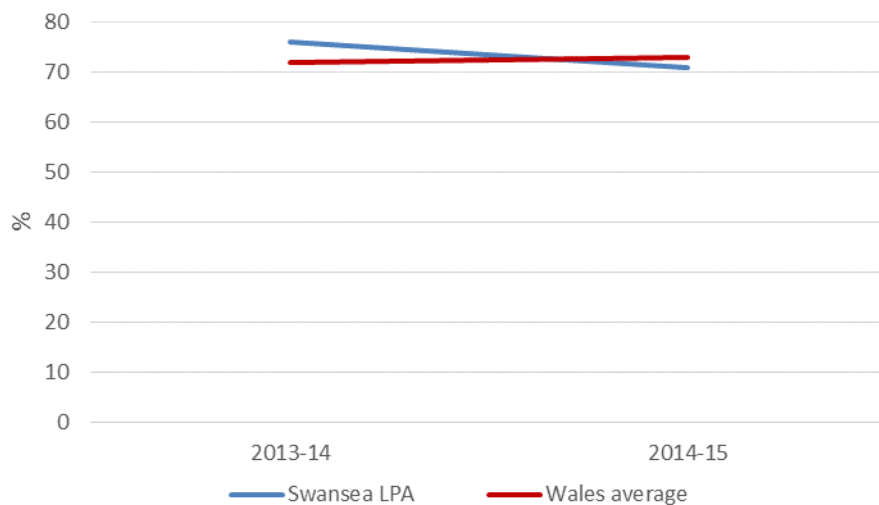
17.26 Figure 3 shows the percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales across the four main types of application for our LPA and Wales. It shows that we determined 81% of householder applications within the required timescales.

**Figure 3: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales, by type, 2014-15**



17.25 Between 2013-14 and 2014-15, as Figure 4 shows, the percentage of planning applications we determined within the required timescales decreased from 76%. Wales saw an increase this year.

**Figure 4: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales**



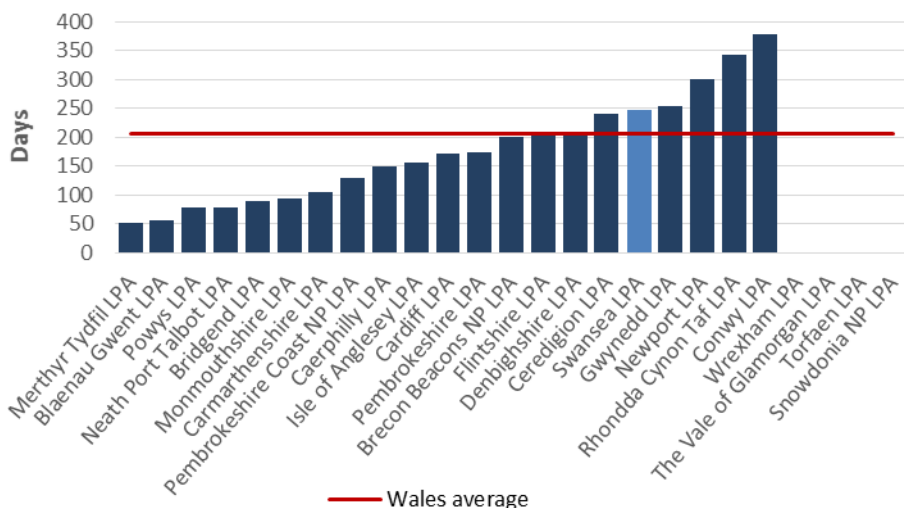
17.26 Over the same period:

- The number of applications we received increased;
- The number of applications we determined increased; and
- The percentage of applications we approved increased.

**Major applications**

17.27 We determined 32 major planning applications in 2014-15, 3% (1 application) of which were subject to an EIA. Each application (including those subject to an EIA) took, on average, 247 days (35 weeks) to determine. As Figure 5 shows, this was the fifth longest average time taken of all Welsh LPAs

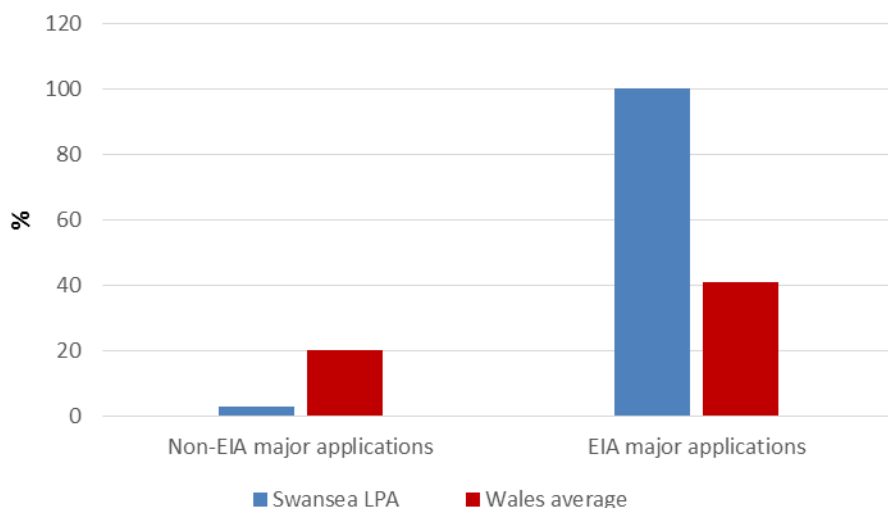
**Figure 5: Average time (days) taken to determine a major application, 2014-15**



17.28 6% of these major applications were determined in the required timescales, the lowest percentage of all Welsh LPAs.

17.29 Figure 6 shows the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales by the type of major application. 3% of our ‘standard’ major applications i.e. those not requiring an EIA, were determined within the required timescales during the year.

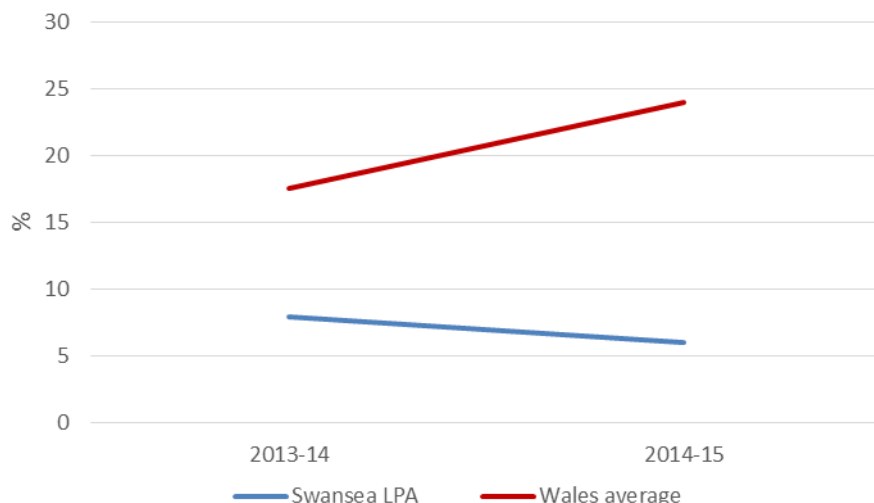
**Figure 6: Percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales during the year, by type, 2014-15**



17.30 Since 2013-14 the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales had decreased from 8%. In contrast, the number of major applications determined increased as had the number of applications subject to an EIA determined during the year.

17.31 Figure 7 shows the trend in the percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales in recent years and how this compares to Wales.

**Figure 7: Percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales**



17.32 Over the same period:

- The percentage of minor applications determined within the required timescales decreased from 75% to 70%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales decreased from 83% to 81%; and
- The percentage of other applications determined within the required timescales decreased from 84% to 77%.

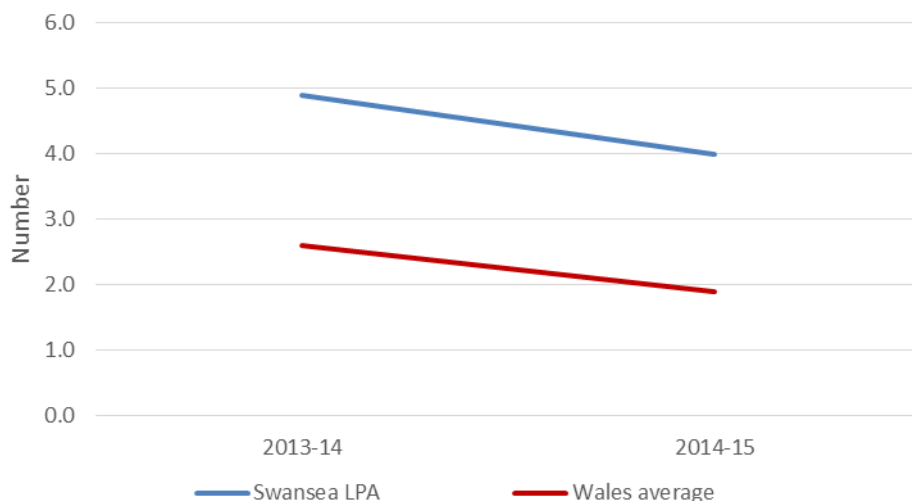
## Quality

17.33 Our Planning Committee made 47 planning application decisions during the year, which equated to 6% of all planning applications determined. Across Wales 7% of all planning application decisions were made by planning committee.

17.34 23% of these member-made decisions went against officer advice. This compared to 11% of member-made decisions across Wales. This equated to 1.3% of all planning application decisions going against officer advice; 0.7% across Wales.

17.35 In 2014-15 we received 73 appeals against our planning decisions, which equated to 4 appeals for every 100 applications received. This was the highest ratio of appeals to applications in Wales. Figure 8 shows how the volume of appeals received has changed since 2013-14 and how this compares to Wales.

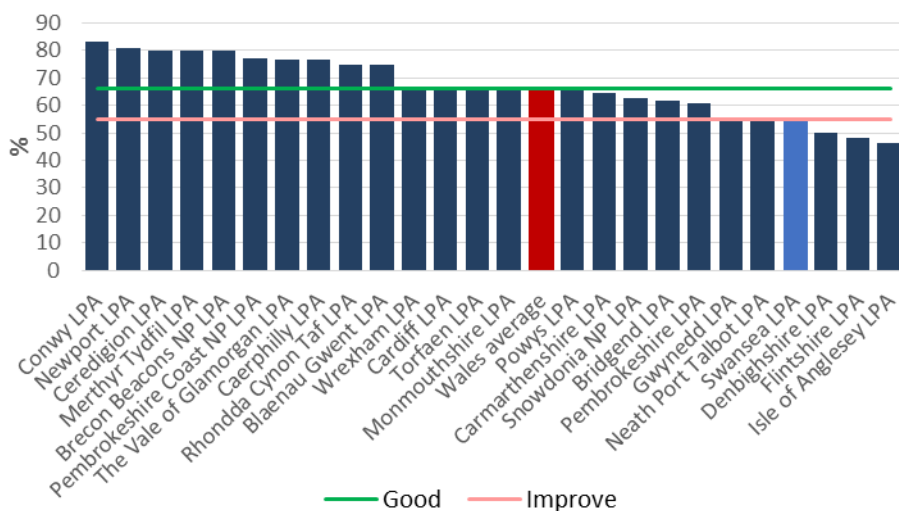
**Figure 8: Number of appeals received per 100 planning applications**



17.36 Over the same period the percentage of planning applications approved decreased from 87% to 85%.

17.37 Of the 71 appeals that were decided during the year, 55% were dismissed. As Figure 9 shows, this was the fourth lowest percentage of appeals dismissed in Wales and was below the 55% threshold.

**Figure 9: Percentage of appeals dismissed, 2014-15**



17.38 During 2014-15 we had no applications for costs at a section 78 appeal upheld.

**Engagement**

17.39 We are:

- one of 22 LPA's that allowed members of the public to address the Planning Committee; and

- one of 20 LPAs that had an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access, track their progress (and view their content).

17.40 As Table 2 shows, 58% of respondents to our 2014-15 customer satisfaction survey agreed that the LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application.

**Table 2: Feedback from our 2014-15 customer satisfaction survey**

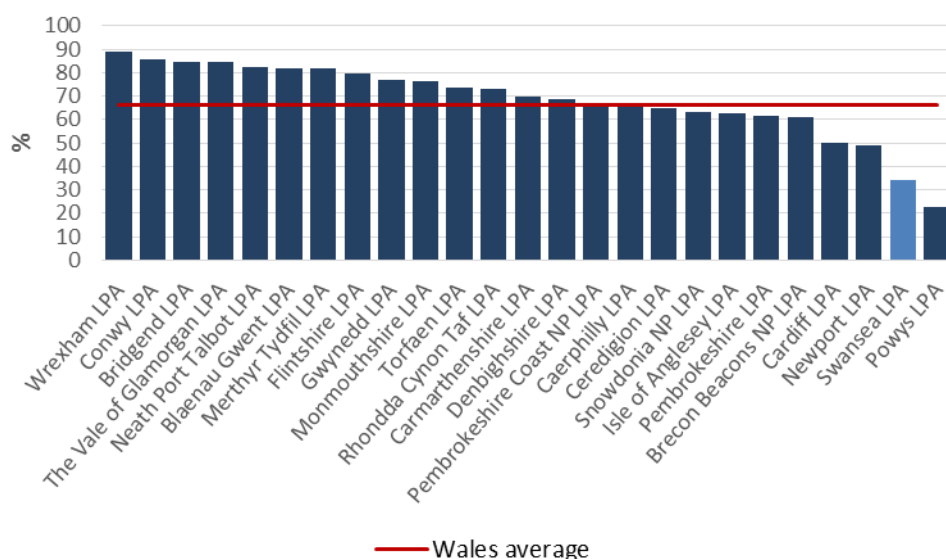
	%	
Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	Swansea LPA	Wales
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	58	57
They were listened to about their application	58	56

## Enforcement

17.41 In 2014-15 we investigated 687 enforcement cases, which equated to 2.8 per 1,000 population. This was the fifth highest rate in Wales. We took, on average, 115 days to investigate each enforcement case.<sup>1</sup>

17.42 We investigated 34% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. Across Wales 66% were investigated within 84 days. Figure 10 shows the percentage of enforcement cases that were investigated within 84 days across all Welsh LPAs.

**Figure 10: Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days, 2014-15**



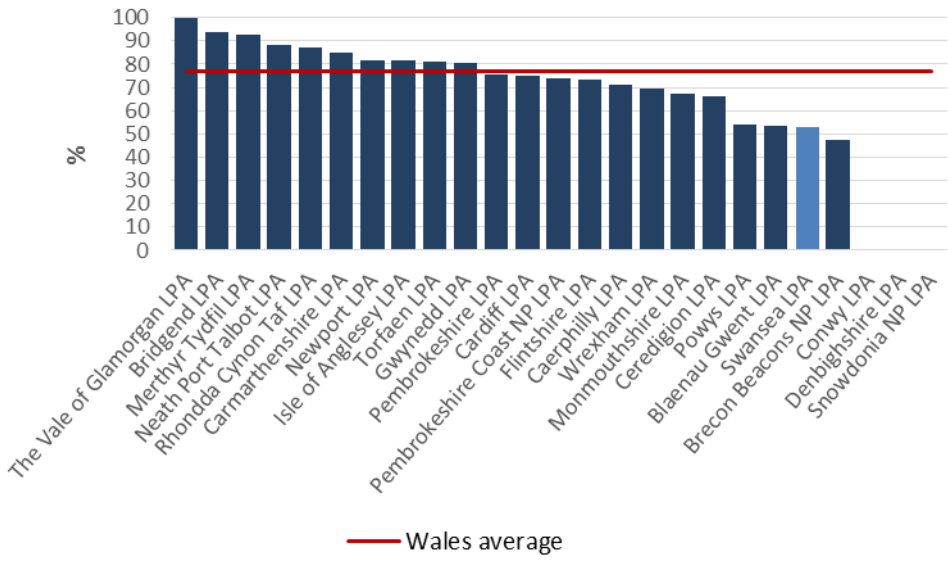
17.43 Over the same period, we resolved 49 enforcement cases, taking, on average, 184 days to resolve each case.

<sup>1</sup> Robust comparisons are not currently available as only 14 of the 25 LPAs supplied data for this indicator.



17.44 53% of this enforcement action was taken within 180 days from the start of the case. As Figure 11 shows this was the second lowest percentage in Wales.

**Figure 11: Percentage of enforcement cases resolved in 180 days, 2014-15**



## ANNEX A - PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

### OVERVIEW

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
<b>Plan making</b>			
Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	Yes		No
LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<12	13-17	18+
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No
The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	>5	4-4.9	<4
<b>Efficiency</b>			
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set
Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	>80	60.1-79.9	<60
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set
<b>Quality</b>			
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	Not set	Not set	Not set
Percentage of appeals dismissed	>66	55.1-65.9	<55
Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0	1	2
<b>Engagement</b>			
Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes		No
Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes		No

WALES AVERAGE	Swansea LPA LAST YEAR	Swansea LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
60	18	30
Yes	N/A	N/A
4.2	5.1	3.0
24	8	6
206	No Data	247
73	76	71
76	No Data	64
11	1.6	23
66	55	55
0	3	0
Yes	Yes	Yes
-	-	-

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access, track their progress (and view their content)?	Yes	Partial	No
<b>Enforcement</b>			
Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	Not set	Not set	Not set
Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application received within 180 days from the start of the case (in those cases where it was expedient to enforce)?	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to take enforcement action	Not set	Not set	Not set

WALES AVERAGE	Swansea LPA LAST YEAR	Swansea LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Enforcement</b>		
66	No Data	34
71	No Data	114.5
77	No Data	53
175	No Data	184

## SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>01. Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
A development plan (LDP or UDP) is in place and within the plan period	N/A	No development plan is in place (including where the plan has expired)

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	Yes
The adopted Unitary Development Plan is up to date and covers the period until 31 <sup>st</sup> December 2016.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>02. LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
The LDP is being progressed within 12 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed within between 12 and 18 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed more than 18 months later than the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	30
The Delivery Agreement was reviewed in 2013 and the LDP is being progressed within 12 months of the revised date. A further revision is currently being prepared.	
Once a Delivery Agreement has been revised beyond 18 months of the original dates specified there is little possibility of recovering slippage time, and the original agreement is in any superseded. It is considered that the performance measure should be refined to follow the most recent Delivery Agreement.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>03. Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>		<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
An AMR is due, and has been prepared		An AMR is due, and has not been prepared

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	N/A
No adopted LDP is in place.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>04. The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
The authority has a housing land supply of more than 5 years	The authority has a housing land supply of between 4 and 5 years	The authority has a housing land supply of less than 4 years

<b>Authority's performance</b>	3.0
<p>Given that the Council is currently preparing the LDP, it does not consider it necessary at this stage to produce a formal review of the UDP housing land supply (e.g. by producing an Interim Housing Land Policy Statement). Furthermore this would cause confusion with, and ultimately delay, the LDP preparation process. However, in the interim, the Council is seeking to bring forward certain sites identified in the LDP Preferred Strategy which are recommended for inclusion in the Deposit LDP. This applies to sites that represent a departure to the adopted UDP policy framework which will not prejudice the Council's future growth strategy, as well as sites within the current settlement boundary. In particular the Council will prioritise strategic sites and also 'exception' sites that will deliver a high proportion of affordable housing. Prioritising Strategic Sites is necessary to ensure the high unit numbers attributed to these sites can be fully delivered over the Plan period up to 2025.</p>	

**SECTION 2 - EFFICIENCY**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>05. Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	6
<p>The Authority has set a local performance indicator with a target of 13 weeks for the determination of major applications which is considered to be a more realistic target given the average time to determine major applications in Wales last year was 206 days. 34 % of all major applications were determined within this time period.</p> <p>More accurately recording of timescales in relation to applications subject to S106 Planning Obligations and taking fuller advantage of provisions for the extension of time will help improve performance against this measure.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>06. Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	247
The average time taken to determine major applications was 247 which compares to a Welsh average of 206 days and was heavily influenced by the determination of a number of old and historic applications and timescales for the completion of S106 Planning Obligations.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>07. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
More than 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 60% and 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 60% of applications are determined within the statutory time period

<b>Authority's performance</b>	71
The percentage of all applications determined within 8 weeks was 62.1% and 63.9% during Q 1 and 2 while the service was under interim management arrangements pending restructure which took place in August 2014. Performance against this measure rose to 84.4% in Q3 and 74.7% in Q2 which was well above the respective Welsh average of 73.3% and 70.8%.	
This upward trend in performance has continued throughout 2015/16.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>08. Average time taken to determine all applications in days</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	64
The average time to determine all applications was 64 days which is below the Welsh average of 73 days for the same period. This reflects a focus on determining applications at the earliest possible decision date rather than working towards the 8 week deadline.	

## SECTION 3 - QUALITY

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>09. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	23
<p>The percentage of Member made decisions contrary to officer advice appears high compared to the Welsh average although the way this is measured has changed since the previous year which appeared to represent a percentage of all decisions rather than those decision made by Members.</p> <p>As detailed above the Authority amended its Committee structures and scheme of delegation in January 2015 to broadly align with Welsh Government proposals. This 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.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>10. Percentage of appeals dismissed</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
More than 66% (two thirds) of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Between 55% and 66% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Less than 55% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	55
<p>The percentage of appeals dismissed was heavily influenced by the number of decisions made contrary to officer advice. Of the 71 appeals that were decided during the year 37 were dismissed and 34 were allowed. Of the 34 appeals that were allowed 15 were determined by Committee and 12 were Member overturns. A performance of 20%.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>11. Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
The authority has not had costs awarded against it at appeal	The authority has had costs awarded against it in one appeal case	The authority has had costs awarded against it in two or more appeal cases

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	0
No comment.	

**SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>12. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>		<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Members of the public are able to address the Planning Committee		Members of the public are not able to address the Planning Committee

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	Yes
No comment.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>13. Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>		<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Members of the public can seek advice from a duty planning officer		There is no duty planning officer available

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	Yes
Office cover is provided at all times. The Authority also provide a “Householder Surgery” on a Wednesday afternoon for members of the public only to obtain advice from a professional planning officer so that they are informed before engaging with an architect and/or agent.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>14. Does the local planning authority’s web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access track their progress (and view their content)?</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
All documents are available online	Only the planning application details are available online, and access to other documents must be sought directly	No planning application information is published online

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	Yes
It is anticipated that the current search engine will be upgraded with enhanced functionality as part of the planned replacement of its current back office system.	



**SECTION 5 – ENFORCEMENT**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>15. Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	34
<p>There are recognised anomalies in the way this indicator is measured by different Authorities. This matter will be resolved as part of future returns.</p> <p>Enforcement performance has, however, been under significant scrutiny by the Authority and through the Authorities Scrutiny Working Group following the build-up of a significant backlog of enforcement cases as a result of historic under resourcing of the service.</p> <p>Following restructuring in August 2014 additional staff resources have been allocated to the enforcement of planning control resulting in a significant reduction in the backlog of outstanding enforcement cases from in excess of 650 cases in August 2014 to 500 in April 2015. This has had an impact upon the percentage of cases investigated within the required timescales.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>16. Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority’s performance</b>	114.5
See comments above.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>17. Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application received within 180 days from the start of the case (in those cases where it was expedient to enforce)</b>	
<b>“Good”</b>	<b>“Fair”</b>	<b>“Improvement needed”</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	53
<p>There are recognised anomalies in the way this indicator is measured by different Authorities. This matter will be resolved as part of future returns.</p> <p>A reduction in the backlog of old and historic enforcement cases has had an impact upon performance when assessed against this measure.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>18. Average time taken to take enforcement action</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	184
See comments above.	