Swansea LPA

PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) – 2021-22

PREFACE

I have the pleasure of introducing the Annual Performance Report (APR) for Swansea Council's Planning Service. APR's were introduced as part of Welsh Government proposals to modernise the planning system and improve local delivery of planning services. The Council's Planning Service is responsible for protecting the amenity and unique natural and built environment of our city and countryside in the public interest and facilitating sustainable development and the economic regeneration of our urban and rural areas. Having adopted the Swansea Local Development Plan the Council has an up to date planning policy framework which sets out a clear and ambitious vision for the future growth and regeneration of the City, its communities, economy and natural environment. In this context the APR provides a mechanism for ensuring that the Planning Service is responding positively to the challenges of evolving national planning guidance and the principles of the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act and the Environment (Wales) Act. In this respect the Planning Service presents the most tangible means of translating the Council's corporate objectives, commitments 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 David Hopkins – Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and Performance

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. As well as being characterised by a highly development central area and surrounding settlements, the County benefits from a number of high quality natural environments that are part of its rural hinterland.

1.2 The policies and proposals set out in the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) seek to address the County's need for new homes, jobs, infrastructure and community facilities to support economic growth and raise standards of living. Policies to promote development sit alongside and complement those that will ensure future proposals respect and promote the County's cultural heritage, important landscapes and sensitive environments. A clear 'placemaking' agenda is promoted which emphasises that future development must accord with the overarching aims of enhancing quality of life and well-being.

1.3 Swansea lies at the heart of the Swansea Bay City Region and the nature of future growth and development management will be critical to shaping the regional geographies of South West Wales. In particular, the aspirations for the City Region seek to significantly boost economic investment and activity, with an associated substantial uplift required in development, including housing.

2.0 **Planning background,**

2.1 The Swansea LDP, which was adopted in February 2019, provides the policy context for the period up to 2025. It superseded the Swansea Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2001-2016).

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

3.1 The Swansea Public Service Board's Local Well Being Plan: Working together to build a better future (2018) has four objectives relating to Early Years, Live Well, Age Well; Working with Nature; and Strong Communities underpinned by key themes of Housing and the Economy which are supported by the planning system.

3.3 The LDP seeks to deliver the land use, regeneration and natural environment enhancement objectives expressed in the Local Well Being Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan, together with other Council strategies, plans and programmes.

4.0 **Employment Growth**

4.1 National policy supports employment growth within the Swansea Bay City 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, Waterfront, Tawe Riverside Corridor and Lower Swansea Valley areas, together with 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. In August 2022, the average house sale price in Swansea was £196,492 - average for Wales £213,091.

4.4 Average (median) earnings for full-time employees in Swansea stand at £593.10 per week and £30,262 per year (April 2022), 6.9% higher than the previous year. This is lower than the weekly Wales average of £603.50 and UK average of £640.00.

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 The County supports an extensive greenspace network, which is vital to economic, environmental and community well-being, and additional green infrastructure is needed to meet national guidance and local requirements for improving accessibility to open space. In particular improvements to linkages between open spaces, public rights of way and key destinations are needed to increase accessibility and promote physical activity.

5.4 The County has a proud industrial heritage and a number of historic buildings, such as castles and Scheduled Ancient Monuments. 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.

5.5 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 geographical 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 such as Sketty and Mumbles.

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 which are generally spread along the main transport corridors into the City. There are also rural / semi-rural settlements in and around the edges of Gower and to the North.

6.4 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 is supported through LDP policy. An increasing number of dwellings are being used as holiday homes within Gower which also impacts on the availability of housing to meet affordable and local needs. Recent changes in planning legislation has resulted in new use classes for Second Homes and Short Term holiday lets. The Council will monitor the impact of these changes to see whether any additional planning controls are required to ensure the availability of housing for local needs.

7.0 Population change and influence on LDP/forthcoming revisions.

7.1 The 2021 Census reported that the usually resident population of Swansea was 238,500; approximately 500 or 0.2 per cent less than the 2011 census total, and 8,100 (-3.3%) less than the 2020 estimates. The population of Wales was 3.1m, an increase of 1.4% on the previous census. The population of England and Wales grew by 6.3% compared to the census of 2011.

7.2 The population of Swansea comprises 117,600 males and 121,000 females (Source ONS). Previous population estimates suggests that Swansea's overall population reduction was due to negative natural change (more deaths than births) and internal (UK-based) out-migration, partly offset by net international in-migration. Analysis of the data will be released throughout this year.

7.3 Table 1 below shows Swansea's 2021 Census population by Age and sex:

Table 1: Swansea's 2021 Census Population by Age and sex.

Age group	Males	Females	Total (% of all)	*Wales %*	Difference: 2021 vs. 2011
0-4	5,800	5,600	11,400 (4.8%)	*5.0%*	-1,700 (-13.0%)
5-9	6,800	6,300	13,000 (5.5%)	*5.7%*	+600 (+4.5%)
10-14	7,100	6,500	13,700 (5.7%)	*5.9%*	+500 (+3.7%)
15-19	7,600	6,900	14,500 (6.1%)	*5.7%*	-1,500 (-9.7%)
20-24	10,500	8,700	19,200 (8.1%)	*6.0%*	-1,300 (-6.4%)
25-29	7,100	7,200	14,200 (6.0%)	*6.0%*	-1,400 (-8.7%)
30-34	7,400	7,700	15,100 (6.3%)	*6.3%*	+700 (+4.9%)
35-39	7,100	7,400	14,500 (6.1%)	*6.0%*	-200 (-1.4%)
40-44	6,800	7,000	13,800 (5.8%)	*5.6%*	-2,100 (-13.4%)
45-49	6,900	7,100	14,000 (5.9%)	*6.0%*	-2,300 (-14.1%)
50-54	7,800	7,900	15,700 (6.6%)	*6.9%*	+500 (+3.6%)
55-59	7,800	8,200	16,000 (6.7%)	*7.2%*	+2,100 (+15.5%)
60-64	7,000	7,600	14,500 (6.1%)	*6.4%*	-500 (-3.2%)
65-69	6,100	6,600	12,700 (5.3%)	*5.7%*	+700 (+5.4%)
70-74	6,200	6,900	13,100 (5.5%)	*5.8%*	+3,000 (+29.6%)
75-79	4,400	5,200	9,600 (4.0%)	*4.2%*	+1,000 (+11.2%)
80-84	2,900	3,900	6,800 (2.9%)	*2.9%*	+500 (+8.5%)
85-89	1,700	2,600	4,300 (1.8%)	*1.7%*	+500 (+12.7%)
90+	800	1,600	2,400 (1.0%)	*1.0%*	+500 (+23.7%)
All ages	**117,600**	**121,000**	**238,500** (100%)	*100%*	**-500 (-0.2%)**

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS), © Crown copyright 2022.
***Note**: 2011 and 2021 figures are from the Census; 2020 figures use the latest published mid-year population estimates.*

7.3 There are 11,400 children aged 0-4 in Swansea, 4.8% of the total population – lower than the equivalent proportion for Wales (5.0%) and 13% lower han the 2011 census. Swansea also has a lower percentage aged 5-14, at 11.2% (26,700 children), than Wales (11.6%). 33,700 (14.2%) of Swansea's population are young people aged 15-24, a noticeably higher proportion than Wales (11.7%), likely in part due to students. 24.2% of the population (57,600 people) are aged 25-44, higher than the percentage for all of Wales (23.9%). 60,200 people in Swansea are aged 45-64 (25.3%), lower as a proportion than Wales (26.5%). 20.5% of Swansea's population are aged 65 and over (48,900), lower than the percentage figures for Wales (21.3%), but higher than the total for England (18.4%). 6,700 people in Swansea are aged 85 and over, 2.7% of the Swansea total; the same as the proportion in Wales 2.7%). Life expectancy at birth in Swansea now stands at 77.5 years for males (Wales 78.3) and 81.8 for females (Wales 82.1)

7.4 The total number of households (with residents) in Swansea in the 2021 census is estimated at 105,000, an increase of approximately 1,500 (1.4%) from the 2011 census figure. Average household size fell from 2.27 people (2010) to 2.20 people (2020). The falling average household size can be attributed to the significant rise of single-person households who now account for over a third of all households.

7.5 The Welsh Government's latest trend-based population projections suggest that Swansea's population will grow by 7.5% (18,400 people) between 2018 and 2043. In comparison, the projections suggest a population increase of 5.4% across Wales over the period.

7.6 The 2021 census indicates that Swansea had a minority ethnic group (non-white) population of around 20,400 in 2021 (approx. 8.6% of the population). In 2021, 75% of Swansea's population were born in Wales, with 22,500 (9.4%) born outside the UK.

7.7 The proportion of people aged 3 and over able to speak Welsh in Swansea decreased from 13.4% (28,938) in 2001 to 11.4% in 2011 (26,332 people); this fell further to 11.2 % in 2021.

7.8 Survey data (ONS) for the year period ending December 2021 suggests that Swansea has a higher proportion of working age residents with qualifications to NVQ level 3 and above than the Wales and UK average. In the last five years (2016 to 2021), the number of Swansea's working age (16-64) residents with NVQ level 4+ has risen from 55,200 to 61,600 (up by 6,400 or 11.6%); whilst the number with no qualifications fell from 15,700 to 12,100 (-3,600 or 22.9%). This is generally in line with national trends over the period.

7.9 GVA (Gross Value Added) per head in Swansea stands at £22,817, (2020, ONS); which is 8.6% above the Wales level but 21.0% below the UK average. However, over the longer term (2015 to 2020), overall growth in Swansea's GVA per head was 13.7%, which is above percentage increases in West Wales & Valleys (+9.0%), Wales (+10.1%), and the UK (+9.6%).

7.10 77.2% of Swansea's working age residents are economically active and 117,200 in employment (72.4% of working age) (year to June 2022, ONS), mostly in the service sectors 89.8%, with 29.6% employed in the public sector and 4.6% working in manufacturing.

7.11 27,000 people commute into Swansea each day (2021, ONS/WG). Most significant cross boundary flows are from Neath Port Talbot and Carmarthenshire. 83% of

Swansea residents worked within the local authority area. Active businesses in Swansea grew by 150 (1.9%) between 2019-20, compared to 0.7% across Wales and 0.4% in the UK.

7.12 Estimates suggest 4.79 million people visited Swansea Bay in 2019 spending over £477 million (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model). Due to the Covid pandemic, this is the most recent data available.

7.13 Swansea is forecast to see significant population growth over the next decade. The County will need new homes, additional employment opportunities and improved infrastructure and community facilities to support this level of growth and raise standards of living, while respecting the area's cultural and natural heritage.

7.14 Key influences on the LDP include:

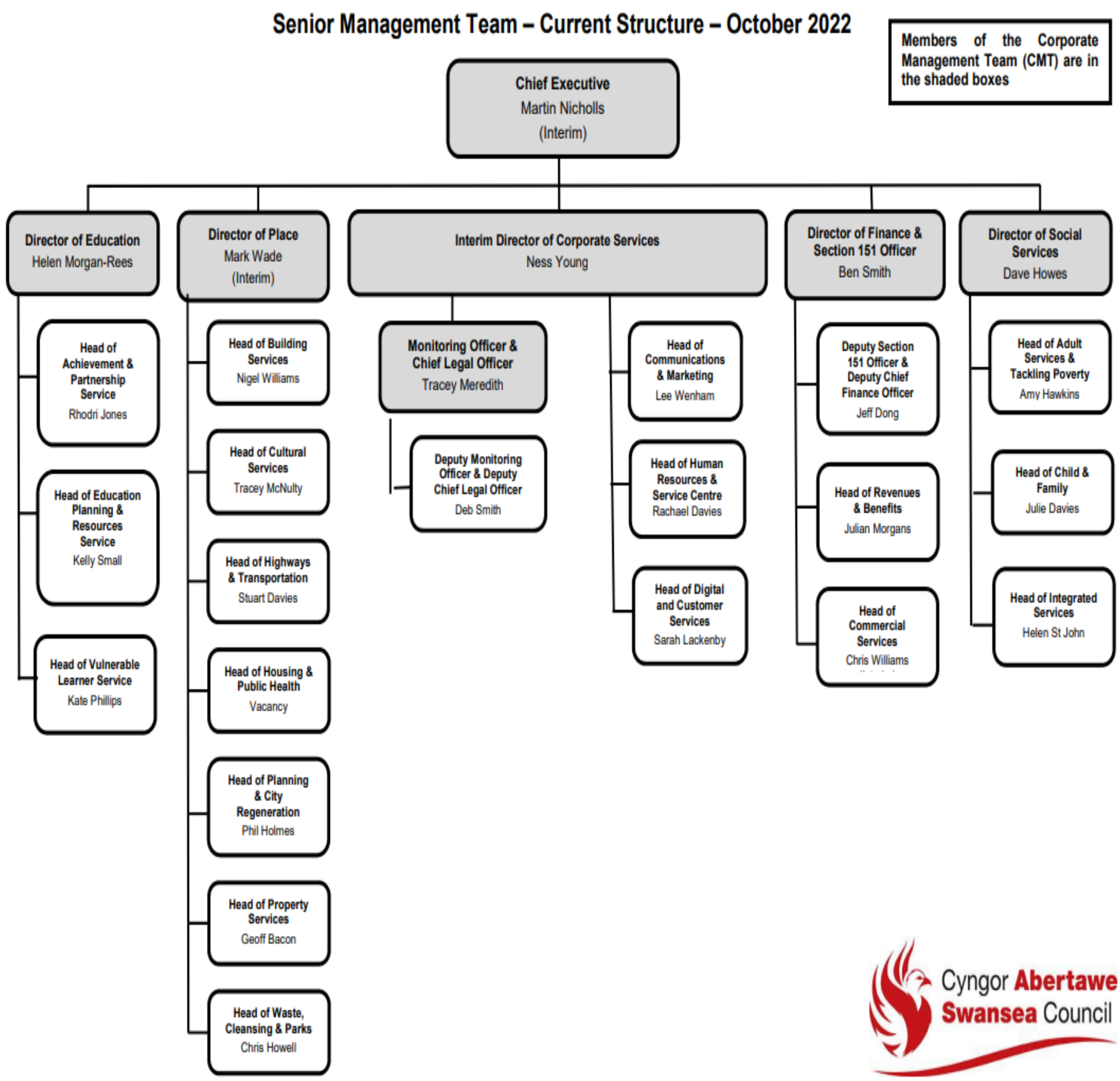
- The need to provide for 17100 new dwellings and support 13600 new jobs,
- Limited previously developed (brownfield) land remaining to accommodate development,
- The sustainable regeneration of the Swansea Central Area as the economic hub and main driver of the 'City Region',
- The need for further investment at SA1, Tawe Riverside and the Fabian Way Corridor to sustain the successful regeneration of waterfront areas, whilst complementing regeneration of the Central Area,
- Reorientation of the economy towards high quality, skilled and knowledge based sectors,
- Lack of available, high quality office space to meet economic growth needs,
- The impact of out of town development of retail, office and leisure uses on the Central Area,
- Significant opportunities for leisure, sustainable tourism and heritage-led development schemes,
- Supply of new house building not keeping pace with demand as the local population grows, a shortfall of affordable housing and the economic viability of sites for delivering new housing varying considerably across the County,
- Community cohesion issues in areas with high concentrations of HMOs,
- Need for greater variety of size and tenure mix within new housing developments to contribute towards sustainable balanced communities,
- Meeting the needs of an increasingly elderly population
- A sizeable Higher Education student population and increasing demand to provide additional accommodation,
- Significant variations across the County in terms of social indicators of deprivation, including access to health, education and community services and facilities and housing quality. Community cohesion issues in certain wards due to the number of conversions of housing stock to HMOs and the geographical spread,
- Safeguarding communities where Welsh language is an important part of the social fabric,
- The high quality natural environment, landscapes, and coastline are important assets to the local economy, attracting visitors, and providing resources,
- The extensive green space network is vital to economic, environmental and community well-being, and more green infrastructure is needed to meet national guidance and local requirements for improving accessibility to open space,
- Improvements to linkages between open spaces, Public Rights of Way, and key destinations are needed to increase accessibility and promote physical activity,

- Poor air quality is an issue in some areas, which can have a detrimental impact on human health. Parts of the urban area have been designated as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), where further deterioration in air quality would be of significant concern,
- The area's industrial past has left a legacy of potentially contaminated sites, where remediation is required to protect human health and well-being,
- The existing highway network experiences traffic congestion along certain main routes and junctions, which can have a negative impact on amenity, health and well-being, and economic competitiveness.

PLANNING SERVICE

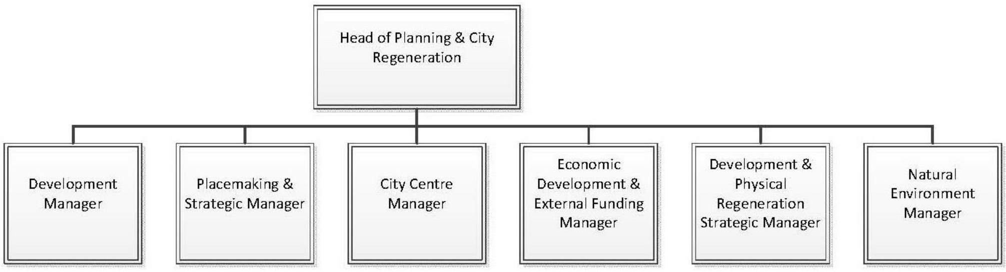
8.1 The Council is organised into five Corporate Directorates reporting directly to the Chief Executive Officer, as detailed in Chart 1 below. Both the Development Management and Placemaking & Strategic Planning functions sit within the Planning and City Regeneration Service under a single Head of Service who reports to the Director of Place.

Chart 1 - Organisational Structure



8.2 The Planning and City Regeneration Service is within the Place Directorate and as detailed in Chart 2 below, is organised into 6 separate service areas namely; Development Management, Placemaking and Strategic Planning, Natural Environment, City Centre Management, External Funding, 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, IT changes, real estate rationalisation?**

9.1 Agile working arrangements have been introduced as part of a corporate initiative, to facilitate the rationalisation of accommodation within the Civic Centre, income generation through the rental of office floor space and improved productivity. In this respect the Development Management function of the Authority has, since 2013, progressively introduced new document management, back office and workflow management systems together with revised and refined business processes to facilitate a paperless office that has allowed the efficiencies and benefits associated with agile working to be exploited more effectively. This work meant the when the Coronavirus pandemic restrictions were imposed in March 2020, officers were fully equipped to work from home. Officers continue to work flexibly with officers able to work both from home and in the office.

9.2 Cross departmental working initiatives include the formation of a core Land Charges Team in April 2019 embedded within the Development Management Section. This brought together discrete functions carried out by 11 separate officers in 7 different Departments under one management structure providing the potential for greater resilience, improvements in the quality of service and opportunities to generate further fee income. In March 2022, part of the Land Charges service was migrated to the Land Registry as part of a national programme. Swansea was the first Authority in Wales to migrate

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, Placemaking and Strategic Planning and Natural Environment functions is difficult to establish as staff within the Development Management, Placemaking and Strategic Planning and Natural Environment service areas input into a range of functions including central administration for the department as a whole, rights of way, ecology and AONB functions.

10.2 In terms of Development Management, the cost of the service is heavily reliant on planning application fee income to offset the costs of the service. However, the three years has seen a reduction in income as illustrated in Table 1 below. Whilst Welsh Government increased planning fees in August 2020, and the number of planning applications received over the period has increased from 2082 in 2018-19 to 2390 in 201-22, there has been decrease in the amount of fees received. This is because of an increase in the number of householder applications received which generate lower application fees.

Table 1 – Planning Application Fee Income

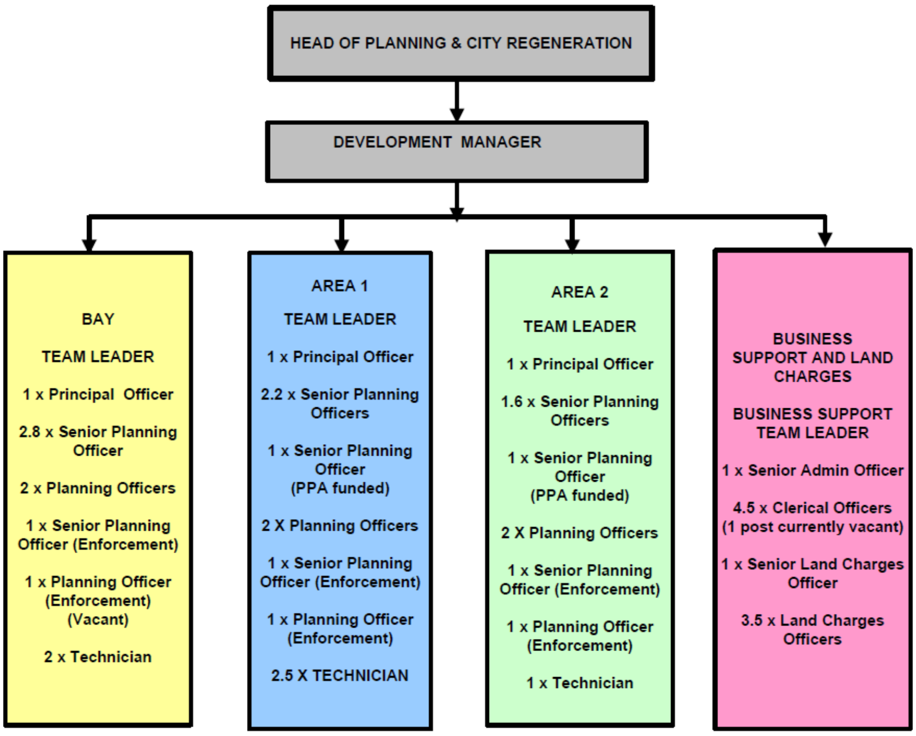
Income (£)	2018/19	2019/2020	2020/21	2021/22
Target	1,072,100	1,073,800	1,080,500	1,212,650
Actual	1,257,249	934,109	916,723	926,812

10.3 Fee income is retained within the Development Management budget which is, however, set demanding fee income targets for each financial year to cover a growing proportion of the costs of the Service. Any budget underspend at the end of the financial year is not carried forward to the following financial year. Two full time Senior Planning Officers are also currently funded by Planning Performance Agreement. This places a heavy emphasis on unpredictable 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.

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 Development Management consists of 4 teams, comprising three Area Planning Teams, and a Business Support Team incorporating the Land Charges Section

Chart 4 – Development Management



11.3 The Section has previously been restructured and accommodated a number of redundancies with job descriptions rationalised to provide more flexible working. Authority has also been delegated further down the staff structure and through on the job training staff from previously discrete teams carry out a much wider range of functions. In this way the impact of redundancies and budget cuts has been managed to an extent with existing officers absorbing these roles in parallel with the introduction of revised business processes and a review of service delivery options.

11.4 Upskilling and reskilling of staff in this way remains an ongoing process but is a robust mechanism to manage the risk to the Service in the face of ongoing budget situation.

11.5 Budgetary pressures and recruitment policies have, however, generated clear resilience issues, with a contracting, ageing workforce and reliance on a small number of individual officers in key specialist fields. The Authority is increasingly having to “buy in” services to address specialism gaps.

11.6 During the year, a number of vacancies have arisen in the department through a combination of staff resignations, long term sickness and internal promotions. These posts have been filled but this process is lengthy and posts remain vacant for a significant period whilst the recruitment process is ongoing. These periods of vacancies has created additional workload pressures on staff. In addition, the significant increase in the number of planning applications being submitted, has further increases the workload pressure on staff. Temporary staff have been recruited to assist in the short term, although these posts are dependent on funding being available in the future.

11.7 In addition, and as stated above, two Senior Planning Officers continue to be funded via fee income generated from Planning Performance Agreements negotiated on a variety of projects. Fee income is now the primary source of funding for the service and as illustrated in Table 1 above can experience significant variations year on year placing the delivery of statutory services at potential risk moving forward. Whilst the costs of providing the service are increasing, there has been no increase in planning fees to meet these increases. The fees are set by Welsh Government at a national level and there is no scope for the Council to increase the fees.

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 an increase in the number of planning and related applications received rising from 1482 in 2012/13 to 2088 in 2020/21 and 2390 in 2021-22. This has had a significant impact on officer workload. The number of planning applications received per case officer (FTE) was 124 per annum in 2020-21. In 2021/22 this was 149. However, it should be noted that at various times during the year, there were vacant posts in the department which meant that in the average number of applications per officer was greater than this. This figure excludes the provision of pre-application advice, input into the change process described above, appeals, enforcement cases, corporate projects and initiatives and policy/SPG formulation.

12.2 The number of enforcement cases received in 462 in 2020-21 with 445 received in 2021-22, which coupled with the remnants of an historic backlog of stubborn cases continues to place pressure on the enforcement service when measured against the performance indicators introduced by Welsh Government in 2017. Furthermore, the restrictions brought in to limit the spread of Covid 19 impacted on the speed of investigation of these complaints, and the impact of those restrictions continued to be felt during 2021-22. Enforcement officers currently carry an average caseload of 139 complaints, up from 129 in 2021-22 and 78 in 2018-19

12.3 Internal and statutory consultees have had capacity issues over the period, These capacity issues can have a significant impact on the provision of comprehensive and/or timely consultation responses and the efficiency of decision making.

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 The LDP was adopted in February 2019 and provides a clear planning framework to address key issues facing the County. It is underpinned by an extensive and up to date evidence base. The AMR is due to be presented to Council on 2nd March 2023. The report will be available to view via the Council website once the agenda for Council is published.

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 Officers meet regularly with Stakeholders to identify issues which may impact on the efficiency of the Development Management Process, including Welsh Government, Internal Departments and Developers.

14.2 The promotion of a development team approach lead by officers from the Council's Development and Physical Regeneration Section (as developer and applicant), externally appointed consultants and officers in the Placemaking and Strategic Planning Team continues to be a highly effective model for the delivery of the Swansea City Centre redevelopment scheme. In development management terms roles were clearly articulated and resourced through the signing of a Planning Performance Agreement which has facilitated the efficient delivery of schemes through the pre-application process with added value and the determination of the resultant applications in a timely manner.

14.3 The Council has also established a Developer Forum to improve working relationships with small and medium sized housing developers (SME's) and address issues which may be frustrating the development process. In this respect two current work streams are ongoing firstly, focussing on providing consistency between planning placemaking policy and highway adoption processes and standards and secondly, on introducing a cross department pre-application advice service which goes beyond the statutory pre-application process that exists.

14.4 Officers of the Development Management Team have a significant input into the Council's 'More Homes' project which aims to deliver new affordable housing within Swansea.

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 As detailed above a number of major and strategic sites including the redevelopment of Swansea City Centre have come forward. The approach adopted by the Authority detailed at Section 14 above has facilitated the effective delivery of a number of these sites in accordance with the "placemaking" policy objectives set out in the LDP and without formal challenge.

15.2 Considerable resources have, however, been dedicated to this process which has only been possible to manage, without impacting on the performance of the Development Management Service as a whole, through the appointment of staff via fee income generated by Planning Performance Agreement (PPAs). As planning applications for these strategic sites have come forward, the scope for further PPAs had reduced. Unless new proposals come forward with PPAs, it will not be possible to retain the temporary posts funded from PPA income. This will place pressure on the service as the reduction in staff set against increased workload will inevitably impact on service delivery.

16.0 Our Performance 2021-22

16.1 In previous years, data has been provided to Local Authorities to allow comparison of our performance and the all Wales picture. However, this data has not been produced for the last three years. As a result, this report provides a comparison against performance in 2020-21. Some reference will be made to all Wales data, although this data is not up to date.

16.2 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.

16.3 Plan making

16.4 The Swansea Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in March 2019 and provides a framework for making decisions on planning applications.

16.5 Efficiency

16.6 In 2021-22 we determined 2138 planning applications, 84% of which were approved. 97% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. The target for Wales is 80%. For comparison, in 2020-21, we determined 1652 planning applications with 82% of applications approved. 99% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This slight drop in performance can be attributed to the increased number of applications received and determined (29%) compared to the previous year

16.7 Table 1 below shows that our performance remained at a high level and above the last available figure for Wales.

Table 1 : Percentage of planning applications determined in required timescales

Wales 2018/19	Swansea 2019/20	Swansea 2020/21	Swansea 2021/22
88%	99%	99%	97%

16.8 Major applications

16.9 We determined 18 major planning applications in 2020-21, 14 of which were in required timescales.

Table 2: Percentage of major applications determined within required timescales:

Wales 2018/19	Swansea 2019/20	Swansea 2020/21	Swansea 2021-22
68%	96%	86%	78%

16.10 The figure for 2020-21 shows a drop on the previous year. The four applications that went over agreed timescales were all reported to committee and as a result went over the agreed timescale.

- The percentage of minor applications determined within the required timescales fell from 99% to 95%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales increased from 99.7% to 98% ; and
- The percentage of other applications determined within required timescales increased from 99% to 98%.

This reflects the increase in the number of planning applications received and determined, as identified above.

16.11 Quality

16.12 In 2021-22, our Planning Committee made 44 planning application decisions, which equated to 2% of all planning decisions made in the year. This represents an increase from 19 (1.2%) in 2020-21 which was impacted by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in Committees being cancelled and a reduction in major planning applications being submitted.

16.13 Planning Committee made 1 (2%) decision against officer advice. This equated to 0.04% of all planning application decisions made by the Council going against officer advice.

16.14 In 2021-22 we received 74 appeal decisions against our planning decisions. Of these, the Council's decision was upheld in 51 (69%) of cases, up from 67% in the previous year. No appeals related to a committee overturn.

16.15 Analysis of the appeals allowed shows that the applications had been refused for the following reason:

- Visual Amenity – 13
- Highway Safety - 3
- Residential Amenity of neighbours– 2
- Amenity for future occupiers- 3
- Lawfulness of development – 1
- Condition attached to planning permission - 1

16.16 It is evident that most appeals are allowed when the reason for refusal relates to visual amenity and these appeals related mainly to householder development. The design of a development is subjective. The Council is bringing forward new SPG so monitoring of decisions will continue particularly once the new SPG is adopted.

16.17 The Welsh Government's target for a good Authority is 66% of appeals dismissed so the Council is still performing above this target.

16.18 During 2021-22 one award of costs were awarded against the Council and one award of costs was made in the Council's favour.

16.18 Engagement

16.19 In previous years, data provided to the Council has allowed us to compare engagement with other Authorities. As this data has not been provided for the last three years, this comparison cannot be undertaken. However,

- we allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee;
- The department has maintained a phone service, albeit with reduced hours (10.30am to 3.00pm) due to long-term staff sickness. In addition, case officers have mobile phones and email so can be contacted directly by applicants and agents.; and
- we maintain an online register of planning applications and the online system allows members of the public to view applications, follow progress of the application and submit comments.

16.20 Enforcement

16.21 In 2021-22 we investigated 218 enforcement complaints, 32% of these within 84 days. In 2020-21 we investigated 229 enforcement cases, 51% within 84 days.

16.22 The drop in performance in 2020-21 can be attributed to two main factors. Firstly, the Coronavirus lockdown impacted the ability of enforcement officers to investigate complaints. Access to property was restricted and as a result, it took longer for officers to be able to establish whether a breach of planning control had occurred. This led to a backlog in enforcement cases, which has increased following the receipt of 445 complaints in 2021-22.

16.23 The second issue relates to staff resources. One of the enforcement officers left the Authority early in the year. This vacancy put additional pressure on the enforcement service with an inevitable impact on performance. The post has since been filled, albeit on a temporary basis. In addition, the departure of a team leader towards the end of the year also had an impact, as other team leaders absorbed his workload until a replacement was appointed. This added to the timescale for progressing cases.

16.24 The average time taken to pursue positive enforcement action was 99 days in 2021-22.