

Organisational response

Report title: Planning Service review – Newport City Council

Completion date: 29th May 2024

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Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer (title)
R1	<p>Service Planning</p> <p>The Planning Service should strengthen its service planning arrangements to reflect the breadth of the service's activity and contribution to the Council. This would help it better demonstrate its value to the Council and provide a clear focus for future service improvements. It would also help the Council monitor the performance of the Planning Service and facilitate greater accountability for performance.</p>	<p>The recommendations have been carefully considered and comments regarding the Service Plan noted. There are opportunities to update and expand on the Service Plan in the new Regeneration and Economic Development (RED) Service Plan which is in the process of being prepared. This will allow overarching objectives to be widened and additional key actions to be included. This will link back to Performance Indicators and clarify how they will be captured and reported to Members.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the Service Plan should reflect the range of services delivered and how we make a positive contribution to the Council and the wider public. Allied to this, the Service Plan will be updated to identify the key challenges, risks and mitigating actions that the Planning Service is currently facing, including the risks around IT and staff recruitment which has, and will continue to impact on planning performance.</p> <p>The Service Plan is supplemented by other reporting documents, including the Local Development Plan (LDP) Annual Monitoring Report which was recently reported to Planning Committee.</p>	October 2024	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

<p>R2</p>	<p>Performance Reporting</p> <p>The Planning Service should improve its performance reporting by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reinstating as intended its annual planning performance report to allow members and the public to gain a better and more thorough understanding of the performance of the service; and - restructuring as intended its Section 106 annual report to allow members and the public to gain a better and more thorough understanding of the allocation of Section 106 monies across the Council and city. 	<p>It is considered that the Service is forward-facing and regularly reviews how to improve the service we provide. This involves learning lessons from other Local Planning Authorities across the UK, which is noted in the report.</p> <p>The Annual Planning Performance Report will be reinstated this year and we will continue to look at identifying best practice from elsewhere. This will include data on a variety of indicators, and outline challenges and successes in the previous financial year.</p> <p>A new format Section 106 (Planning Contributions) Report will also be produced on an annual basis, where development benefits will be delivered and providing more transparency.</p> <p>All of these documents will be linked back to the revised RED Service Plan to enable improved accountability of performance across the Planning and Development Service.</p>	<p>October 2024</p>	<p>Planning and Development Manager</p>
<p>R3</p>	<p>Data Quality</p> <p>The Council needs to assure itself that the Planning Service has robust data quality arrangements to ensure that it reports accurate performance data so that staff, members, Welsh Government and the public can place reliance on the integrity of the data.</p>	<p>One data collection issue that was identified as part of the audit has been resolved and links to the next recommendation. It is fully accepted that correct data needs to be submitted to Welsh Government.</p> <p>The data submitted to the Welsh Government is automatically populated by the IT system, but upon further investigation</p>	<p>December 2024</p>	<p>Planning and Development Manager</p>

		<p>issues with recording information correctly on the IT system has resulted in minor errors.</p> <p>These inputting errors are being addressed with the team through further training. The service area will continue to monitor and review data before submission to ensure the information is accurately captured in the first instance to give confidence in the system.</p>		
R4	<p>Planning Service IT system</p> <p>The Council needs to improve staff training on the Planning Service's IT system to ensure full use of the system's functionality, to improve recording and reporting of performance data and to improve efficiency.</p>	<p>This recommendation is fully acknowledged and will be acted upon. As noted in the report, the service introduced a new IT system in 2020, just prior to the pandemic. It is acknowledged that the system is not being utilised to its full potential and further formal training will be provided.</p>	December 2024	Planning and Development Manager
R5	<p>Governance arrangements</p> <p>The Council should strengthen its Planning Service's governance arrangements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensuring the Planning Committee arrangements and procedures as stated in the Planning Committee Code of Practice align with the arrangements stated within the Council's constitution; - reviewing the balance of time local ward members have to speak on planning applications at committee meetings as compared to applicants and objectors; - clarifying the role and voting rights of a Planning Committee member when 	<p>The Planning Committee Protocol and Code of Practice will be updated to correct inaccuracies and inconsistencies. This will also include a review of the time local ward members are allocated to speak at the Committee meeting, and the providing clarification on the role / voting rights of a Planning Committee Member, using best practice from other Local Planning Authorities.</p> <p>All Members will be offered training on Committee Procedures and given an overview of Planning related matters.</p>	<p>Review by December 2024 (formal amendment at the earliest date thereafter that is possible under Council procedures).</p> <p>December 2024</p>	Head of Law and Standards / Democratic and Electoral Services Manager

addressing the Committee in their capacity as a Local Ward Member who has called a planning application to the committee to reduce the risk of a conflict of interest or pre-determination; and

- providing all Members with training on Planning Committee procedures and an overview of planning matters.