

Monmouthshire LPA

PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) – 2018-19

PREFACE

I am very pleased to introduce the fifth Annual Performance Report for Monmouthshire County Council's Planning Service.

This report shows that Monmouthshire's Planning Service continues to perform very well, with just four of seventeen relevant indicators that were in need of improvement against the Welsh Government's targets. We are performing particularly well in dealing with major planning applications and I am pleased to note that the committee process is working effectively showing an excellent relationship between members and officers in this authority. The Heritage Team members deserve high praise for their outstanding quality of service and the commitment they have shown in developing and establishing a joint heritage service with our neighbours at Torfaen Council.

Where we are performing less well, we have clear actions to improve those elements of the service.

Good planning is central to the Council's purpose of building sustainable, resilient communities while also generating growth in the economy and protecting the heritage and landscapes that make our County the beautiful place it is. It is central to achieving our well-being objectives for everyone who lives, works and spends time in our beautiful County.

Councillor Bob Greenland, Cabinet Member

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This is Monmouthshire's fifth Annual Performance Report, which looks at the performance of the Planning Service against nationally set performance indicators, Welsh Government targets, the Wales average performance, and Monmouthshire's performance last year. The results are considered in the context of the challenges, opportunities, priorities and resources (staffing and financial) available to us. The objective of the APR is to reflect on and celebrate good performance, identify areas for improvement, and look across Wales to identify potential areas of best practice that we could learn from or share with others.
- 1.2 The nature of the performance indicators means their focus is on decision speed and customer service rather than measuring whether or not better outcomes have been achieved. It has not yet been possible to identify an objective way of measuring outcomes, however we seek to prioritise securing the best scheme possible rather than traditional indicators relating to speed of decision-making. Research has identified that our customers' priority is securing planning permission: customers generally understand the benefits of good design and, within reason, do not see the time taken as a priority.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this report, 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.

This Framework was established by the Welsh Government in partnership with Local Planning Authority representatives, and Monmouthshire's Head of Planning sat on the working group and the Council's Development Services Manager continues to contribute to the group. Performance is ranked as 'good', 'fair' or 'needs improvement'.

- 1.4 Based on the customer feedback in Section 5 and the performance information in Section 6 and Appendix A, we can be pleased with the service we deliver. During this period:
- The proportion of all applications determined within 8 weeks or an agreed timescale at 88.4% was well above the national target of 80% and was just above the Welsh average;
 - The proportion of major applications determined within agreed timescales increased and at 89% was over 20% above the Welsh average;
 - 89% of listed building applications were determined within approved timescales and we dealt with more heritage applications than any other authority in Wales;
 - The percentage of applications approved remained well above WG average and is stable at 95%;
 - Over 2018/19, 170 planning applications stemmed from pre-application advice we gave. Of those that have been determined 98% were approved. Only one application was refused and that proposal did not follow the officer advice given at pre-application stage. One application was withdrawn and not progressed due to a change in the applicant's

circumstances. Consequently, we have a 100% success rate of applications that went to decision stage and followed our pre-application advice.

- The proportion of respondents to the 2017/18 customer survey who were satisfied overall with the service was 74%, well above the Welsh average of 63%. This shows that, despite a challenging workload, the implementation of our new planning application processing software and staff changes, our performance and levels of customer satisfaction have improved and our pre-application advice service is effective.

1.5 A summary table of our performance can be found in Appendix A. There are 17 relevant indicators and of these:

- Monmouthshire's performance is ranked 'good' against 12, 'fair' against 1 and 'in need of improvement' against 4. The 'fair' result relates to the average time taken to determine all applications in days; this missed the target of 67 days and at 86 days will be the focus of improvement via our action plan. One of the four measures that were in need of improvement was the five-year supply of housing land that has fallen to 3.9 years; work is underway to address this via the allocation of appropriate unallocated sites and via the LDP review (these matters are discussed elsewhere in this Report and also in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2019). In addition, our appeal performance, although an improvement upon the 2017/18 period, standing at 46% of appeals being dismissed was well below the expected standard of 66%. An analysis of the appeal performance is set out in 'Our Performance 2018-19' par. 6.21 below. The two enforcement measures showed a decline in performance over previous years and the need to manage these elements and provide timelier outcomes is acknowledged and will be a priority going forward. This is being addressed via a review of the Planning Enforcement function which is anticipated to be concluded by December 2019. There will be a focus on these measures in the 2019/20 APR.
- We performed above or at the Wales average in 11 of the 15 comparable indicators. The indicators for which performance was below Wales average related to average time taken to determine all applications in days, appeal performance and the two enforcement measures, as referred to immediately above. Further commentary on the performance against these measures is set out in Section 6.
- Our performance declined against four indicators, The declining performance related to:
 - a) 5 year housing land supply;
 - b) Average time taken to determine all planning applications;
 - c) 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
 - d) Average time taken to take positive enforcement action

Where a target was set by the Welsh Government, we are still ranked 'good' or 'fair' except for the enforcement and appeal performance, and the five year housing land supply measure. The latter had fallen to 3.9 years' supply below the required 5 year supply (but following interventions to improve this situation we know this has risen to 4.0 years' at March 2019, Monmouthshire being the only Authority in Wales to improve this measure). This is discussed in detail in the LDP AMR 2019.

1.6 In the light of the above, five actions are proposed going forward:

Action 1 – Complete the review of the effectiveness of the Council’s bespoke pre-application advice service and rolling out the use of Planning Performance Agreements, where appropriate.

Action 2 – Continue to improve the Planning Service’s web pages to deliver relevant, accessible and legible information so that customers can self-serve. This includes investigating the value of a chatbot to signpost users to information held online that can help them self-serve and reduce queries to the team via phone and email.

Action 3 - Systems review of the Planning Service’s enforcement function and its processes to speed up our decision-making, verify if we have the right resources and we are providing a good service for our customers

Action 4 – Continue to pursue an agenda of collaboration in relation to heritage services with neighbouring authorities and collaboration in other areas where possible, including the evidence base for the review of the Local Development Plan.

2.0 CONTEXT

- 2.1 This section sets out the planning context within which the Local Planning Authority operates, both corporately and in terms of Monmouthshire as a county, for the 2018-19 period.

Corporate Context

- 2.2 The Council adopted its Local Development Plan in February 2014 and will be submitting its fifth Annual Monitoring Report in October 2019.
- 2.3 The purpose of the Planning Service is to help build sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations in Monmouthshire, which is a shared purpose with the Council's public service board partners. This is at the heart of everything we do.
We contribute to delivering the Council's well-being objectives, which align to the Public Service Boards objectives, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2017-2022, the specific objectives we contribute to are:

MCC Purpose	Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities
MCC Well-being Objectives	The best possible start in life Lifelong well-being Maximise the potential of the natural and built environment Thriving and well-connected county Future-focussed Council

- 2.4 The Planning Service's purpose links directly to Monmouthshire County Council's objective of building sustainable, resilient communities.
- 2.5 The Planning Service sits within the Council's Enterprise Directorate. The Enterprise Vision provides a strategic context for the development and promotion of an enterprising culture, which builds business resilience and creates high value outcomes for Monmouthshire's communities.
- 2.6 The Planning Service is made up of i) the Planning Policy and ii) the Development Management teams. The primary purpose of the Planning Policy team is to prepare the statutory Local Development Plan (LDP) and assist in its effective implementation through the Development Management (planning application) process. This ensures that the land use and sustainable development objectives of the Council are met ensuring the provision of an adequate supply of land in sustainable locations for housing, retail, education, recreation, tourism, transport, business, waste and other needs, whilst protecting the county's valued environmental, heritage and cultural assets. This work aligns directly with achieving four of the Council's Well-being objectives while being prepared to work innovatively aligns with the fifth objective regarding a Future-focussed Council.
- 2.7 The Head of Service for Planning is also the Head of Housing. The Monmouthshire Public Service Board Well-being Plan identifies a key issue as being the need to respond to

demographic change, with the County having an increasingly ageing population. The Planning Service has an important part to play (alongside Housing colleagues) in readdressing the supply and mix of housing stock to ensure suitable and affordable housing is available to all demographic groups.

- 2.8 The Planning Service in its policy-making role and when making decisions on planning applications has a significant part in the Well-being goal that seeks to “Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change”. The PSB Well-being Plan acknowledges this by i) identifying Planning’s (and its partners’) capacity to improve the resilience of ecosystems by working at a larger scale (landscape) to manage biodiversity and maximise benefits such as natural flood risk management; ii) ensuring design and planning policy supports strong, vibrant and healthy communities that are good for people and the environment, and iii) enabling renewable energy schemes, especially community owned schemes, and developing new solutions including storage, smart energy, heat and local supply.
- 2.9 The Planning Service’s Vision is “To enable through the land use planning policy framework the building of sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations.”
- 2.10 In addition, the Development Management Service undertook a System Review between 2010-12 where its purpose was established as being: “To advise on, give permission for and ensure the best possible development” which complements the overall service vision.
- 2.11 Key areas of work for the Service include:
- Carrying out a review and subsequent revision of the Monmouthshire LDP.
 - Preparing and co-ordinating thematic supplementary planning guidance to help to foster the interpretation and implementation of LDP policy.
 - Implementing the Council’s LDP through engaging and working with communities, and partnership working with both internal and external partners.
 - Depending on the outcome of legislative changes at the UK Government level, adopting and implementing the Community Infrastructure Levy. Infrastructure needs will be reviewed and consideration will be given to the best options for funding them alongside LDP progress.
 - Working with colleagues in Development Management to create a unified Planning Service focussed on enabling positive outcomes.
 - Monitoring and evaluating development plan policies, including preparing the statutory LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).
 - Maintaining the LDP evidence base and ensuring fitness for purpose for future LDP revision.
 - Developing linkages with the Council’s emerging framework for community governance and development
 - Providing pre-application advice to customers;
 - Determining planning applications in accordance with adopted policy and material planning considerations, taking into account stakeholder comments and corporate objectives;
 - Securing financial contributions from developers to offset the infrastructure demands of new development;
 - Safeguarding the County’s 2400 Listed Buildings and 31 Conservation Areas, areas of archaeological sensitivity, the Wye Valley AONB and the Brecon Beacons National Park;

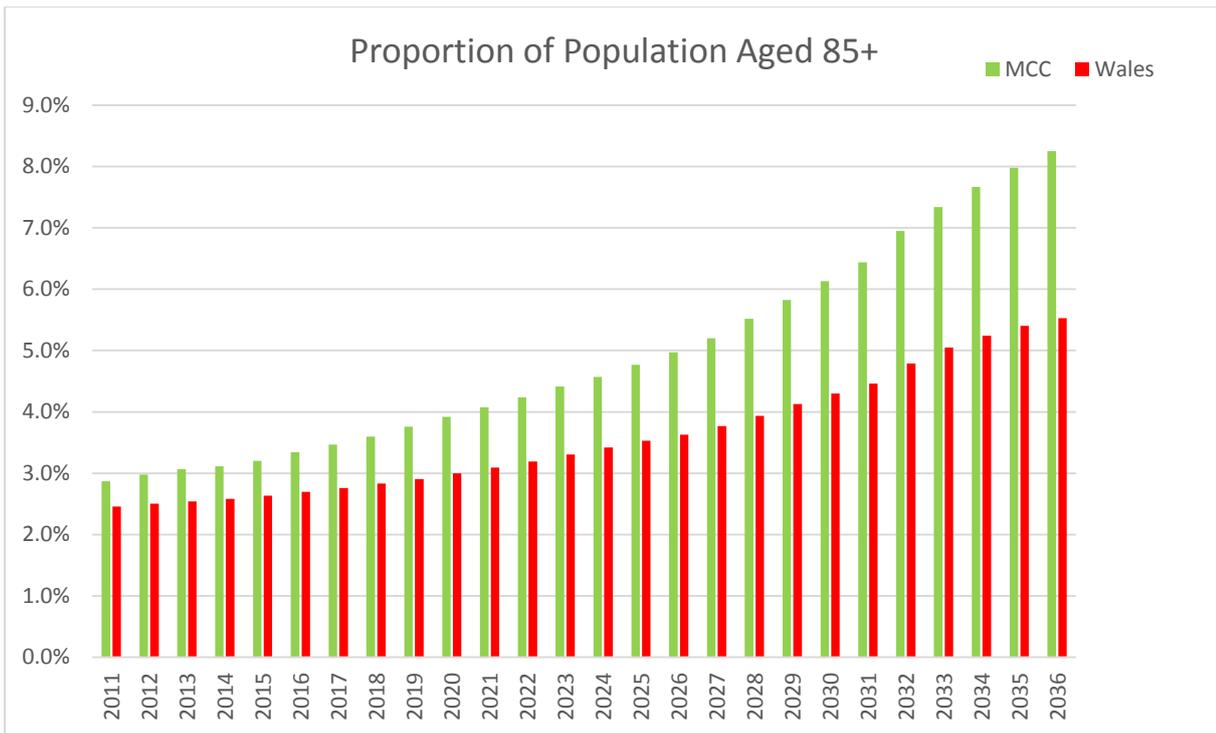
- Providing a heritage service for our neighbouring colleagues in Torfaen County Borough that works in a manner that is consistent and as well-resourced as the one provided for Monmouthshire.
 - Taking robust enforcement action against unauthorised development that is unacceptable.
 - Preparing and submitting the Planning Services' Annual Performance Report (APR) to WG which assesses the effectiveness of the Monmouthshire's planning service and benchmarks it against other Councils' performance.
- 2.12 The main customer of the Planning Service is the applicant of any planning application, however there are numerous stakeholders including individuals, communities, businesses, third sector organisations, other Council Services and elected Members.

Local Context

2.13 Located in South East Wales, Monmouthshire occupies a strategic position between the major centres in South Wales, the South West of England and the Midlands. The County shares a border with the neighbouring Local Planning Authorities of Newport, Torfaen and Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP) in Wales and Gloucestershire, the Forest of Dean and Herefordshire in England, with Severn crossing links to South Gloucestershire. The County forms the gateway to South Wales, and is part of the Cardiff Capital City Region. This location gives the County a distinctive identity.

2.14 Our people

- 2.14.1 Monmouthshire covers an area of approximately 88,000 hectares with a population of 91,323 in 2011 (92,843 according to the 2016 mid-year estimate), 7.9% of which resides within the BBNP area of the County. The County has a low population density of 1.1 persons per hectare – significantly lower than the South East Wales average of 5.3 persons per hectare – reflecting the area's rural nature. Only 53% of the population live in wards defined as being urban areas (i.e. with a population of more than 10,000).
- 2.14.2 Our population has been increasing steadily, up 7.6% between 2001 and 2011 compared with the Wales average of 5.5%. This increase is wholly attributable to inward migration, with natural change showing negative growth. The County has a relatively high and increasing proportion of older age groups, and a lower and decreasing proportion of younger adults compared with the UK and Wales averages. This trend is predicted to continue.



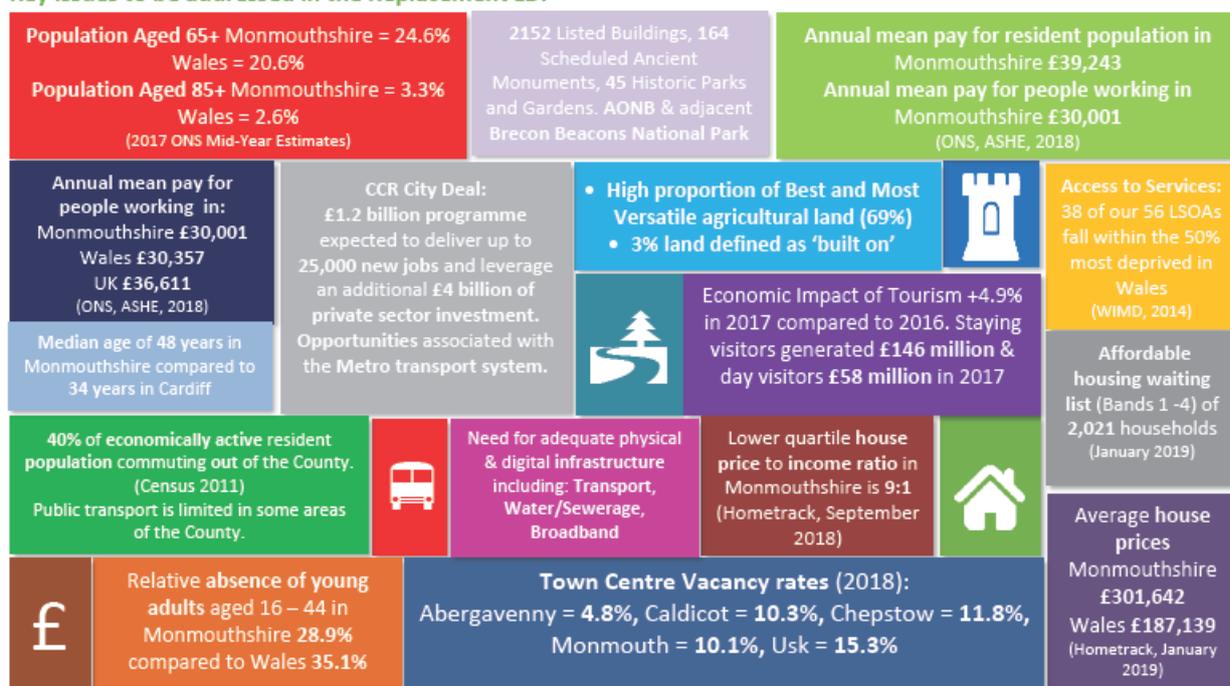
Source: Office for National Statistics

2.14.3 This demographic change has significant implications for economic activity and demand for services to enable our citizens to continue to live independent lives. The Council has embarked on a work-stream named ‘Future Monmouthshire’ to consider the needs and aspirations of our communities going forward, and how those will be met in the context of a rapidly changing public sector. The project is also considering the extent to which we are a hostage to fortune of these demographic changes, or if we can and should seek to change trends, for example by seeking to retain younger people in the County and the role of affordable housing and employment opportunities in achieving that. This work is providing important evidence, context and direction to the review of the Local Development Plan and to regional planning.

2.14.4 The following diagram encapsulates the challenges facing the Council in the review of the LDP over the next two years:

Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan – Issues, Vision and Objectives

Key Issues to be addressed in the Replacement LDP



2.15 Housing and quality of life

2.15.1 The County has three broad categories of settlement:

- The historic market towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth have developed over many years to have a wide range of opportunities for employment, shopping, community facilities and public transport;
- The newer settlements in Severnside of Caldicot/Portskewett, Magor/Undy, Rogiet and Sudbrook where recent high levels of residential growth have taken place without the local jobs and community facilities to match. The area benefits, however, from a strategic location at the 'Gateway' to Wales with good access to the employment markets of Newport, Cardiff and Bristol;
- The rural area, containing the small town of Usk, the larger villages of Raglan and Penperlleni, and a large number of smaller villages, widely dispersed around the County.

2.15.2 Over the last decade, housing completions in the Monmouthshire LPA area have averaged approximately 245 dwellings per annum, although there have been significant annual variations with just 158 completions in 2009/10. To deliver the LDP housing requirement, 488 completions per annum are required (2013-2021). To date, completions since LDP adoption have averaged approximately 240 per annum. This is discussed in more detail in the LDP Annual Monitoring Report.

2.15.3 Average house prices are significantly higher than the Wales average (£301,600 compared to £187,100 average in January 2019) resulting in a significant need for affordable housing (source: Hometrack Housing Intelligence). Between 2006 (the time the Monmouthshire Unitary Development Plan was adopted) and March 2019, there have been 3,404 completions of which 715 were affordable, equating to 21% of all dwellings built. Since LDP adoption (2014) to March 2019 there have been 1,399 completions of which 342 were affordable, equating to 24.5% of all dwellings constructed.

2.15.4 Monmouthshire is generally a prosperous County offering a high quality of life for its reside super output areas (LSOA) in Monmouthshire in the most deprived 10% in Wales. However, poor access to community facilities and declining local service provision is an issue for rural and ageing communities. The health of Monmouthshire's population is generally better than the Wales average, with greater life expectancies and higher proportion of residents classing themselves as being in good health (2011 Census). Fewer residents in the County suffer with a limiting long-term illness compared with Wales as a whole. The rate of reported crime in Monmouthshire tends to be lower than for Wales as a whole.

2.16 **Our economy**

2.16.1 The County has a high proportion of working age people in employment (62.8% in 2011) compared to neighbouring Authorities or the Wales average (58.2%). Our economy is reliant on the public sector and services for employment:

- The public administration, education and health sector accounts for 33.3% of jobs;
- The distribution, retail, hotels and restaurants sector accounts for 27.4% of jobs;
- Tourism, as part of the services sector, is also important in the County (see 2.16.3 below).

- 2.16.2 The County had 3,720 active enterprises in 2011, 27% of which were in the property and business services sector. Nearly 99% of the County's businesses are classified as small (i.e. up to 49 employees). Monmouthshire has experienced growth in eight of fourteen sectors in the decade to 2011, with the greatest increases in the property business services, hotels and catering and education and health sectors, while there has been a decline in the number of manufacturing businesses. Recent changes in Business Rates by the Welsh Government have disproportionately affected Monmouthshire.
- 2.16.3 Tourism is vital to Monmouthshire's economy and generates income to support a wide range of businesses that benefit from spending by visitors. According to figures supplied by tourism economic indicator STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor), the sector brought in £204.43m to Monmouthshire in 2017 and supported the equivalent of 2,968 full-time jobs, accounting for approximately 10% of the workforce. Each visitor contributing to the county's economy by purchasing food and drink, fuel, services and accommodation spends on average over £66 per day.
- 2.16.4 Monmouthshire's tourism performance over the life of the previous plan displayed an encouraging 10% real growth in terms of economic impact, an increase of 8.7% in visitor numbers and a 1.5% growth in full-time jobs. The approved Destination Management Plan has been developed following a review of the previous plan and is based on Monmouthshire's best prospects for tourism growth as well as extensive consultation with stakeholders.
- 2.16.5 The Plan capitalises on key opportunities for Monmouthshire, including its location at the gateway to Wales offering an initial chance to make a great impression, especially now that Severn Bridge tolls are to be phased out. It also recognises Monmouthshire's contribution to the Cardiff Capital Region's City Deal and the overall growth target - set by the Welsh Government's tourism organisation, Visit Wales - of 10% or more in the sector's value by 2020.
- 2.16.6 The 2015 Welsh Government Commuting Statistics indicate that 58.3% of the County's residents work in the area. Although less than the Welsh average of 69.4%, this is an improvement of last year's figure of 54.5%. This suggests that there has been some progress in meeting the aspiration to increase the proportion of resident workforce working within Monmouthshire over the Plan period. However, the same data source suggests that Monmouthshire has a net outflow of 900 commuters – with 17,800 commuting into the Authority to work and 18,700 commuting out. There was significant in-commuting from Torfaen (3,000), Newport (2,900), Blaenau Gwent (2,800) and from outside Wales (8,000). The main areas for out-commuting were Newport (3,900), Bristol (3,400), Cardiff (2,500) and Torfaen (2,100), with a further 6,400 commuting to other areas outside Wales. A relatively high proportion of Monmouthshire's residents travel long distances to work, with a high usage of the private car. Heavy reliance on the private car and limited opportunities for public transport is a particular issue in rural areas. These figures should be treated with caution, however, as the data is based on a small sample survey.

2.17 Communications

2.17.1 The County is easily accessible from the rest of Wales by the M4, A40, A449 and A4042 and from England by the M4 and M48 Severn Bridges and the A48, A40 and A465. The good road transport links connect the County to major population centres such as Cardiff, Newport and Bristol. Monmouthshire is served by a number of local and national bus routes, with main bus stations in the towns of Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth. In terms of rail provision, Monmouthshire has four railway stations, at Caldicot, Chepstow and Severn Tunnel Junction in the south of the County and Abergavenny in the north. As part of the Cardiff Capital Region, Monmouthshire is set to benefit from the proposed South Wales Metro proposals. The local community in Magor Undy is at an advanced stage of campaigning for a new Magor Undy Walkway Station, close to the Community Hub building that has now received planning permission. The announcement to remove the toll charge on the Severn Bridge has already had a demonstrable impact on house prices and, anecdotally, on speed of sales.

2.17.2 Public rights of way include 1,499km of footpaths, 71km of bridleways, 84.5km of restricted byways and 1.5km of unrestricted byways. These public rights of way are complemented by permissive paths. The County has three long distance regional trails (Usk Valley, Wye Valley and Three Castles) as well as the national trail (Offa's Dyke Path). The County also provides the start of the all-Wales coastal path. There are two national cycle routes within Monmouthshire, both of which run from Chepstow. The countryside access opportunities available in the County are one of its key assets, sustaining tourism and providing opportunities for economic regeneration.

2.17.3 The rural nature of the County and high proportion of SMEs means broadband and mobile communication are both vital and challenging. The Council is part of the Superfast Cymru project rolling out BT broadband. Other local projects to roll out Broadband into less accessible rural areas are being explored.

2.18 Our natural heritage

2.18.1 The County is noted for its rural beauty and has a rich and diverse landscape stretching from the coastline of the Gwent Levels in the south of the County, to the uplands of the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north. In addition, there is the picturesque river corridor of the Wye Valley AONB in the east and the Blaenavon Industrial World Heritage Site to the north-west. The landscape and countryside of Monmouthshire contributes not only to the health and well-being of Monmouthshire's residents but also supports the important tourist economy.

2.18.2 Monmouthshire has significant biodiversity and nature conservation resources, a number of which are internationally or nationally recognised, including:

- The Severn Estuary Special Area for Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Ramsar Site (Wetland of international importance);
- The River Wye, River Usk, Wye Valley woodlands and Wye Valley Special Areas of Conservation (bat sites);

- 49 nationally designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) – covering some 2,087 hectares. Most are woodland or grassland sites with others designated for their wetland or geological interest;
- Two National Nature Reserves (Fiddler’s Elbow (woodland) and Lady Park Wood) and one Local Nature Reserve at Cleddon Bog;
- Approximately 650 non-statutory Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) predominantly in relation to grassland and ancient and semi-natural woodland areas. The statutory sites cover 6,432 hectares, or 7.6% of the LPA area; 3,664 hectares of which comprises the Severn Estuary SPA.

2.18.3 Other key challenges facing the Planning Service include areas at risk of flooding (including most of the Gwent Levels and the flood plains of the Rivers Usk and Wye and their tributaries). There are, however, flood defences within the towns of Chepstow, Monmouth and Usk.

2.19 **Our built heritage**

2.19.1 The Monmouthshire LPA area has a rich built heritage and historic environment which includes:

- Approximately 2,400 Listed Buildings, of which 2% are Grade I, 10% are Grade II* and 88% are Grade II. Of note, around 176 Listed Buildings have been identified as being at risk.
- 31 Conservation Areas – designated for their special historic or architectural interest, covering some 1,648 hectares in total;
- 45 Historic Parks and Gardens – identified as having a Special Historic Interest, covering 1,910 hectares;
- 3 Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest identified by Cadw (parts of Blaenavon, the Gwent Levels and the Lower Wye Valley);
- 164 Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

2.20.1 The LDP is heavily reliant on greenfield sites to deliver its development needs due to a lack of brownfield sites. Air quality in Monmouthshire generally meets current standards, although there are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) within the County, where objective levels of nitrogen dioxide may be exceeded. These are at Bridge Street in Usk and Hardwick Hill/Mount Pleasant in Chepstow. The Monmouthshire Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy has not identified any sites as being contaminated.

3.0 PLANNING SERVICE

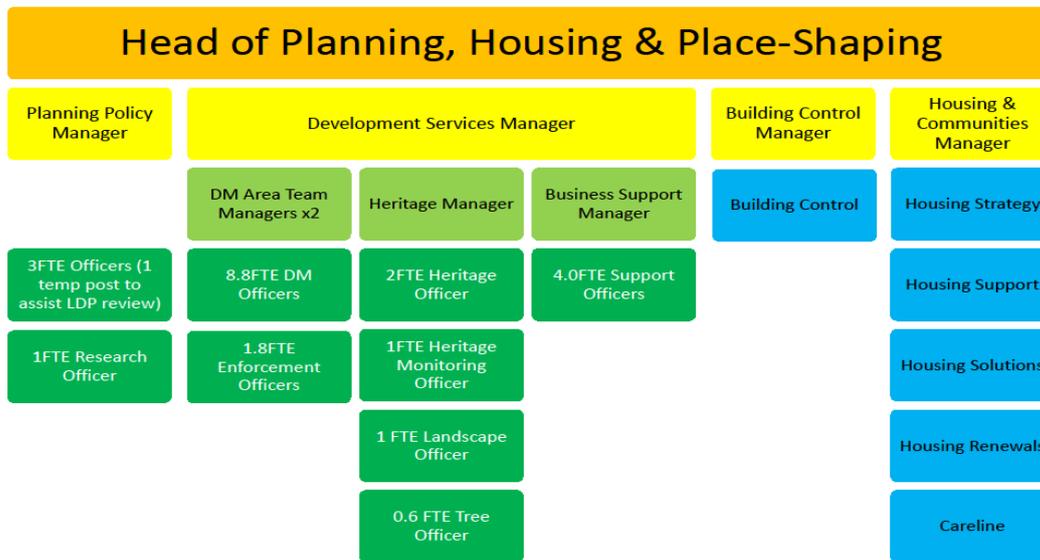
Organisational setting

3.1 During the previous reporting period, the Planning Service underwent a number of significant changes, including a restructuring of management responsibilities within Planning Policy and DM. This resulted in an increase in management capacity as a response to officer feedback, to better support colleagues, to enable succession planning and recognise talent, and to support service delivery improvements. The changes have now bedded in with the new full-time Policy Manager being at the forefront of the LDP review and additional management capacity enabling better monitoring of officer performance in the DM team. Within this reporting period, a senior manager in DM retired leading to their replacement by a new DM Area Team Manager (Abergavenny/ Usk DM area and Enforcement), also from within the DM team, thus rewarding in-house talent and providing career progression. Other changes have seen the recruitment of a new Landscape Officer who sits in the Heritage Team together with the Tree Officer post, formerly in the Countryside and GI Team being accommodated in the Heritage Team as another key specialist to assist the planning process. The delivery of a joint heritage service with Torfaen CBC from January 2019 and managed by Monmouthshire County Council has led to the recruitment of a further senior heritage officer for a two year period (albeit that this post is funded by Torfaen Council). A 0.5FTE post in Support was deleted as a budget saving. In Planning Policy, three internal promotions occurred including the appointment of a new full time Policy Manager following the retirement of the previous part time manager. Owing to the need to have adequate staff to undertake the LDP review, a three year temporary senior policy officer post was created and filled internally by the secondment of a senior DM officer. The senior DM post has been backfilled to enable the DM team to be adequately staffed.

Department structure and reporting lines for the 2018-19 reporting period



3.2 Planning Service staffing structure for the 2018-19 reporting period



Links with other Council projects

3.3 There are a number of wider corporate activities that impact upon the planning service, or that the planning service supports and/or shapes:

3.3.1 Budget management

Local Government budgets have been significantly reduced over recent years, and the Planning Service has had to make savings in the same way as all other unprotected services. This has comprised a combination of reduced expenditure, increased income budget lines, and reduced staffing costs. In 2014-15 and 2015-16, the DM team underspent by around £50k each year through underspends in respect of staff costs (gaps between posts being filled) and the Professional & Specialist Fees budget. In 2016-17 identified budget mandate savings of £40k for DM were not achieved - savings had been anticipated via extra planning application fee income for 2016/17 – however, application fee income fell from £626k for 2015/16 to £506k for 2016/17 owing to economic conditions. Savings (or increased income) for 2017/18 were then identified via an increase in pre-application advice fees (by £5k), a drive towards a paperless system (reducing printing and copying – leading to savings of £5k), the introduction of new fee earning services (fast track planning applications and pre-purchase / completion certificates, anticipated to earn £4k) and a reduction in the DM Professional & Specialist Fees element of the budget by £43k. Planning Policy set budget savings of around £17k for 2017/18, including a reduction in their Professional & Specialist Fees element of the budget. Owing to the reduction in planning application fee income over 2017/18 there was an over spend of £197,000 in the DM Team, whereas the Policy team underspent by £218,000, leaving an overall underspend of £21,000.

For 2018/19, DM fee income recovered significantly compared to the two previous years leading to a small overspend of £7k in DM, whereas the Policy team underspent by £186k. Much of this underspend is the rolled over reserve to fund the LDP review which will be used over the next two years.

3.3.2 The income from planning applications improved to £583k in 2018/19, over £200k more than the previous reporting period. Almost £50k of fees were received for the council's pre-application advice service which was 'on budget'. The DM Team made savings of almost £19k via the deletion of a 0.5FTE support officer post, a reduction in the travel claims allowance budget (by making more efficient use of the two pool cars DM rents) and a small reduction in the professional fees budget. Both elements of the service made some savings because of an under-spend in the respective professional fees budget.

3.3.3 Service improvement/Systems Thinking

The Council has reviewed a number of its services via a Systems Thinking approach. Planning underwent this review between 2010 and 2012, and it is now fully embedded. The review seeks to strip the service back to basic principles: who is the customer, and what is important to them? As far as is possible (for example taking into account legislative requirements), activities that do not add value to the customer are removed.

In terms of the Planning Service, this has resulted in a high performing, outcome-focussed service. Officers are empowered to make decisions and take responsibility for their caseload from start to end. The outcome focus means that our emphasis is on securing a positive outcome where possible, rather than a focus on arbitrary performance targets. Performance against end-to-end times is monitored via monthly team meetings, however this monitoring is in the context that decision speed is only a small part of the wider picture, and is not always important to our customers.

The team applied this approach when implementing the roll out of a new planning application processing data base system that went live in March/ April 2018. This ensured disruption when changing over to the new system was minimised. It has also been used as method to seek ways of improving the service's web pages to improve the customer experience when accessing planning-related information online.

3.3.4 Development Team approach

A fee-paying pre-application advice service was introduced in late 2013 which has been well received by customers and is now embedded. This service includes offering a Development Team approach, which seeks to provide an integrated, round-table multi-disciplinary approach to pre-application enquiries. This has helped build positive relationships with other service areas, and help all parties to understand each other's objectives and priorities, leading to better outcomes. We also ask applicants if they wish the local ward member to be involved in pre-application discussions on major planning applications to improve communication and to promote transparency. Another improvement we have introduced is to ensure the council's Design Panel, made up of the council's planning committee chair, vice chair and opposition spokesperson and senior planning managers, is involved at an early stage for major planning proposals that have a design implication. Experience shows the subsequent planning application follows a smoother path during the committee process

because of the inclusive nature of the journey. All applications that have undergone this process – including major housing proposals at Abergavenny, Monmouth and Caldicot that have been approved within agreed timescales.

During this reporting period, we received 387 applications for pre-application advice and closed 367:

- 79% were determined within the agreed timescale for pre-application advice;
- Over 2018/19, 170 planning applications stemmed from pre-application advice we gave. Of those that have been determined 98% were approved. Only one application was refused and that proposal did not follow the officer advice given at pre-application stage. One application was withdrawn and not progressed due to a change in the applicant's circumstances. Consequently, we have a 100% success rate of applications that went to decision stage and followed our pre-application advice.

As part of the systems thinking revisit referred to in 3.3.2 above, it is intended to review our pre-application advice service to see how we can make this more effective for the customer and improve the timeliness of our responses. This is particularly important as we are looking to put in place fast track services for more complex proposals that will necessitate the Development Team approach. The Development Team approach is valued by customers as it provides a comprehensive service but it is more challenging to organise given the number of different officers involved.

3.3.5 Best practice benchmarking

We are involved in various regional and all-Wales working groups, which provide an important forum for identifying, learning from and sharing best practice, while recognising Monmouthshire's uniqueness. These groups include:

- Planning Officers' Society for Wales (POSW) (meeting of all Chief Planning Officers from Welsh LPAs; POSW is involved in benchmarking work among all Welsh local planning authorities undertaken for WG by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to understand the costs of running a planning service more accurately and comparably than CIPFA data;
- South East Wales branch of POSW (POS-SEW);
- South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG) (meeting of planning policy lead officers from the ten SE Wales LPAs and the Brecon Beacons National Park together with WG representatives, HBF, NRW and Welsh Water). Monmouthshire and Newport Councils jointly chaired this group during this reporting period, with Monmouthshire becoming the Chair Authority in January 2017;
- South East Wales Heritage Forum. Monmouthshire's Heritage Manager chaired this group during this reporting period.
- South Wales Enforcement Forum
- South Wales Development Management Group (meeting of the South Wales Development Management lead officers)

An informal group of DM officers and managers from the former Gwent Local Planning Authorities also meets to share best practice and procedures in the light of new regulations coming into force. The objective is to discuss consistency on a more manageable basis, and feed learning back to all LPAs in Wales.

Monmouthshire's Head of Planning, Housing & Place Shaping sat on the Welsh Government's Positive Planning Advisory Group representing all Welsh Local Planning Authorities working alongside the private sector, Royal Town Planning Institute, Welsh Local Government Association and Welsh Government to co-ordinate the identification, promotion and dissemination of best practice. This group appears to have been disbanded by the Welsh Government.

In addition, we hold monthly liaison meetings between the Planning Policy and Development Management teams to disseminate policy changes at national and strategic levels, to understand corporate strategies, to aid interpretation and implementation of the adopted Local Development Plan, and to review implementation of the LDP to help inform and shape the replacement LDP. This has provided a valuable forum to ensure a cohesive and consistent planning service is provided.

3.3.6 Asset Management

In response to budget pressures, in addition to a wider desire to use our assets responsibly, the Council is undergoing a process of reviewing its estates portfolio and where appropriate, disposing of those assets. The planning service plays a key role in enabling best use of/return from those assets. As an example, planning permission has been granted for a solar farm on one of our own County farms near Crick. The revenue from energy generation can be reinvested into providing valuable services to our citizens. The Corporate Business Plan includes a commitment to deliver a second solar farm.

The Local Development Plan includes four Council-owned sites as housing allocations. During this reporting period, outline planning approval was granted at Crick Road for a mixed use development, detailed planning permission was granted for the first phase of the proposed housing development at Rockfield Farm, Undy while outline permission was also granted for an allocated housing site in Raglan.

3.3.7 21st Century Schools

The planning service continues to play a key role in advising on and enabling the delivery of replacement school buildings as part of the 21st Century Schools project. The aim of this project is to give our young people the best possible start in life, and give them the best possible range of opportunities by the time they leave school. Construction has been completed for both Caldicot and Monmouth comprehensive schools (approved in 2014 and 2015 respectively) although external works are on-going.

3.3.8 Well-Being Plan

There are four well-being objectives forming part of the Monmouthshire Well-Being Plan, two relating to people and two relating to place:

People/Citizens:

- Provide children and young people with the best possible start in life
- Respond to the challenges associated with demographic change

Place/Communities:

- Protect and enhance the resilience of our natural environment whilst mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change.
- Develop opportunities for communities and businesses to be part of an economically thriving and well-connected county.

In tandem with the Well-Being Act and the Well-being Plan the Council's Planning Service is committed to securing sustainable development in the public interest for the good of the County's citizens and its environment.

3.3.9 Local Transport Plan and Active Travel

We contributed towards the Council's Local Transport Plan in a previous reporting period, and will continue to work with colleagues to help enable delivery of the identified priorities and compliance with the Active Travel Act, whether this be via LDP allocations, planning application decisions or securing planning contributions. During this reporting period we have been involved in negotiating pedestrian and cycle links for larger housing schemes at Crick Road, Raglan, Undy and Caldicot, as well as holding discussions relating to new cycle routes in the Chepstow and Usk areas. A new Llanfoist cycle/ footpath bridge was approved planning permission in September 2018 but has since been refused a licence by NRW.

3.3.10 IT improvements and 'channel shift'

The Council has a shared IT resource with Newport, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils, and through this has implemented a new planning back-office system. Collaboration on reporting functions and training has been undertaken with Torfaen Council. Setting up the new system has been very resource intensive but the system went live in April 2018.

The Planning Service is a key frontline service in terms of visibility and customer access. We have already introduced agile working and electronic document management, and work has been undertaken to improve our website to improve the ability of customers and stakeholders to self-serve where possible, as well as to comply with the Welsh Language Measures, although more work is needed to improve the customer offer in this area.

In 2018/19 we improved the layout and content of the DM service's web pages to allow customers to self-serve more easily. We have also moved towards a paperless office, resulting in printing and postage savings. Going forward we would like to scan old microfiche records so that these are also available via our website, however this is prohibitively expensive at present. We also introduced a Report It function on the web site

so that the public could report possible breaches of planning control for the planning enforcement team to investigate.

Operating budget

- 3.4 The operating budget for the service is shown below together with the changes from last year:

	Costs	Income	Net Cost	Change
2013-14	£1,648,800	£601,200	£1,047,600	
2014-15	£1,397,400	£614,900	£782,500	-£265,100 (-25%)
2015-16	£1,360,500	£669,900	£690,600	-£91,900 (-12%)
2016-17	£1,363,600	£572,000	£791,600	+£101,000 (+15%)
2017-18	£1,292,600	£430,100	£862,500	+£70,900 (+9%)
2018-19	£1,426,500	£653,600	£772,900	-£89,600 (-10%)
2019-20*	£1,428,900	£694,400	£734,500	-£38,400 (-5.0%)

*Budgeted figures are shown for 2019-20; actual figures are shown for the other years. The 2019/20 figure excludes Planning Policy's budget for Professional fees.

- 3.5 The two main costs for the service are staff costs and the LDP budget (money is transferred from the above budget to sit in an LDP reserve, built up to fund the next LDP). Income is generated by planning application fees and pre-application advice (the latter amounted to approximately £50,000 over 2018/19) as well as the Planning Service's newer discretionary services that are discussed below.
- 3.6 For 2019/20, planning application fee income has been estimated to remain static at £629k. Agreement to stop increasing the application fees each year by inflation was agreed by the Council given that the authority does not set the fees, they do not rise by inflation each year and fee income is dependent on economic activity which is also out of the Council's hands.
- 3.7 Research by the Welsh Government identifies that application fees recover approximately 60% of the cost of dealing with planning applications, although work is currently being undertaken with the Planning Advisory Service to provide a more accurate picture of cost recovery across all Welsh planning authorities. Additional costs are incurred through the work involved in the statutory Development Plan, and via other services such as enforcement and heritage management. Increased planning application fee income is used to reduce the net cost of the service to the Council. In-year windfall extra income is used to balance the Council's budgets and offset overspend in other services. Conversely as has been the case during recent years, underspend in other services was used to offset DM's under-recovery of income, when economic and other circumstances resulted in a sudden drop in fee income. Application fee income has fluctuated significantly over recent years, and this poses a challenge for budget management going forward. Fee income is heavily influenced by the wider economy, for example house-building (which itself is affected by mortgage lending and development viability) and other funding streams (for example the feed-in tariff for renewable energy schemes).

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Budgeted fee income	£473k	£490k	£525k	£633k	£668k	£684k	£681k	£693k
Actual income	£415k	£596k	£584k	£664k	£560k	£430k	£653k	

N.B. Fee income includes planning application fees, pre-application income and the discretionary fees for fast track applications.

Staff resources

- 3.8 Staffing levels for the reporting period are shown in the chart at paragraph 3.2 above. Staffing levels in the planning service reduced by 5.2FTE between 2013 and the end of 2015/16. Workload increased during this same period (see table at paragraph 4.2). It was recognised that resources were stretched too thinly and additional fee income was invested in employing a 1.0FTE fixed term Senior Landscape and Green Infrastructure Officer in 2015, a 0.6FTE fixed term DM Officer and a 1.0FTE fixed term Business Support Officer. During 2016/17 the 0.6FTE DM Officer was made permanent, an additional 0.5FTE DM Officer has been recruited, and the 1.0FTE Business Support Officer was made permanent (including upskilling the post-holder to enable her to deal with a caseload of minor applications). During 2017/18 there was an adjustment in management responsibilities to increase capacity in DM (responding to staff feedback for more the need for more day-to-day management in 1:2:1s) creating a new post of DM Area Management (Central & South areas) and re-designating the Planning & Enforcement Manager's post as the other Area Manager (covering the North DM team and the Enforcement function). This allowed succession planning enabling the Planning & Enforcement Manager to work three days per week under the basis of flexible retirement. A 0.5 FTE Business Support Officer left the Authority and the post was made redundant to help meet the DM team's budget savings for 2018/19. One of the two DM Area managers retired in the summer of 2018 and was replaced by an internal candidate whose senior DMO post was then backfilled. A secondment was created to provide a DM officer from Blaenau Gwent CBC the opportunity to gain experience as a senior DMO covering the post vacated by a DM officer who was covering maternity leave for a senior officer in the Policy Team.

The changes to the Heritage Team within DM are briefly referred to in par. 3.1 above, and are set out in more detail in par. 4.24 below.

In Planning Policy, the former Policy Manager (p/t) retired in May 2018 and was replaced by a new full time Policy Manager who was an internal candidate. The new manager's previous role as a Principal Planner was also replaced internally as was the successful candidate's, leading to a new Research officer being appointed externally. Owing to the need to have adequate staff to undertake the LDP review, a three year temporary senior policy officer post was created and filled internally by the secondment of a senior DM officer. The senior DM post has been backfilled to enable the DM team to be adequately staffed.

- 3.9 For the reporting period, sickness levels were fairly low, with an average of 9.43 days per colleague lost due to sickness in DM and just 0.8 days for the Policy team. Much of the DM absence related to one team member who has since returned to work in September 2018

after a prolonged absence and whose attendance is now excellent. Team morale is good despite work pressures, including the implementation of the new planning data base software.

3.10 Training and development opportunities provided for colleagues during the reporting period included training provided by Welsh Government (and a further internal workshop run for members and officers) regarding the new sustainable drainage regime. There was training in the form of a workshop to assist in the writing of Service Business Plans. Regular workshops have taken place to engage DM officers regarding LDP issues such as the candidate site process. This is in addition to in-house development opportunities provided via Development Management and Planning Policy Liaison Meetings. There has also been training for managers regarding the GDPR, cascaded to staff via team meetings. There has also been Safeguarding training provided by MCC staff for all the Planning Service staff. External training and development opportunities included attendance at events run by Frances Taylor Building Law on recent legal changes in planning law. A Design Tour was held for Planning Committee Members in June 2018 to review applications granted by committee and officers under delegated powers. An event was held in June 2018 for community and town councillors focussed on planning enforcement issues which was run by Planning Aid Wales and supported by senior officers in DM together with enforcement staff. This was well-received. Several officers attended the annual Wales Planning Conference in June 2018. The newly appointed DM area Team manager attended specialised training regarding enforcement which falls under his remit. Five staff within DM have undertaken Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM) qualifications over the last two years, three having qualified and two are underway.

3.11 All colleagues have had an annual appraisal during the reporting period.

4.0 YOUR LOCAL STORY

Workload

4.1 Key projects during the reporting period included:

- Commencement of the work to formally review the LDP. This involves a challenging timetable for delivery agreed with WG and has necessitated additional staff resource. Some of this work involves collaboration with neighbours Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen (regarding demographics - population/household/ employment-led projections to inform the LDP growth and spatial strategy), and in respect of employment this entails a larger than local joint study based on the Gwent footprint (including Newport and Caerphilly).
- Establishing a joint heritage service for Monmouthshire and Torfaen Councils. This commenced in January 2019 and reviews of its effectiveness are scheduled periodically over the next 12 months. MCC manages the service for TCBC via a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and provides the staff to deliver a resilient heritage service assisted by TCBC funding.
- The Council's Heritage Manager has achieved delegation from Cadw to determine heritage applications for Grade II* Listed Buildings (understood to be unique to the UK) while one of the Heritage team's senior officers has achieved IHBC membership and has secured Cadw delegation to determine heritage applications relating to grade II buildings.
- Consulting on supplementary planning guidance (SPG) on the interpretation and implementation of LDP policy, including 1) Affordable Housing (revised version) and 2) Infill residential development; work is also taking place in relation to SPG for Landscape and Archaeology.
- Promoting and delivering our recently introduced bespoke application services including fast track applications for householder planning applications, listed building consent and certificates of lawfulness, as well as pre-purchase certificates and completion certificates.
- Achieving succession planning in DM and Planning Policy via the promotion of excellent internal candidates to management roles, providing the leadership needed for the challenges in each team, including the review of the LDP. There has been training and mentoring put in place for those new managers.
- Developing with members a credible and innovative policy approach to addressing the shortfall in the five year housing land supply which had slipped to 3.9 years but partly as a result of the approval of two non-allocated housing proposals that formed a part of this new approach, has now improved to 4.0 years. This is described in more detail at par. 4.12 below.
- Securing planning permissions for two of the LDP's strategic housing sites at Crick Road, Portskewett and Rockfield Farm, Undy, as well as major housing proposals at Raglan (an allocated site in the LDP), Brecon Road, Abergavenny and on the site of the Abergavenny Magistrates Court. Planning Committee approved two non-allocated major housing sites off Church Road, Caldicot and at Grove Farm, Llanfoist (both in outline) to help address the shortfall in the five-year housing land supply. Major economic development approved included a major new investment in a large workshop and office development by the Mon Motors Group at Newhouse Farm Industrial Estate, Chepstow.

- Working with a Building Preservation Trust to seek to secure the restoration of a Listed Building at Risk including a CPO.
- Bedding in and implementation of the Green Infrastructure SPG with the role of the new Landscape Officer in the Heritage team given a leadership role in this process. This SPG is the first of its kind in Wales, and has broken new ground to fill an identified gap in guidance for developers and planners. There is considerable interest in the new SPG from stakeholders, including the Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales and other local authorities. Crucially, it is having a tangible positive influence on Monmouthshire’s landscapes and GI assets by encouraging higher quality planning applications. A review of 25 planning applications has been undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the SPG which has quite clearly shown the added value, as well some challenges/lessons to be learnt. The Green Infrastructure and Countryside and Planning Policy teams collaborated in the development of the SPG; it was subsequently submitted for the Landscape Institute Awards in November 2015 where it was “Highly Commended” with judges commenting that it is; “A practical and very comprehensive tool to encourage consideration and application of Green Infrastructure in planning.” It was also a shortlisted finalist for the 2016 RTPI Wales Planning Awards.

4.2 Application caseload has reduced slightly since the previous reporting period while the number of applications determined increased. Some explanation to this can attributed to the fact that applications were not registered during the last two weeks of March 2018 owing to the transition to our new Uniform planning applications data base system. The proportion of approvals was similar to previous reporting periods at 95%. During 2018-19, 95.5% of applications were determined under delegated powers (Wales’s average 93%).

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Applications received	987	983	1173	1284	1117	1188	1126
Applications determined	874	852	1053	1085	1087	1071	1101
% within 8 weeks or agreed timescale	45%	70%	76%	79%	90%	91%	88%
% applications approved	94%	93%	95%	95%	96%	95%	95%

4.3 During this reporting period, we received 387 applications for pre-application advice and closed 367. Of those, 79% were determined within the agreed timescale for pre-application advice. Over 2018/19, 170 planning applications stemmed from pre-application advice we gave. Of those planning applications that have been determined 98% were approved. Only one application was refused and that proposal did not follow the officer advice given at pre-application stage. One application was withdrawn and not progressed due to a change in the applicant’s circumstances. Consequently, we have a 100% success rate of applications that went to decision stage and followed our pre-application advice. The conclusion is that

the pre-application advice service is working well but we need to analyse whether the service is leading to quicker decision making. This will be analysed as part of the continued comprehensive review of our pre-application advice system and the review of the information offered on our web pages (APR Actions 1 and 2).

- 4.4 A key area of work over the last eighteen months has been the development of new, bespoke services. The most popular of these has been the Fast Track services for householder applications, lawful development certificates (LDCs) (existing and proposed) and listed building consent.
- 4.5.1 The Fast Track service accelerates the administration and processing of the application for a small additional charge. The offer is that Fast track applications are determined within 28 days following the submission of a valid application. This decision period varies for fast track applications for a certificate of lawfulness (10 days) and applications for listed building consent (35 days). There is an £85.00 additional fee (so £275 in total) although certificates of lawfulness are £190. A valid application is defined as outlined within Welsh Government Circular 002/12. In the unlikely event of not being able to achieve this target or agree a short extension of time (no more than 5 working days) we will refund the fast track service fee.
- 4.5.2 The *pre-purchase certificate* is a discretionary service aimed at people looking to buy a property in Monmouthshire. The application would provide the applicant with i) a planning history search; ii) details of planning permissions; iii) listed building consents and iv) enforcement history relating to identified breaches of planning control (this would not relate to unsubstantiated complaints). This service would include a site visit and identify whether there are any breaches of planning control and whether or not any breaches would be enforceable. The certificate confirms that any approved development at the site, up to the point of the request, has been carried out in accordance with approved plans and that there is no breach of planning control at the site. The fee for this service is £180 and we aim to provide a written response within 28 days. This service looks at compliance with all types of planning permissions including listed building consent: it does not provide a substitute to lawful development certificates. We are raising the fees for this service in 2019/20 to £250 to recover the costs involved in providing this service.
- 4.5.3 The other discretionary service we offer we provide is a *certificate of completion*. The certificate will indicate whether or not the planning permission and/or Listed Building Consent applied for has been carried out in accordance with the approved plans, and also it would confirm the status of all planning conditions and any approved amendments if applicable. The purpose of this service is to offer support to applicants, agents or any other interested party that the works are appropriate and acceptable once they have been built. If there is an issue of noncompliance this will be brought to the applicant's attention and an opportunity provided for the breach of planning control to be rectified. The service includes a site inspection and desk based research and investigation. The fee for this service is £120 for each application number requiring a certificate and we will aim to provide a written response within 28 days. Where an application for listed building consent and a planning application were required for the same development, they will be treated as one application. Similarly to the pre-purchase certificate, from April 2019 we have raised the fee for a certificate of completion to £200 to help recover the costs involved.

4.6 These discretionary services have been in place since 1st July 2017 (they were rolled out slowly but have quickly gathered pace). The below table outlines the take up of these services and the amount of income that the additional services have generated. We are seeking to increase this with wider marketing.

Type of service	Number of applications/enquiries complete 01/07/17 to 31/03/18	Income generated	Number of applications/enquiries complete 01/04/2018 to 31/ 03/19	Income generated
Fast track householder applications	36 (1 refund to date - Local member called application to Planning Committee)	£2975 (This figures excludes the refunded amount)	47 (9 refunds due to a range of issues, but mainly because the number of objections led to the need for the application to be presented to the Council's Delegation Panel rather than be officer delegated).	£3230 (Excludes refunds)
Fast track certificate of lawful development	Existing - 0 Proposed – 8	£760	Existing – 0 Proposed - 4	£760
Pre purchase certificates	5	£900	6	£1080
Completion certificates	4	£480	2	£240
Fast track listed building applications	8	£2200	13	£1925 (Includes 6 refunds as applications were too complex to be determined in 35 days)
Total		£7, 315		£7,235

4.7 Limited meaningful historical trends can be drawn in relation to the enforcement workload due to significant changes to the performance indicator definition since 2014, which changed what is measured as an enforcement case and the definition of when a case is 'resolved'. While 2018/19 saw a decline in performance against the revised WG measures, the appointment of a new manager in the Enforcement Team midway through 2018/19 has given us the opportunity to review the service's structure and its work practices. This intervention will ensure the demand on this small but important team is carefully managed and performance improves against those measures (Action 3).

Annual Monitoring Report

- 4.8 The Council adopted its Local Development Plan in February 2014 and our fourth LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) was submitted in October 2018 to cover the 2017-18 period. Our fourth AMR identified that although good progress had been made in implementing many of the Plan's policies and that overall the strategy remains sound, a number of key housing provision policy targets were not being met which indicated that these policies were not functioning as intended. The continued lack of a 5 year housing land supply remained a matter of concern that needed to be addressed if the Plan's housing requirements are to be met. The third AMR recommended an early review of the LDP was necessary because of the housing land supply shortfall. A full review of the LDP commenced during the current monitoring period which culminated with the publication of the Final Review Report in March 2018. The report concluded that the LDP should be revised and that this should take the form of a full revision procedure, i.e. a fully revised LDP. It also concluded that the Monmouthshire LDP should be revised on an individual basis, rather than jointly with adjacent Local Planning Authorities. Work on this project has commenced as will be described in the next reporting period.
- 4.9 For this APR period the Council's housing land supply was below 5.0 years, at 3.9 years. We now know that the supply (as at 1 April 2019) is 4.0 years. To build the 4500 home target in the LDP, 679 completions are required every year from 2017/18 until 2021. This compares with actual completions over the last ten years averaging approximately 250 dwellings per year. There are three main factors causing this problem: allocated sites have been slow to come forward and then secure planning permission; external economic factors affecting site viability, consumer confidence and mortgage availability; and issues with the way TAN1 is calculated. As a result of the housing land availability issue, we have commenced work on a replacement LDP. Non-allocated housing sites are also being looked at on their merits in accordance with national planning policy, and sites at Rockfield Road, Monmouth, Grove Farm, Llanfoist and Church Road, Caldicot have been approved (in outline) by Members within the last two reporting periods. A site at Mounton Road, Chepstow was refused due primarily to its Green Wedge designation. Further non-allocated sites will be likely to come forward in the next reporting periods, based on their suitability and subject to strict criteria based on environmental / amenity acceptability and deliverability. The Council's new policy approach to unallocated sites is discussed below. This is in response to WG's then Cabinet Secretary issuing her decision to disapply paragraph 6.2 of TAN1 in July 2018. Her letter, however, goes on to state that it is now for the decision-maker (i.e. Monmouthshire County Council as Local Planning Authority) to decide the weight to give its housing land supply shortfall. The LDP sets an annual completion target of 450 dwellings (4500 dwellings over ten years), but due to the delivery shortfall between the Plan's 2011 start-date and its adoption in 2014, that target has increased for monitoring purposes to 488 dwelling completions per annum. Performance is well off target at present (1782 dwellings completed to March 2018 against a pro-rata target of 3150). Although the projections show a significant increase in build rate from April 2018 to December 2021 now that allocated sites are progressing, there would still be a 504 home shortfall. It is acknowledged that this 504 home shortfall is substantial, both as a proportion of the total LDP housing requirement (4500 homes) and compared to build rates, and as such warrants intervention. Given our

significant housing prices, affordable housing need, and increasingly imbalanced demography this is of significant concern.

4.10 As at March 2018, the status of the strategic sites is as follows (more detailed information is available in the Council's 2018 JHLAS and AMR):

4.10.1 Deri Farm, Abergavenny (SAH1):

Persimmon Homes submitted a full application (DC/2014/01360) for 250 residential units (201 market and 49 affordable units) in November 2014. The progress of the application was slower than anticipated due to significant issues relating to site viability, particularly affordable housing provision and the undergrounding of overhead power lines. However, these issues were subsequently resolved, the application was approved in the 2017 - 2018 monitoring period and 32 units have been completed to date.

The agreed 2018-2019 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 182 units within the Plan period.

4.10.2 Crick Road, Portskewett (SAH2):

Monmouthshire County Council and Melin Homes submitted in April 2018 a joint outline application (DM/2018/00696) for 291 residential units (218 market and 73 affordable units). A master planning consultation exercise to consider various options for the site was undertaken during the 2015-2016 monitoring period, along with various pre-application meetings over the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 monitoring periods along with a formal Pre-Application Community Consultation. The site was granted outline permission in March 2019. The employment allocation has been replaced with a care home which will provide up to 48 beds on the area outlined for employment use. This is deemed acceptable as it is anticipated it will create jobs, as well as meeting local needs for elderly accommodation

The agreed 2018-2019 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 87 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2020/21.

4.10.3 Fairfield Mabey, Chepstow (SAH3):

Progress with the application has been slower than anticipated due to various matters, including highways issues (Welsh Government Highways Division had a holding objection on the application for 18 months). However, the outstanding issues have since been resolved and the site gained outline planning permission for 450 units (432 market and approximately 18 affordable units (4%) on 1.5 acres of the site) in November 2017. The viability of the site has been assessed and independently reviewed for the Council by the District Valuation Services Team (the DVS). The review concluded that the scheme has a substantial viability issue and that it cannot be delivered with a policy compliant affordable housing provision mainly because of the significant costs that the development has to bear. The most significant of these costs include the remediation and the sewer diversion/road lowering. The provision of the 1.5 acres of land was identified as the best way of making provision for affordable housing on the site.

A Reserved Matters Application (DM/2019/00001) was submitted over the current monitoring, which is expected to be approved during the next monitoring period, showing further progress.

The agreed 2018-2019 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 115 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2020/21.

4.10.4 **Wonastow Road, Monmouth (SAH4):**

Outline permission was granted for up to 370 dwellings and 6.5ha of employment land in December 2014. The site developers (Barratt/David Wilson and Taylor Wimpey) submitted a Reserved Matters application (DC/2015/00392) for 340 units (238 market and 102 affordable units) which was granted permission in November 2015, with 21 dwelling completions recorded on the site during the 2016-2017 monitoring period and 87 dwellings in the 2017 -2018 monitoring period. A further 145 dwelling completions were recorded on the site over the current monitoring period taking the total completions to 253 dwellings, 169 market and 84 affordable.

The overall LDP site allocation is for a total of 450 units. The additional units relating to this allocation are to be delivered as an extension to the site at Drewen Farm. An application for this element of this site has not yet been submitted. This part of the site is effectively land-locked until the Taylor Wimpey development is sufficiently progressed to allow access through.

The agreed 2018-2019 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 400 units within the Plan period.

4.10.5 **Rockfield Farm, Undy (SAH5):**

This site is currently owned by the Council and is allocated for 270 residential units and 2ha of serviced land for business and industrial use. An outline planning application was submitted in July 2016 (DC/2016/00883) for 266 units and 5,575 sq. m of employment land (B1 use). For the purposes of the AMR 265 units (198 market and 67 affordable units) are recorded as a net gain, as the existing farmhouse has a residential use and is being demolished so has been taken off the overall figure. Progress with the site has been slower than anticipated due to various issues, including archaeology. These issues have, however, been resolved and the outline application was approved in March 2018. A Reserved Matters application (DM/2018/01606) was granted planning permission for phase 1 of the development over the current monitoring period for 144 residential units in February 2019.

The agreed 2018-2019 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 163 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2019/20.

4.10.6 **Land at Vinegar Hill, Undy (SAH6):**

This site for 225 residential units is linked to the adjacent Rockfield Farm site and was expected to progress in tandem. However, the developer has not yet submitted an application. There has, however, been some further progress over the current monitoring period with a number of pre-application meetings to discuss the progress of the site. An application is expected for the first phase of the site during the next monitoring period.

The agreed 2018-2019 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 75 units within the Plan period with the first completions in 2020/21.

4.10.7 Former Paper Mill, Sudbrook (SAH7):

A full planning application (DC/2015/01184) was submitted by Harrow Estates (Redrow confirmed as the developer) in October 2015 for 212 residential units (192 market and 20 affordable units). There had been a number of site viability issues associated with this application meaning that progress with the application has been slower than anticipated. However, these issues were subsequently resolved and the application was approved in the 2016 - 2017 monitoring period (November 2016). The site is currently under construction. A total of two completions were recorded over the 2017 - 2018 monitoring period and a further 33 units of which 10 are affordable, have been completed over the current monitoring period.

The agreed 2018-2019 JHLAS expects the site to deliver 140 units within the Plan period.

- 4.11 The AMR highlights issues surrounding the delivery of affordable housing, and developers continue to raise viability issues on some of the strategic housing sites above. This is a Wales-wide issue. The Council's approach to viability debates has now been established, and the links between a project management approach to these applications with LDP delivery are understood.
- 4.12 In response to the Council's lack of five-year housing land supply and the Welsh Ministers' decision to 'disapply' par. 6.2 of TAN1 the Council adopted an innovative and evidence-based approach to dealing with non-allocated housing sites. This is described in the following report to Council considered on 21 February 2019 where Members resolved that the Council continues to give 'appropriate weight' to its lack of a five year housing land supply, insofar as those development proposals are otherwise acceptable in planning terms and that the 11 'ground rules' set out in the report are all satisfied:
<https://democracy.monmouthshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=143&Mid=4106>
An outline planning application for a major housing proposal has been approved in the light of this policy at Church Road, Chepstow while another at Raglan is being considered as a called-in application by Welsh Ministers.
- 4.13 In October 2015 the Council's Economy and Development Select Committee scrutinised the LDP's impact on enabling tourism-related development. As stated above, the tourism industry forms a key part of the County's economy and links directly to what makes Monmouthshire distinctive. This scrutiny identified a need to produce Supplementary Planning Guidance to clarify for customers and officers how the LDP supports different types of tourism development, and also identified a need for future revisions to the policy to allow greater flexibility for agricultural diversification for tourism purposes. The SPG was adopted during this reporting period and is now widely used by DM officers to consider proposals for sustainable rural tourism. The AMR shows that the clarity provided by the SPG has had a positive impact on tourism-related proposals coming forward and being approved.

Value of Planning

4.14 RTPI Cymru has published a new toolkit which measures the value generated by a local authority planning service. The tool has been developed to capture the economic, social and environmental value at a local planning authority level across Wales. The tool and its 'Value Dashboard' has been designed to provide RTPI Cymru and the Welsh Government with a platform to demonstrate to local authorities, national policy makers, the private sector, researchers and other broader policy and media audiences, the value planning contributes and how planning is positively contributing to Wales' seven well-being goals. The data has been updated to reflect planning permissions and completions in the current reporting period (2018/19). The toolkit has been a very useful means of promoting the good work undertaken by the department that is often taken for granted. Over this period, the toolkit considers that the service has contributed £121M to the local economy by the allocation of sites in the LDP, the safeguarding of land, the granting and implementation of planning permissions, the operation of its enforcement function and the securing of planning obligations. We aim to update this for the ensuing reporting periods. The 'Dashboard' data summarises the Planning Service's contribution below:

Value of Planning in Monmouthshire 2018/19

Planning service key data



29 FTE jobs in planning service



1,101 applications handled



£0.6m collected in fees

LDP Land Safeguarded



LDP Land Allocated



LDP Value

£2.1m uplift value
(based on land allocated for whole plan period)

Value adding policies ✓ 89%

Applications



0 DCOs dealt with
1 DNS dealt with
75 LBC applications granted
13 refusals appealed
0 judicial reviews

Decisions

✓ 1,055 approvals (96%)
x 46 refusals (4%)
175 subject to pre app



Permissions

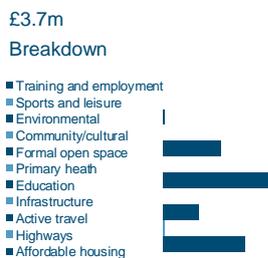


Permissions



Contributions

Section 106 income



CIL income



Completions



Enforcement

405 enforcement complaints
5 planning contraventions
5 enforcement notices
5 breach of condition notices
0 stop notices
0 section 125 notices



Wider indicators



In 2018/19 the total value of planning was **£121.0m**

SOURCES: Planning function outputs (LPA survey), Land and property value data (JLL estimates), business rates valuations (Valuation Office Agency), employment densities (English Homes & Communities Agency), Council tax rates (Stats Wales), Health benefits from Affordable Housing (Department for Communities and Local Government Appraisal Guide, based on various studies outlined in appraisal databook), Community benefit from renewables (Renewables UK Cymru). Some of the calculations require high level assumptions to convert between units/m²/ha. Where possible, benchmarks have been employed otherwise reasonable assumptions have been used. Business rate, council tax and gross FTE job estimates based on assumption of 100% occupancy and do not factor in any displacement. Numbers of applications and decisions are unlikely to match up as these can take place in different financial years for any given application. 'Value adding policies' refers to the proportion of policies the team has identified as adding 'intangible value' that are included in local plans. Approvals and refusals do not sum to 100% due to applications carry across years. The total value of planning only incorporates some of the metrics presented in the dashboard.



Service Plan priorities for 2018-19

4.15 The Service Plans for the Development Management and Planning Policy areas identified the following priority actions:

- Commence the LDP Revision. The Delivery Agreement was agreed by WG on 14 May 2018. The Call for Candidate Sites ended 19th November 2018. 220 candidate sites submitted (204 for development /redevelopment, 16 for protection). Candidate Site Register was published in Q4. A joint working group has been established with Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent relating to background data for population projections as well as Caerphilly and Newport plus the aforementioned councils in relation to the employment evidence base.
- Provision of evidence of the County's housing land supply, retail data and employment land take up. This provides data to inform the LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and LDP Revision.
- Regular attendance to ensure that MCC's policies and interests are effectively represented at regional fora, including SEWSPG and Pathfinders. This includes participation in the SDP Task & Finish Group meetings.
- Effective management arrangements are in place to ensure that necessary infrastructure is delivered and appropriate funding provided. There is a quarterly S106 Working Group meeting chaired by the Head of Planning. This forum fosters a partnership between the Planning Service and the various council services that coordinates the spending of the contributions from development. Links to the community are provided by the Community & Partnership Development Lead who attends as well as Members who participate in identifying priorities.
- Consolidate the department's use of the new Idox Uniform planning application data base software system. The new system has bed in and officers are now using the system to process and determine applications with more confidence. The DM Quarterly Return report is now working well and other monitoring reports have been developed for managers to enable officer performance to be monitored.
- Develop a digital plan for the future of the whole team and implement the plan. This has included improvements to the web site experience for our customers. The web pages have been redesigned to be more accessible and more relevant to users with less text and more links. Information regarding the DM team's recent discretionary services, including fast-track applications and pre-purchase certificates was added to the team's web pages, as were revisions to the pre-application advice service; changes were also made to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations.
- Review the pre-application advice service to verify it is adding value, reducing waste and that it is valued by customers – this has been monitored to a degree and suggests the system is working well but more analysis is anticipated in the next reporting period as the Uniform project that was made a priority takes up less of the team's resource.
- Prepare, consult and adopt Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). A programme for the preparation of SPG, including prioritisation between different policy areas to reflect available resources was adopted by Planning Committee. Work is underway on the following: 1) Landscape SPG – amendments needed to Volume 2 – further work is ongoing and being undertaken by the new Landscape Officer in the Heritage Team. Political reporting will take place in 2019/20; 2) S106 Planning Obligations Advice Note – Political reporting for Cabinet endorsement is anticipated 2019-20; 3) Archaeology – also

being concluded by the new Landscape Officer. Political reporting is anticipated in 2019/20; 4) Infill/Backland Development SPG – drafting of SPG has commenced and public consultation has been carried out. Political reporting will take place in 2019/20.

- Prepare the 4th LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and Annual Performance Report (APR). These were sent to WG in October 2018 and published online.
- Review the structure and processes of the Planning Enforcement team. This has been delayed by the appointment of a new enforcement team leader and although commenced will not be completed until the end of 2019. It will therefore remain an action in the current APR.
- Cross-departmental working to ensure corporate plans and activities align with the LDP. This priority is on-going, although significant steps have been taken to improve cross-departmental working relationships, including work on s106 agreements, green infrastructure and the City Deal.
- Develop collaborative working arrangements with other agencies including neighbouring local authorities. This has led to joint working arrangements regarding the council's heritage service (with Torfaen Council) as well as joint working on the LDP review with Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen and for the employment evidence base there is a larger than local joint study on the Gwent footprint (including Newport and Caerphilly Councils). Managers also attend SEWSPEG and the DM regional managers' meeting to share good practice and discuss pending or recent changes in planning legislation.
- Securing delegated status (from Cadw) for determining heritage applications relating to grade II* listed buildings. Cadw have approved MCC's Heritage Manager as a named officer for grade II* buildings following a 12 month period of monitoring. Previously, a named officer status extended only to grade II buildings. This has been the first time Cadw have considered and approved an enhanced scheme of delegation, underlining the commitment to Heritage in MCC, and acknowledged by Cadw.

Local pressures

4.16 Key local pressures include:

- Enabling delivery of the County's housing needs: bringing forward allocated LDP sites; site viability; achieving good planning decisions, creating sustainable communities and seeking to achieve a five year housing land supply;
- Consideration of whether to adopt and implement CIL;
- Securing timely consultation responses from consultees, both internal and external;
- The work associated with the review of the adopted LDP having regard to the current Plan's expiry date in 2021 as well as the challenging timetable for delivery;
- The need to help resource and deliver the Strategic Development Plan for SE Wales;
- Constant change caused by successive new legislation, national planning policy and procedures;
- Increasing workload as the economy recovers and customer expectation of the service rises but with limitations on budgets to resource the service;
- Career and training support for staff in the light of limitations on budgets.

4.17 One of our key challenges is balancing our aim of creating quality places in a timely manner while ensuring schemes are viable and help deliver housing numbers. We are, however, clear that quality is more important than quantity. The introduction of a place-making

emphasis in PPW10 is welcomed, as is its form that embraces the Well-Being of Future Generations Act.

Actions from our previous APR

4.18 Our 2017/18 Annual Performance Report identified five actions:

Action 1 - Systems review to be re-visited and reinvigorated to identify what matters today and how we meet that demand as well as identifying causes of variation in our system that lead to delays in reaching a positive outcome. This includes a review of the enforcement team and their processes to verify if we have the right resources and we are providing a good service for our customers.

Action 2 - Consolidate the department's use of the new Idox Uniform planning application database software system

Action 3 - Monitor the effectiveness of the Council's bespoke pre-application advice service and our fast track application services, while rolling out the use of Planning Performance Agreements, where appropriate.

Action 4 – Improve the Planning Service's web pages to deliver relevant, accessible and legible information so that customers can self-serve.

Action 5 – pursue an agenda of collaboration in relation to heritage services with neighbouring authorities.

4.19 Actions 1, 2, 3 and 4 resulted from the desire to ensure we provide a coherent and timely set of processes for our customers in delivering planning outcomes. Although the performance in 2016/17 was good in determining applications within agreed timescales (moving from amber to green), this was seen as an area for potential improvement and we proposed to undertake a 'Systems Revisit' to assess how much waste was in our processes and to understand if there were common themes as to why applications were not being determined within a timely fashion. There should also be reductions in waste in our systems and time savings to be made by the rolling out our new Idox Uniform database for the DM service (Action 2). Action 4 also overlapped into making our application processing more efficient in that signposting customers effectively so they can self-serve enables demand on our officers to reduce, freeing up their time to carry out work that is essential and valuable to the service.

4.20 While our evidence shows that customers prefer a positive outcome than a quick decision, we fully recognise that if customers are going to continue using our pre-application advice service (which streamlines the subsequent stages, improves outcomes and generates fee income), they must receive timely and meaningful responses. In addition, new regulations allow customers to claim an application fee refund if their application is not determined within a given timescale. We can reduce this risk by agreeing extended deadlines, which we do to good effect. Customers, however, will not be willing to agree a time extension if they cannot see a timely conclusion being reached or have previously received poor service.

- 4.21 Actions 1 and, by implication, 4 were commenced and initial work was carried out to identify where our customer demand was focussed. As a result of this, primary focus involved a web team being set up from within the DM team to seek to reduce day-to-day demand on officers by helping customers to self-serve using an improved and more sophisticated web site. This work was carried out during the reporting period in conjunction with the Council's Digital Team and a substantial redesign of the DM team's web pages was implemented towards the end of 2018/19. This redesign has received positive feedback from all customers, including colleagues in other departments, Members, applicants and agents.
- 4.22 In respect of the latter element of Action 1, this was instigated following a surge in enforcement cases in 2016/17 and mixed performance under some of the previous enforcement measures in that reporting period, which have since been amended following work undertaken by Welsh Government Planning and a POSW officer performance indicator sub-group. Key stages of the triage system, piloted by Swansea Council have been implemented, but in the meantime, following the appointment of a new enforcement manager midway through 2018/19 it has been decided to undertake a more holistic systems review of the Council's planning enforcement team that will be concluded in the next reporting period. This should determine whether the structure and working methods are appropriate given the demands of this small but important team. This aspect will be reviewed within the next APR.
- 4.23 Action 2 has been implemented following the Go Live of the new Uniform software from March / April 2018. The Idox Uniform Implementation team made up of members of the DM Team, spent considerable time in developing a series of comprehensive guides to the different stages required to process an application for pre-application advice and planning applications. DM, Heritage and Enforcement officers have all benefited from the training guides and the transition to the new system has been smooth. Feedback from officers is that the system is easier to use and more efficient than the old M3 software (there is more automation and fewer steps to produce documents). Managers also have a suite of reports they can use to monitor officer performance.
- 4.24 In respect of Action 3, this was delayed owing to a significant part of the team's resources being given over to the implementation of the Idox Uniform software which went live in March/ April 2018. A working group has been set up to progress the review of the pre-application advice service with work gathering traction in 2019/20 regarding analysis of the process and the value it adds to the planning application process. Customers' views are being sought as part of this work. This remains an important piece of work and is retained as an action for 2019/20.
- 4.25 As regards Action 5, during this reporting period it has been possible to secure and manage a shared service between Monmouthshire CC and Torfaen CBC. The team has drawn up a Memorandum of Understanding and secured approval for the collaboration. This has resulted in the appointment of a new Senior Heritage Officer to resource the collaboration, managed by Monmouthshire's Heritage Manager but funded by Torfaen. The service has been in place since January 2019 and has recently had the first review. The report is very

promising and both authorities are pleased with the progress being made. It is anticipated that this will continue to be built on in the forthcoming months and it is hoped after the two year trial period the collaboration will continue on a more formal basis. The collaboration has many benefits, including improved resilience and skill sharing, together with more opportunities to learn and build on the teams skill set. For the above reasons Cadw have been supportive of the new way of delivering heritage services and have endorsed the collaboration. The team has also been able to secure umbrella delegation for MCC named officers to 'sign off' listed building consent applications in Torfaen, meaning that applications in TCBC no longer need to go to Cadw for approval. This has been welcomed and supported by Cadw. As mentioned earlier, delegation arrangements have also been improved in that the Council's Heritage Manager has achieved delegation from Cadw to determine heritage applications for grade II* Listed Buildings (understood to be unique to the UK) while one of the Heritage team's senior officers has achieved IHBC membership and has secured Cadw delegation to determine heritage applications relating to grade II buildings.

5.0 WHAT SERVICE USERS THINK

What matters to our customers/citizens?

- 5.1 Between 2010 and 2012 the Council's DM team underwent a Systems Thinking review. This review sought to strip the function back to first principles: what is important to our customers, and how can waste (actions or procedures that do not add value to the outcome) be eliminated. This evidence-based review has been fully implemented, although part of the Systems Thinking approach requires services to be kept under review and closely monitored.
- 5.2 This review identified that the following things are important to customers:
- Customers value pre-application advice and advice during the consideration of the application;
 - They want officers to be accessible and for there to be open and honest communication;
 - They want consistency of pre-application advice and in validation of applications;
 - They want Planning Committee to follow the officer's recommendation and value being able to have a dialogue with Members prior to determination;
 - They do not want too many conditions attached to decisions, and when conditions are imposed they should be relevant and easy to discharge;
 - They value being able to submit an application online and to search for applications and information online; and
 - Third parties/stakeholders value being listened to during the application process.
- 5.3 The service therefore operates with these priorities as guiding principles, shaping behaviour and procedures. The service is committed to having an outcome focus rather than chasing arbitrary performance targets that are not a priority to our customers.

LDP survey

- 5.4 Following adoption of our Local Development Plan in February 2014, a customer feedback survey was undertaken in November 2014 with 120 responses received. The key headlines from this survey were reported in the 2015/16 APR.

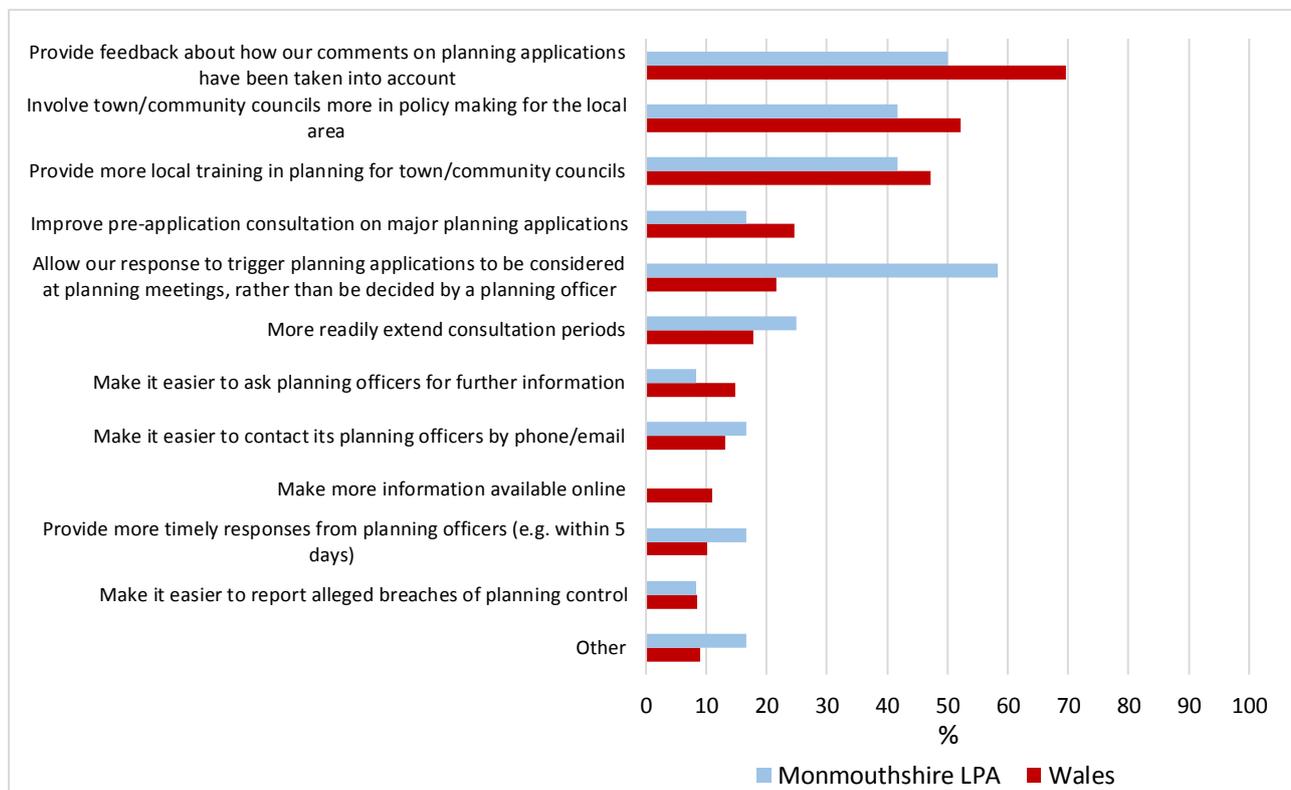
Planning Service Customer Survey

- 5.5 For 2018/19 there has been a change in format from previous years. In the past, we conducted a customer satisfaction survey aimed at assessing the views of people that had received a planning application decision during the year. This year the survey has been aimed at the performance of the whole of the planning service, including planning applications, development plans and enforcement and involves the views of local community and town councils (a statutory consultee) rather than planning applicants. The survey was sent to all 33 community or town councils, 12 of whom submitted a whole or partial response.

5.6 The respondents were asked to select the three ways in which they thought our LPA could help town/community councils to participate more effectively in the planning system. Figure 2 shows the percentage of respondents that selected each option as one of their three choices. The option that stated, ‘Allow our response to trigger planning applications to be considered at planning meetings, rather than be decided by a planning officer’ was the most frequently selected option for Monmouthshire. It should be noted that for non-householders planning applications, community and town councils can request that a planning application is considered by planning committee rather than be dealt with via delegated powers. The caveat is that they must attend to speak at committee to convey their observations to members. Failing that they can also request to attend the Council’s planning application Delegation Panel and can express any representations verbally to the three Panel Members before a decision is made on the application. Thus, it is considered that the community and town councils have ample scope to engage with the planning decision process.

5.7 As regards the second highest option selected (providing feedback about how comments have been taken into account), we do provide a section in our officer reports that sets out our assessment of the proposal having specific regard to the observations of the community and town council - so this is documented clearly. We are also happy to attend community and town council meetings from time to time to discuss a particular planning issue that is of concern or to inform the local community about key changes in legislation that might affect how they respond to applications. We have also carried out general and more focused planning training to the current cohort of community and town councillors.

Figure 2: Ways LPAs could help town/community councils participate more effectively in the planning system, 2018-19



- 5.8 We seek and act upon customer feedback. We have received feedback in previous years via the applicant’s survey and there is a clear message that communication with customers is key to providing a good service. The feedback has been discussed in team meetings and we are continuously working to improve the service we provide. It should, however, be noted that we scored above the Wales average on every indicator in the 2017/18 customer survey, often well above. This reflects our willingness to work with the applicant to try to achieve a positive outcome.
- 5.9 Previously we asked respondents to select three planning service characteristics from a list that they thought would most help them achieve successful developments. The top three characteristics identified by Monmouthshire’s customers as being important were:
- Access to the case officer to check on your application
 - Availability to talk to a duty planner before submitting an application, and
 - Quick response times to requests for pre-application meetings
- These results illustrate the areas of most importance to our customers and therefore guide how we should focus our resources and attention. These priorities matched the customer priorities identified in 2012 as part of the Systems review (see paragraph 5.2).
- 5.10 Customer feedback has been taken into account when reviewing service delivery, for example when considering the level of duty planning officer service that we are able to sustain. Given the customer feedback, we have sought to maximise the level of service provided.
- 5.11 In addition to the above survey, the number of formal complaints and letters offering compliments are recorded. There were 14 complaints received over 2018/19, compared to just four in 2017/18. Three of these led to Stage 2 Complaint recommendations to remedy justified complaint. These stemmed from issues including being more careful when collecting evidence before issuing an enforcement notice, communication being kept clear and open with complainants (including use of voicemail and getting back to complainants) and having a process in place to deal with objections from local action groups, MPs and AMs. These issues have all been actioned and issues are raised when necessary at team meetings. Although this rise in complaints is regrettable, planning is a contentious area dealing with individual’s rights to develop land and where third parties’ interests will be affected by planning decisions. Land-use planning will always be an area where complaints will be inevitable to some degree. We do try to learn from any issues of justifiable complaint. It is fair to say that complaints have generally risen across all sectors of the Council over the last year. We received six recorded compliments over 2018/19 compared to two over the previous period.

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Number of Stage 1 formal complaints received	17	9	5	5	4	14
Number of Stage 2 formal complaints investigations received	11	5	2	2	1	4
Number of Stage 2	4 partially	3 partially	0 upheld	0 upheld	0 upheld	3

complaints upheld or partially upheld	upheld	upheld				partially upheld
Number of Ombudsman complaints upheld or partially upheld	1 partially upheld	0	0	0	1 upheld	0
Number of compliments received	3	4	2	9	2	6

5.12 Quality customer service continues to be a service and organisation priority so the momentum and desire to improve remain.

6.0 OUR PERFORMANCE 2018-19

6.1 This section details our performance in 2018-19. 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.

6.2 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.

Plan making

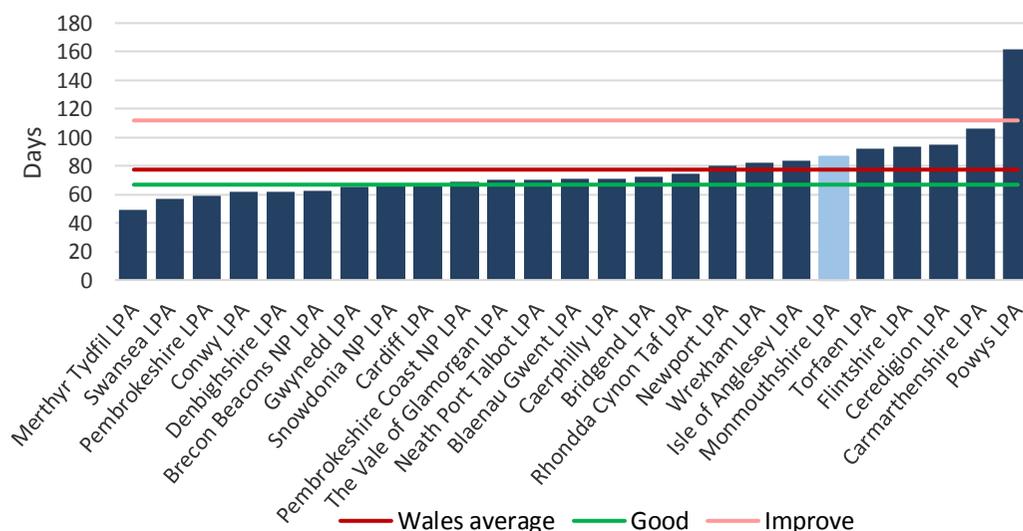
6.3 As at 31 March 2019, we were one of 23 LPAs that had a current development plan in place. We are required to submit an Annual Monitoring Report in October 2019. This document has been prepared and is being submitted to Welsh Government by 31st October 2019.

6.4 During the APR period we had 3.9 years of housing land supply identified, making us one of 19 Welsh LPAs without the required 5 years supply. We now know that our housing land supply has since risen to 4.0 years as a result of delays to the delivery of most of the strategic housing sites in the LDP easing and also because of action we have taken to approve appropriate housing development on non-allocated sites e.g. at Llanfoist, Monmouth and Caldicot. Part of the wider problem involves structural issues in the supply of land, development finance and the house building industry. In Monmouthshire our issue is primarily that sites have not come forward as quickly as anticipated: we do not have a notable issue with land-banking by developers nor do we have any sites that are wholly unviable. Some of our smaller 60% affordable housing sites in Main Villages have not come forward due to land-owners having unrealistic aspirations for their land value. While this has impacted upon delivery of that rural affordable housing policy, it has not impacted significantly on overall housing supply due to the low numbers in question. Welsh Government has now embarked on a review of the delivery of housing in Wales to investigate ways of speeding up new quality housing. Further commentary on our land supply is provided in the Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report.

Efficiency

6.5 In 2018-19 we determined 1,101 planning applications, each taking, on average, 86 days to determine. This compares to an average of 77 days (11 weeks) across Wales. Figure 2 shows the average time taken by each LPA to determine an application during the year. Following engagement with customers and stakeholders, Monmouthshire County Council has made the evidence-based decision that the outcome of planning applications is far more important than the speed of decision-making. Within reason, customers would prefer to continue working with us to secure an acceptable scheme and obtain planning permission, with as few pre-commencement conditions as possible, than simply have a decision made within an arbitrary 8 week deadline. The impact of planning decisions is long-lived and, while it is recognised that timely decisions can assist the economy, developers and investors also seek clarity and certainty and ultimately want planning permission. Our focus is therefore on the outcome, although we will be seeking an improvement in this figure (which is below the Welsh average) via actions to improve our pre-application advice service and the information on our web pages, as well as more focussed performance management of individual case officers in the DM team.

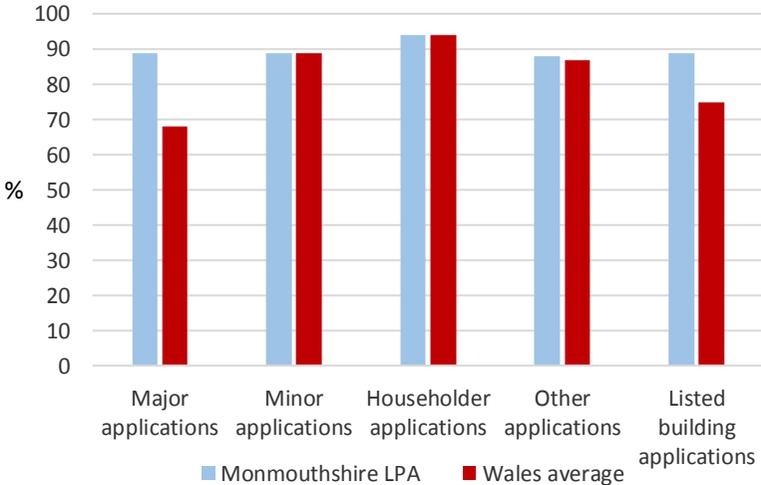
Figure 1: Average time taken (days) to determine applications, 2018-19



6.6 88% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This reflected the average across Wales and we were one of 20 LPA's that had reached the 80% target.

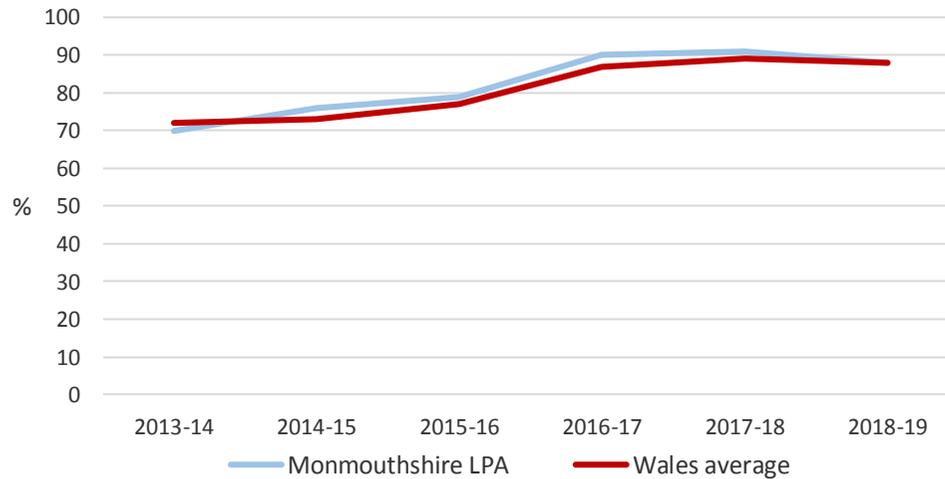
Figure 3 shows the percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales across the four main types of application for our LPA and Wales. Figure 3 shows the percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales across the main types of application for our LPA and Wales. It shows that we determined 94% of householder applications within the required timescales which was the same as the Welsh average. We also determined 89% of Listed Building Consent applications within the required timescales (compared to the Welsh average of 75%).

Figure 2: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales, by type, 2018-19



6.7 Between 2017-18 and 2018-19, as Figure 4 shows, the percentage of planning applications we determined within the required timescales decreased from 91% to 88%. Wales also saw a decrease this year(also to 88%). Our figures picked up quarter on quarter over 2018/19 following the implementation of the Council’s back office application processing data base in April 2018.

Figure 3: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales



Over the same period:

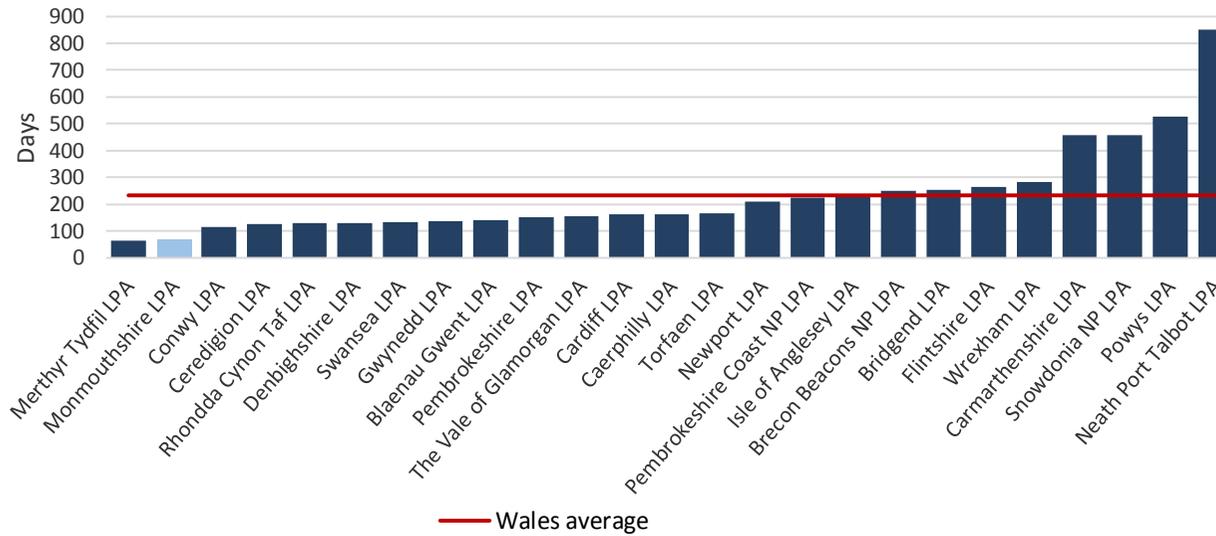
- The number of applications we received increased by 71 applications;
- The number of applications we determined decreased by 16 applications; and
- The number of applications we approved increased.

6.8 The slight drop in the number of planning applications we determined can be explained by the fact that during the final two weeks of March 2018, no planning applications were determined because the Planning Service's new planning application database was being implemented.

Major applications

6.9 We determined 9 major planning applications in 2018-19, none of which were subject to an EIA. Each application took, on average, 66 days (9 weeks) to determine. This compares to 188 days over 2017/18 and so is a substantial improvement. As Figure 5 shows, this was significantly shorter than the Wales average of 232 days (33 weeks), and was the second shortest average time taken of all Welsh LPAs.

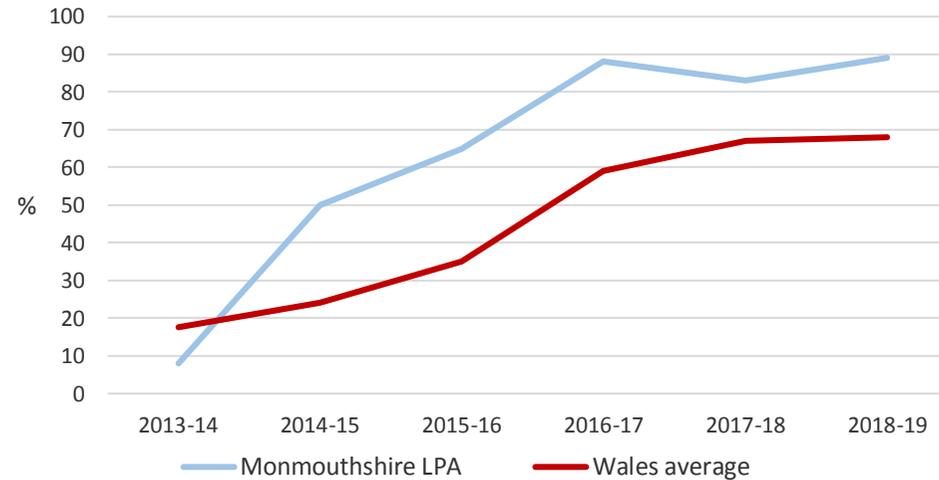
Figure 4: Average time (days) taken to determine a major application, 2018-19



6.10 89% of these major applications were determined within the required timescales, compared to 68% across Wales.

6.11 Since 2017-18 the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales had increased from 83%. Figure 6 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 6: Percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales



6.12 It can be seen that we have consistently performed above the Welsh average on this measure since 2014/15. Our particularly strong performance for major applications is due to a combination of an effective pre-application service, and a good working relationship with customers ensuring agreement to an extension of time. We are now rolling out planning performance agreements for major applications, where applicants can opt for milestones to be agreed in the processing of their application, based on best endeavours and prioritisation of these important applications.

6.13 Over the same period:

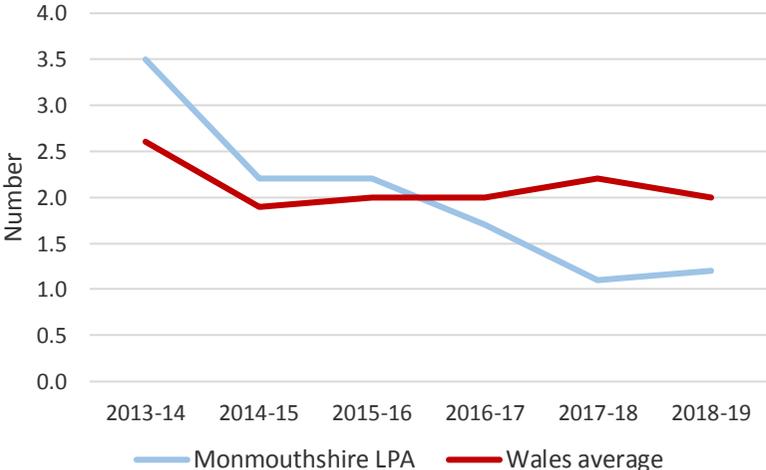
- The percentage of minor applications determined within the required timescales decreased from 95% to 89%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales decreased from 97% to 94%;
- The percentage of other applications determined within required timescales increased from 85% to 88%, and
- The level of approvals remained high at 95% (the same as 2017/18).

6.14 This slight decline in the percentage of applications determined within agreed timescales can be largely explained by staff adapting to the new back office computer system, including officers' use of the extensions of time function in Uniform. However, overall this shows a very good level of performance over the period.

Quality

- 6.15 In 2018-19, our Planning Committee made 50 planning application decisions during the year, which equated to 4.5% of all planning applications determined. Across Wales just over 6% of all planning application decisions were made by planning committee. Unlike most Authorities, Monmouthshire has a Delegated Panel system in operation whereby most applications with between 1 and 4 objections are reviewed by a group comprising the three lead Planning Committee Members. This system works effectively in reducing the number of applications referred to Committee while ensuring interested parties are reassured that their concerns have been heard and reviewed before a decision is made.
- 6.16 Of these Committee-made decisions, 4% (2 out of 50 decisions) went against officer advice. This compared to 8% of member-made decisions across Wales. This equated to 0.18% of all planning application decisions going against officer advice in Monmouthshire (0.4% across Wales). The relatively low proportion of Committee overturns is testament to an effective Member-Officer working relationship, the added value of Planning Committee visiting every site before making a decision, and an experienced Planning Committee provided with appropriate development training.
- 6.17 The two overturned applications in question related to firstly, an infill housing plot in Raglan that was judged by Members to be an over development of the plot but allowed on appeal and secondly, a retrospective application for a revised house design near Caerwent where the enlarged garage element was considered to be unacceptable in visual terms as well as impact on a neighbour. This was also allowed on appeal. The two issues revolved around design and scale and so are subjective issues rather than technical ones that would be of more concern and more vulnerable to an award of costs.
- 6.18 In 2018-19 we received 13 appeals against our planning decisions, which equated to 1.1 appeals for every 100 applications received. This was the third lowest ratio of appeals to applications in Wales indicating our willingness to negotiate proposals to a positive outcome and the strength of our policy framework. Figure 8 shows how the volume of appeals received has changed since 2013-14 and how this compares to Wales.

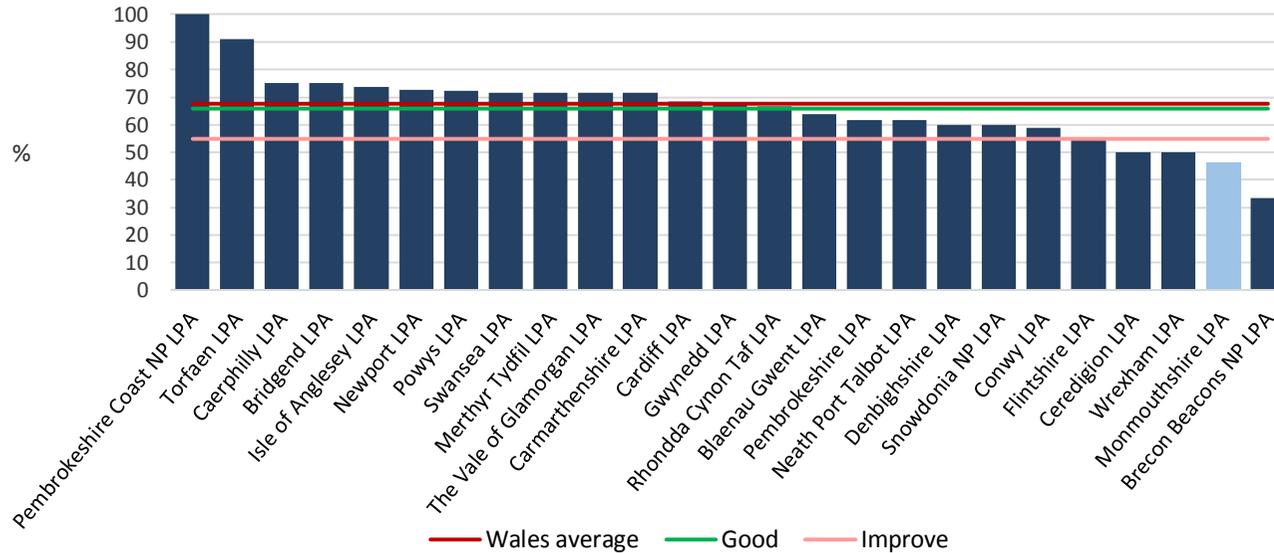
Figure 7: Number of appeals received per 100 planning applications



Over the same period the percentage of planning applications approved stayed the same at 95%.

6.19 Of the 13 appeals that were decided during the year, 46% were dismissed. As Figure 9 shows, this was the second lowest percentage of appeals dismissed in Wales and was below the 55% threshold. Those decisions have been inflated by a small number of Member decisions contrary to officer advice (4 of the 13 decisions in 2018/19 were Member decisions, allowed on appeal) and these almost all related to the issue of design which is a subjective matter. If we omit these, the officer decisions alone equated to a 67% success rate that would be within the 'green' good category in the Performance Framework. The figure should be also be tempered against the fact that thirteen planning application appeals is very low over one year based on a total determined of over 1100, and reflects the Council's approach to finding a positive outcome. An appeal is essentially waste in our system as well as waste to the applicant. Our pre-application advice system has been useful in deterring the submission of applications that have little chance of success.

Figure 8: Percentage of appeals dismissed, 2018-19



6.20 During 2018-19 we had no applications for costs at a section 78 appeal upheld.

Engagement

6.21 We are:

- one of 24 LPAs that allowed members of the public to address the Planning Committee;
- one of 22 LPAs that have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public, and
- one of 21 LPAs that had an online register of planning applications.

6.22 As Table 1 shows, 73% of respondents to our 2017-18 customer survey agreed that the LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application, although this fell from 80% in 2016/17. The 73% is still well above the Welsh average, though. Moreover, the success rate of our pre-application advice service is commented upon above.

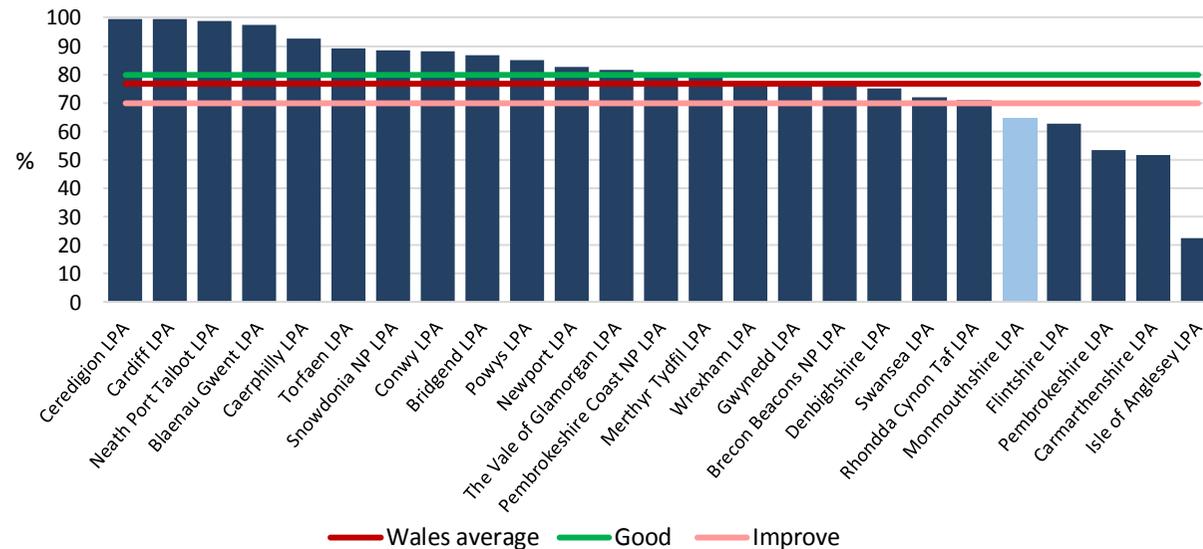
Table 1: Feedback from our 2017-18 customer survey

Respondents who agreed that:	Monmouthshire LPA %	Wales %
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	73	60
They were listened to about their application	80	60

Enforcement

6.23 In 2018-19 we investigated 313 enforcement cases, which equated to 3.3 per 1,000 population. This was the fifth highest rate in Wales and an increase of 8% compared to the previous reporting period. We investigated 65% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. Across Wales 77% were investigated within 84 days. Figure 9 shows the percentage of enforcement cases that were investigated within 84 days across all Welsh LPAs.

Figure 9: Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days, 2018-19



6.24 The average time taken to pursue positive enforcement action was 232 days, which was a substantial decline on last year's performance of 96 days (although many older, longstanding cases were cleared over 2018/19). Given the need to manage this small team's sizeable workload, the team are undergoing a systems review of the Enforcement function to understand the areas for improvement and where we can drive out waste and sharpen our practices, leading to further improvement (Action 3).

7.0 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Based on the customer feedback in Section 5 and the performance information in Section 6 and Appendix A, we can be pleased with the service we deliver. During this period:

- The proportion of major applications determined within 8 weeks or agreed timescales increased and was well above 80%, and substantially above the Welsh average. The average time taken has improved significantly;
- The number of applications we determined slightly increased (by 2.8%);
- The proportion of applications we approved remained high at 95%;
- Of those applications that had gone through our pre-application advice service, 98% were approved;
- We dealt with the largest number of applications for listed building consent in Wales (79 applications) and almost 89% of these were approved within agreed timescales;
- Enforcement performance declined over 2018/19.

This shows that, despite a challenging workload, our performance has been generally very good and our pre-application advice service is effective. The need to improve the performance of our enforcement function is fully acknowledged and is a priority going forward.

7.2 A summary table of our performance can be found in Appendix A of the APR. Of the 17 applicable indicators, 12 are ranked good, 1 is fair and 4 are in need of improvement.

- Eleven of the indicators applicable to Monmouthshire have numerical targets set by the Welsh Government. Monmouthshire's performance is ranked 'good' against 6, 'fair' against 1 and 'in need of improvement' against 4. The 'fair' result relates to the average time taken to determine applications (86 days) which missed the 'good' target of 67 days and was below the Welsh average of 77 days. The four measures that were in need of improvement were the five-year supply of housing land that has fallen to 3.9 years, our appeal performance that is still substandard at 46% (although this performance is explained at par. 6.19 above) and the two enforcement measures.

	Number of indicators
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance is 'good'	6
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance is 'fair'	1
Welsh Government target has been set and our performance 'needs improvement'	4

- We performed above or at the Wales average in 13 of the 17 comparable indicators. The indicators for which performance was below Wales average related to the five year housing land supply, together with the appeal and enforcement measures as referred to immediately above. Further commentary on the performance against these measures is set out in Section 6.

No target has been set but our performance is above the Wales average	1
No target has been set but our performance is slightly below the Wales average	0
No target has been set but our performance is significantly below the Wales average	0

- Our performance declined against four indicators:

Indicator	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Wales average	WG target
5 year housing land supply	4.1 years'	4.0 years'	3.9 years'	6 years'	5.0 years'
Average time taken to determine all applications	73 days	77 days	86 days	77.2 days	<67 days
% of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days	83%	91%	64.5%	76.3%	>80%
Ave time taken to take positive enforcement action	227 days*	96 days*	232 days	165 days	<100 days

*No target set by WG for those years

7.3 In the light of this, four actions are identified going forwards.

Speed of determining applications

7.4 We determined 88% of applications within agreed timescales, against a Welsh Government target threshold for good performance standing at 80%. The average time taken to determine all applications was 86 days, missing the 'good' target of 67 days (and above the Welsh average of 77 days). While it is accepted that timely decisions can have economic benefits, of greater importance to investors is clarity and certainty, and our evidence is that, within reason, customers are happy to have a slightly slower decision if it is a favourable one. We therefore place greater importance on securing a positive outcome.

7.5 However, this is an area for potential improvement and we have been undertaking a 'Systems Revisit' to assess how much waste is in our processes and to understand if there are common themes as to why applications are not being determined within a timely fashion. There have been reductions in waste in our systems by the implementation of our new Idox Uniform database for the DM service but naturally enough, this has taken time to become stable and embedded, so gains will be in the medium to long term. Opportunities are there to ensure our pre-application advice service is contributing effectively to reducing planning application determination periods by providing clear, professional and respected advice. In addition, our web site offer to customers, although substantially improved via work already carried out with the Council's Digital Team, could be further improved to turn off demand on officer time. There will always be customers who wish to speak directly to an officer but many will self-serve given the opportunity. As such, we need to explore opportunities to signpost customers to useful information on-line so that they can carry out a variety of functions unassisted. These could include making an application for pre-application advice, making a planning application or commenting on a planning application.

We will explore the use of a chatbot with our colleagues in the Council's Digital Team to investigate whether we can answer more straightforward planning queries and signpost customers to appropriate information on our web pages or on other useful sites, including the Planning Portal Wales.

7.6 Project management for major planning applications can be improved by resourcing their processing properly via planning performance agreements (PPAs) with the applicant to deliver a timelier decision by best endeavours. We have trialled one PPA this year which was considered a success in establishing and meeting milestones for a planning application for a complex, strategic, mixed-use development in Chepstow. The fee from such an agreement can be used to back-fill and allow the case officer to be freed up to be a more dedicated resource. We know that further applicants are interested in engaging with us to explore the benefits of this project management tool. Thus, Actions 1 - 2 below are identified.

Action 1 – Complete the review of the effectiveness of the Council's bespoke pre-application advice service and rolling out the use of Planning Performance Agreements, where appropriate.

Action 2 – Continue to improve the Planning Service's web pages to deliver relevant, accessible and legible information so that customers can self-serve. This includes investigating the value of a chatbot to signpost users to information held online that can help them self-serve and reduce queries to the team via phone and email.

Speed of resolving enforcement cases

7.7 The performance of the Council's Planning Enforcement team declined in relation to the two enforcement measures in the Performance Framework over 2018/19, and we do receive customer feedback and complaints regarding perceived delays in

enforcement cases. These issues are certainly not unique to Monmouthshire, and the problem is at least in part due to a misunderstanding of the powers available to us and/or unrealistic expectations, a matter that has been addressed in some way by the training on enforcement that took place in May 2018 for community and town councillors. There remains, however, scope for substantial improvement. The systems review of the Planning Enforcement function, due for completion in December 2019, will help to improve this team's practices and drive out waste. The triage system identified the APR 2016/17, has been partially implemented to systematically prioritise cases, but this is being reviewed as part of the wider systems approach (Action 3).

Action 3 - Systems review of the Planning Service's enforcement function and its processes to speed up our decision-making, verify if we have the right resources and we are providing a good service for our customers

Collaborative Working

7.8 Monmouthshire has a wealth of heritage assets and has long invested in its heritage team to manage these assets in the public interest. It has become apparent that opportunities exist to work collaboratively with neighbouring Councils to provide a shared heritage resource. This reporting period saw the establishment of a shared heritage service with Torfaen Council that is working well. This has given the opportunity to address issues of capacity and consistency of advice between Authorities. In addition, it provides an opportunity to increase resilience, knowledge and the skills base of aspects of Historic Environment Management through building and sharing of expertise and experience. It also acknowledges the agenda for collaboration in the delivery of local government services being promoted by Welsh Government. It is understood that other planning authorities in South-East Wales are considering their needs against the offer of our shared heritage service. Going forward we will promote collaboration with other authorities, where appropriate. This will also include work involved in the preparation of the LDP review which has seen sharing of the background evidence work, as referred to in par. 4.14 above.

Action 4 – Continue to pursue an agenda of collaboration in relation to heritage services with neighbouring authorities and collaboration in other areas where possible, including the evidence base for the review of the Local Development Plan.

Opportunities going forward:

7.9 The following opportunities for the coming year have been identified as a result of this Annual Performance Report, our LDP, AMR and our Service Business Plans:

- To improve the speed of our responses to pre-application advice requests and determining planning applications via a review of our bespoke pre-application advice service valued by our customers (Action 1);

- In tandem with our systems thinking approach, to use Team meetings and performance reports to drill down into specific areas of workflow and identify where problems exist and why, with a targeted approach to identifying solutions (Actions 1 and 3);
- Consider the project management of major planning applications, where appropriate, via planning performance agreements to seek by best endeavours to ensure timely and well-managed processing of such applications, providing a good customer experience for the customer (Action 1);
- To improve the web site experience for customers and improve customers' pathways to information; this could include trialling a 'chatbot' to help customers to self-serve on line and reduce the demand on officers, particularly the daily duty officer (Action 2);
- To consolidate the use of the more efficient replacement database for planning applications to reduce waste for staff, including the production of standard letters and monitoring reports. Stage 2 of the Idox project will include the conditions monitoring module and enhancements to the public access module which will provide a better service to the public when they search applications online; these include providing an online measuring tool and the ability to track changes to an application (Action 2);
- To improve the speed with which we deal with enforcement cases via a systems review of the Enforcement function (Action 3);
- To extend collaborative working to deliver a Built Heritage Management Service with neighbouring local authorities, providing resilience, shared learning and consistency across those areas (Action 4);
- Continue with the review of the Monmouthshire LDP because of the need to address the shortfall in the housing land supply and facilitate the identification/ allocation of additional housing land as well as addressing the demographic and employment challenges of the County;
- To identify, implement and/or disseminate best practice via the Planning Officers' Society for Wales or other working groups, including the Welsh Government, the WLGA and the RTPi
- Promote the value of the work carried out by the Council's Planning Service by updating the Value of Planning toolkit on an annual basis and publicising the finding in each APR.

7.10 Progress will be measured via our 2019/20 Annual Performance Report, 2019/20 LDP Annual Monitoring Report, and our 2019-2022 Service Business Plan.

ANNEX A - PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Plan making			
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+
Time taken to commence formal revision of an LDP following the triggering of Regulation 41, in months	<12	13-17	18+
Has an LDP Revision Delivery Agreement been submitted to and agreed with the Welsh Government?	Yes		No
LDP review deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<3		4+
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No
The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	>5		<5
Efficiency			
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	>60	50.1-59.9	<50
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	70.1-79.9	<70
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	<67	67-111	112+
Percentage of Listed Building Consent applications determined within time periods required	80+	70.1-79.9	<70
Quality			

WALES AVERAGE	Monmouths hire LPA LAST YEAR	Monmouths hire LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
73	N/A	N/A
17	-	2
Yes	-	Yes
1	-	N/A
Yes	Yes	Yes
6 of 25	4	3.9
68	83	89
232	188	66
88	91	88
77	77	86
75	67	89

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	<5	5-9	9+
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+
Engagement			
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
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
Enforcement			
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	>80	70.1-79.9	<70
Average time taken to take positive enforcement action	<100	101-200	200+

WALES AVERAGE	Monmouths hire LPA LAST YEAR	Monmouths hire LPA THIS YEAR
9	7	4
68	36	46
0	0	0
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes
77	91	65
167	96	232

SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING

Indicator	01. Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
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)

Authority’s performance	Yes
The Council adopted its Local Development Plan in February 2014.	

Indicator	02. LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
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

Authority’s performance	N/A
The Council has adopted its LDP and therefore this indicator is not applicable. It does not apply to the review of the Plan.	

Indicator	03. Time taken to commence formal revision of an LDP following the triggering of Regulation 41, in months	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
The Delivery Agreement is submitted less than 12 months after Regulation 41 is triggered	The Delivery Agreement is submitted within 12 and 18 months after Regulations 41 is triggered	The Delivery Agreement is submitted more than 18 months after Regulation 41 is triggered
Authority’s performance	2 months	
A full review of the LDP commenced in 2017, with a Draft Review Report published for consultation between 11 December 2017 and 5 February 2018. The Final Review report of the LDP was agreed by a special meeting of Council held on 19 th March 2018.		

Indicator	04. Has an LDP Revision Delivery Agreement been submitted to and agreed with the Welsh Government?	
"Good"		"Improvement needed"
An LDP Revision Delivery Agreement has been submitted by the LPA and agreed with the Welsh Government		No LDP Revision Delivery Agreement has been submitted by the LPA or agreed by the Welsh Government

Authority's performance	Yes
The Delivery Agreement was agreed by WG on 14th May 2018.	

Indicator	05. LDP revision deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	
"Good"		"Improvement needed"
The LDP revision is being progressed within the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement		The LDP revision is being progressed later than the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement

Authority's performance	N/A
This measure is not applicable during this reporting period. This indicator will become relevant during the next reporting period as the WG agreed the Council's Delivery Agreement in May 2018.	

Indicator	06. Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	
"Good"		"Improvement needed"
An AMR is due, and has been prepared		An AMR is due, and has not been prepared in time

Authority's performance	Yes
The Council's fourth AMR was submitted to the Welsh Government in October 2018.	

Indicator	07. The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years
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“Good”		“Improvement needed”
The authority has a housing land supply of more than 5 years		The authority has a housing land supply of less than 5 years

Authority’s performance	3.9
The 2018 Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS) was agreed by an independent Inspector and showed that we had a 3.9 years’ housing land supply. This matter is considered in detail in the 2018-19 LDP Annual Monitoring Report.	

SECTION 2 - EFFICIENCY

Indicator	05. Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 60% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 50% and 60% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 50% of applications are determined within the statutory time period

Authority's performance	89
<p>The team's performance has improved from 83% over 2016/17. This element of the team's performance remains strong over 2018/19 and is well above the Welsh average of 67.8%. To prioritise resources for major planning applications, planning performance agreements will be increasingly adopted with applicants for suitable planning applications, leading to better project management of these generally more complex applications.</p> <p>The Council has piloted a scheme whereby the local member and key members of planning committee are invited to pre-application advice meetings for major developments to ensure the process is frontloaded. This has avoided delays when the application is eventually submitted. This process is now standard practice for the authority.</p>	

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

Authority's performance	66
<p>The Council's performance is very good compared to the Welsh average of 232 days and has improved substantially from the previous reporting period (188 days). It is the second highest performance for Wales. The use of PPAs should help the team to keep this measure at the excellent level of performance it has achieved this year.</p>	

Indicator	07. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 70% and 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 70% of applications are determined within the statutory time period

Authority's performance	88
<p>88% of all planning applications we dealt with were determined within the required timescales, which is well above the 80% threshold for the 'Good' performance ranking. This compared to 88% across Wales and is a slight decline compared to last year (91%).</p> <p>The slight decline can be attributed to the introduction of our new planning application back office system in March-April 2018. The breakdown of quarters reveal the following performance which improved as the IT system 'bedded in': Q1 – 83%; Q2 – 87%; Q3 – 92%; Q4 – 92%.</p>	

Indicator	08. Average time taken to determine all applications in days	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Less than 67 days	Between 67 and 111 days	112 days or more

Authority's performance	86 days
<p>In 2018-19 we determined 1101 planning applications, each taking, on average, 86 days (just over 12 weeks) to determine. This compares to an average of 77 days (11 weeks) across Wales and misses the 'good' target of 67 days. Given our focus on outcome rather than speed, this is a reasonable achievement and suggests we have struck a fair balance between these two objectives.</p> <p>We acknowledge that this measure should be better and nearer the 'good' target. The actions identified in relation to improving application submissions via our pre-application advice service, together with improving our web page information as well as closer management of individual workloads should reduce end-to-end times for determination in the next reporting period.</p>	

Indicator	08a. Percentage of Listed Building Consent applications determined within time periods required	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority's performance	89
<p>This is the second year of its inclusion as an indicator and has improved significantly compared to last year's figure of 67%. The Welsh average for this indicator was 75%. The Council's Heritage team has worked hard at improving its turnaround of listed building applications. We determined 79 applications for listed building consent over 2018/19, the highest of any authority in Wales. The team of four officers (including a monitoring officer) also contributes to the pre-application advice process, the handling of appeals and provides consultation responses on planning applications in conservation areas. A similar service is also provided for Torfaen Council. The Authority has Cadw accredited delegation arrangements for grade II* and II buildings.</p>	

SECTION 3 - QUALITY

Indicator	09. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Less than 5% of decisions	Between 5% and 9% of decisions	9% or more of decisions

Authority's performance	4
<p>Monmouthshire's performance shows that 4% of Committee decisions go against officer recommendation, which equated to 2 planning applications out of 50 determined at committee during 2018/19 which is an improvement on the performance over 2017/18 of 7%. This compares favourably to the 8.2% average in Wales and is below the 5% or less threshold to be rated 'Good'.</p> <p>Provided that Committee decisions are based on good planning judgement and material planning considerations, overturned recommendations are a perfectly acceptable part of the planning process. The difficulty only arises where decisions are made that cannot be substantiated at appeal.</p> <p>The two overturned applications in question related to an infill plot in Raglan deemed to be an over development by members and a retrospective application for a garage element of a house near Caerwent, judged to be unacceptable in streetscene and neighbour amenity terms. These are subjective issues. The two refused applications were both allowed on appeal. All appeal decisions are reported to committee so that Members can review and learn from such decisions.</p>	

Indicator	10. Percentage of appeals dismissed	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
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

Authority's performance	46
<p>This remains below the standard we would like to achieve and although an improvement on last year's performance needs improvement.</p> <p>The decisions are reviewed in the Planning Service's monthly Policy / DM Liaison meetings as well as at Planning Committee and detailed issues are shared and discussed.</p> <p>It is noteworthy that the appeal performance, excluding the four committee decisions that were contrary to the officer recommendation, would have meant the appeal performance of a 67% success rate would have been rated 'green' or good. The proportion of appeals we deal with is low at 1.1 appeals for every 100 applications received (Welsh average 2 appeals per 100 applications determined). This was the third lowest ratio of appeals to applications in Wales indicating our willingness to negotiate proposals to a positive outcome and the strength of our</p>	

policy framework.

Indicator	11. Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
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

Authority's performance	0
<p>No awards of costs for unreasonable behaviour have been made against us this year. There were also no awards of costs during the two previous reporting periods.</p> <p>An action identified in the first APR was to report appeal decisions to Planning Committee every month for learning and discussion. This action has been implemented and has been welcomed by the Committee as useful. Committee members are also encouraged to sit in on appeal hearings or inquiries as further development training and to assist the case officer. The Council's protocol is that nominated members help to present the case where a decision is contrary to the officer recommendation.</p>	

SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT

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

Authority’s performance	Yes
<p>Monmouthshire has an established and effective Public Speaking Protocol and also allows applicants, objectors, supports and community and town councils to speak at the Delegation Panel site visits. This has proven to be a valuable exercise in terms of making informed decisions and improved customer and community satisfaction, even if the final decision is not the one they hoped for. The public speaking protocol was amended during the previous reporting period to enable the applicant to be notified earlier that an objector had registered to speak; this provides the applicant with earlier notice and more time to organise a right of reply and after review it appears to be working well.</p> <p>The Size and Composition of Local Planning Authority Committees (Wales) Regulations 2017 did not seek to control the public speaking element of a planning committee. If any future national protocol seeking consistency throughout Wales is published it is hoped it is provided as best practice guidance and does not curtail the successful delegation and public speaking system we already employ.</p>	

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

Authority’s performance	Yes
<p>We have a duty officer available every day from 9am to 5pm and although this is resource intensive, we recognise from feedback that this is a service that the customer values (see par. 5.9 above).</p>	

Indicator	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)?	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”

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
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Authority's performance	Yes
<p>Our public access element allows customers to view all public documents and plans relating to applications including officer reports and decision notices, and also allows customers to comment online.</p> <p>We have implemented a new back office system at the start of this reporting period and this has helped make savings in time in relation to automation and easier process steps. This has allowed officers to carry out more work of value such as determining applications for pre-application advice and planning applications.</p> <p>Navigational and functional improvements to the Idox public access module (e.g. to enable a customer to track changes to an application) have been actioned during this reporting period.</p>	

SECTION 5 – ENFORCEMENT

Indicator	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	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
More than 80% of enforcement cases are investigated in 84 days	Between 70% and 80% of enforcement cases are investigated in 84 days	Less than 70% of enforcement cases are investigated in 84 days

Authority’s performance	65
<p>This was a disappointing area of performance and compared poorly to the Welsh average of 76.3%. The recent appointment of a new Area Team Manager who manages the enforcement section has seen the commencement of a systems review of the enforcement function. This should be completed by December 2019. We would like to move much closer to 100% for this measure and thus the action to review the Enforcement Team is retained. Special attention will be given to this measure in the next reporting period.</p>	

Indicator	16. Average time taken to take positive enforcement action	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority’s performance	232
<p>Again, this was a poor performance for this indicator, well below the Welsh average of 165 days. This was a significant decline on the 96 days taken over 2017/18. The systematic review of the enforcement service during 2019 will identify areas of waste, poor working practices and smarter ways of working to reduce this time significantly.</p>	

SECTION 6 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

The purpose of the Sustainable Development Indicators is to measure the contribution the planning system makes to sustainable development in Wales.

The Sustainable Development Indicators will be used to measure the progress against national planning sustainability objectives, set out in Planning Policy Wales, and can be used to demonstrate to our stakeholders the role and scope of the planning system in delivering wider objectives. The information will also be useful to local planning authorities to understand more about the outcomes of the planning system and help inform future decisions.

Authority's returns	A Full return was provided
<p>Monmouthshire Council provided full statistical returns for these indicators. However, it should be noted that this work had to be undertaken manually because our back office IT system at the time cannot store or retrieve most of the data. This is a common problem throughout Wales, the resolution of which has proven to be very time consuming. The Council has procured a new IT system that went 'live' in April 2018 so it is hoped that the time and resource spent manually collecting this data will be reduced.</p> <p>It is worth noting that, in many cases, the sustainable development (SD) indicator definition is different to information collected in the LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), and therefore the results are different in some cases. For example, in terms of housing approvals, the SD indicator records only detailed or final Reserved Matters approvals, whereas the LDP AMR quite rightly (for that context) also includes outline applications as evidence that allocated sites are coming forward.</p> <p>These discrepancies have been checked and properly accounted for. Going forward, where appropriate, consideration will be given to amending the LDP AMR monitoring indicators slightly to reflect the SD indicators, so that similar data is only captured once, reducing duplicated effort and potential confusion. In other cases, such as reviewing progress on the delivery of LDP housing sites, the AMR monitoring indicator will remain unchanged.</p>	

Indicator	SD1. The floorspace (square metres) granted and refused planning permission for new economic development on allocated employment sites during the year.
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Granted (square metres)	
Authority's data	19058

Refused (square metres)	
Authority's data	0

The planning system should support economic development and steer such development to the most appropriate locations. This indicator provides information on the contribution the planning system is making to delivering traditional economic development in identified employment sites.

This performance indicator measures new buildings in square metres approved on allocated and protected employment sites. It now also includes extensions and change of use consents where vacant buildings have been brought back into employment-generating use. It is also limited to measuring only 'B' use classes, and so excludes supporting employment uses such as hotels. Consequently, this data shows a small proportion of the decisions made to support economic growth in the County. More information can be found in the AMR.

The developments approved for this indicator included a 17000m² development comprising a workshop (B2), two storey office (B1), valet/car preparation area and associated infrastructure works for the Mon Motors group at New House Park Industrial Estate , Chepstow plus a 1600m² warehousing development for an existing business at Wonastow Road Industrial Estate, Monmouth.

Indicator	SD2. Planning permission granted for renewable and low carbon energy development during the year.
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Granted permission (number of applications)	
Authority's data	2

Granted permission (MW energy generation)	
Authority's data	6

The planning system can optimise renewable and low carbon energy generation. This indicator tells us part of the contribution the planning system is making to delivering renewable and low carbon energy generation and moving towards a low carbon economy.

Small scale renewables are now mostly permitted development and, because they do not need planning permission, will never appear in these stats returns. The indicator records only stand-alone schemes for the purpose of generating energy from renewables: it does not record, for example, solar panels on the roof of a new barn or on new dwellings.

During the previous reporting periods, applications were approved primarily for solar development including a 6MW scheme at a farm at Parkhouse, near Trellech.

During this reporting period there was one significant proposal approved for a 6MW stand alone solar project near Llanhennock.

There has been a general drop off in activity, particularly in solar proposals, due to changes to Feed in Tariffs (for instance in 2015/16 year we approved 4 schemes likely to generate 17MW). This illustrates that factors outside of the planning system have the greatest influence on the delivery of renewable energy.

Indicator	SD3. The number of dwellings granted planning permission during the year.
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Market housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	252

Affordable housing (number of units)	
Authority's data	85

The planning system can facilitate the provision of market and affordable housing to meet local housing requirements. This indicator provides information on the contribution of the planning system to delivering new housing.

It is worth noting that this data differs significantly from the LDP AMR data due to differences between the indicator definitions. In particular, this sustainable development indicator records only full planning permission and Reserved Matters approvals: outline consents are excluded.

Over the previous reporting period we approved 300 market dwelling units and 84 affordable housing units.

It is well understood that there is an issue with the LDP strategic housing sites coming forward in a timely fashion and this has affected our housing land supply. The need to review the Plan is recognised and is underway. The strategic housing sites are progressing with approvals being granted from 2017 to this reporting period at Deri Farm, Rockfield Farm, Undy (outline and now first phase reserved matters) together with the strategic site at Crick Road, Portskewett (the latter is also an outline permission). Progress is slower than is desired but is gaining momentum. Owing to the lack of a five year land supply for housing, unallocated sites of an appropriate scale and location have been approved at Llanfoist, Monmouth and Caldicot. This has helped to see the five year housing land supply move upwards slightly from 3.9 years to 4.0 years at March 2019.

A detailed commentary on housing approvals is provided in the LDP AMR.

Indicator	SD4. Planning permission granted and refused for development in C1 and C2 floodplain areas during the year.
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Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) which were GRANTED permission	
Authority's data	1 dwelling unit; 5 ha of non-residential development

Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) which were REFUSED permission on flood risk grounds	
Authority's data	0

The planning system has an important role in ensuring that new development is not exposed unnecessarily to flooding and can guide development to locations at little or no risk from flooding. This indicator provides information on how planning applications for development in floodplain areas are being managed.

During this reporting period, one apartment was approved within flood zone C1 – this was a site in Use above commercial premises and such proposals are supported for regeneration purposes under Policy SD3 of the LDP.

The non-residential development related to a significant vehicle preparation development (3.7ha) on brownfield C2 land at Newhouse Park Industrial Estate, an allocated employment site. The other non-residential development related to a warehouse development (0.67ha) on Wonastow Road Industrial Estate, an allocated employment site, but also C1 flood plain, and a two storey office and single storey warehouse extension (0.6ha) to an existing business at Pill Street, Redwick (near Magor) which is also in zone C1.

These developments were either on established employment sites or the expansion of a well-established business and where flood consequences were properly evaluated and managed in both cases.

Indicator	SD5. The area of land (ha) granted planning permission for new development on previously developed land and greenfield land during the year.
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Previously developed land (hectares)	
Authority's data	10.24

Greenfield land (hectares)	
Authority's data	7.8

The planning system can ensure that, wherever possible, previously developed land is used in preference to greenfield sites, particularly those of high agricultural or ecological value. This indicator tells us where the planning system is directing new development.

The performance against this indicator normally reflects the rural nature of Monmouthshire as a County, with limited brownfield land available for development. Usually, the majority of development is on greenfield land. However, this reporting period saw a good proportion of approved non-residential development on brownfield sites including Newhouse Park Industrial Estate, Chepstow, Wonastow Road Industrial Estate, Monmouth and Merthyr Road, Abergavenny, plus major housing developments at Brecon Road and Tudor Street - both in Abergavenny. To a lesser extent the development of domestic gardens for new housing also makes a contribution to this.

The greenfield development primarily relates to the strategic site at Rockfield Farm, Undy (5.4ha)

It is worth noting that the data provided above differs significantly from that recorded in our LDP AMR, because the definition for the SD indicator reported upon here excludes outline planning permissions, and therefore significant sites which secured outline planning permission during the reporting period, are not recorded here. Such schemes will be reported in future APRs when detailed planning permission or Reserved Matters consent is given.

Indicator	SD6. The area of public open space (ha) that would be lost and gained as a result of development granted planning permission during the quarter.
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Open space lost (hectares)	
Authority's data	0

Open space gained (hectares)	
Authority's data	1.5

Open spaces can provide recreational, amenity and environmental value as well as having a role in climate protection and adaptation to the impacts of climate change. This indicator measures how the planning system is protecting existing, and facilitating the provision of new, open spaces.

During the monitoring period no permissions were approved that would result in the loss of public open space.

As a result of the reserved matters approval for phase one of the Rockfield Farm, Undy strategic site, 1.5 ha of new open space have been created.

Indicator	SD7. The total financial contributions (£) agreed from new development granted planning permission during the quarter for the provision of community infrastructure.
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Gained via Section 106 agreements (£)	
Authority's data	3,010,000

Gained via Community Infrastructure Levy (£)	
Authority's data	0

Financial contributions can be used to fund the provision of community infrastructure required to support sustainable development. This indicator measures the level of financial contributions agreed for the provision of community infrastructure.

This reporting period saw over £3M of contributions being secured which was slightly more than the previous period and considerably more than 2016/17 when £1.35M worth of Section 106 contributions were agreed.

This is chiefly because of the two strategic housing sites being approved at Rockfield Farm, Undy, and Crick Road, Portskewett as well as major housing schemes at Church Road, Caldicot, Brecon Road, Abergavenny, the site of the former Magistrates' Court, Abergavenny, Sandy Lane, Caldicot and an allocated housing site at Chepstow Road, Raglan. The contributions range in respect of providing affordable housing, education / community facilities, green infrastructure, sustainable transport infrastructure and public open space.

The Council is considering whether to adopt a CIL, subject to potential changes to Central Government policy.