

Planning Service Improvement Plan Actions (Updated June 2021)

Completed

- 1 Recommendation of the Internal Audit of Planning Applications (2019)
- 2 Recommendation of the Internal Audit of Planning Enforcement (2019)
- 3 Recommendation of the Internal Audit of Section 76 Planning Agreements (2017)

Initiative / Action	Actioned	Progress	Status
Attend the regional Planning Continuous Improvement Working Group meetings to engage and influence outcomes	2017	Completed	
Implement a structured approach to staff meetings across the planning service	2017	Completed	
Introduce "bite size" training sessions for planning staff	2018	Completed	
Set up regular Management Team meeting with other Council Departments	2018	Completed	
Set up regular update meetings for CMT on Major planning applications and emerging issues	2018	Completed	
Set up development industry workshop to discuss service issues and inform improvement activity	2018	Completed	
Set up joint Working Group to engage with and influence the approach of Statutory Consultees, to support performance improvements	2018	Completed	
3 Establish and maintain a database for monitoring and reporting on Planning Agreements	2018	Completed	
Implement new application validation processes	2018	Completed	
Introduce more effective monitoring of complaints and processing times	2018	Completed	
Presentations to senior managers across the council to explain the role of the Planning Service	2018	Completed	
Set up quarterly meetings of the planning committee to discuss performance	2018	Completed	
Engage with and influence the Department led Planning Performance Monitoring Framework	2018	Completed	

Publish an Application Checklist to help customers understand what information they need to submit with their planning application	2018	Completed	
Publish Customer Guidance based on agreed Operating Principles to improve the operation of the application process	2018	Completed	
Implement Phase 1 of the Application Checklist (applies to the following applications – ≥10 residential units, ≥1,000sqm and ≥0.5ha)	2019	Completed	
Revise and refresh the Developers Forum to create an Industry Engagement Forum across Planning and Building Control	2019	Completed	
1 Continue to progress Improvement Plan including assigning resources to individual actions with timeframes for completion	2019	Completed	
1 Ensure that list of Portal users is relevant and up to date	2019	Completed	
Agree long term ITC solution for monitoring Planning Agreements (included in specification for replacement Planning Portal)	2019	Completed	
Implement Phase 2 of the Application Checklist (includes addition of Major applications)	2019	Completed	
Implement the new tender for advertising planning applications in the press	2019	Completed	
Review the use of VU.CITY in the DM process	2019	Completed	
1 Review the processes and timeliness around Major applications, including monitoring and reporting on delays in processing	2019	Completed	
1 Review Member training arrangements to ensure they take account of Local Government Auditor recommendation	2019	Completed	
1, 3 Apply resources to the monitoring of planning agreements	2019	Completed	
Contribute staff to the regional core project team overseeing replacement of the Planning Portal	2019	Completed	
1 Implement checklist to support the sign-off of applications	2020	Completed	

3 Publish the Developer Contributions Framework for adoption	2020	Completed	
3 Implement a strategy for spending Developer Contributions secured through the planning application process	2020	Completed	
Review and publish Scheme of Delegation for Planning	2020	Completed	
Agree an approach to replacing the Planning Portal	2020	Completed	
3 Develop an internal proforma for Planning and Legal Services to authorise spending of financial contributions by other service areas	2020	Completed	
3 Publish an Annual Monitoring Report which sets out what financial developer contributions have been collected, which have been spent and those that are still to be committed or spent (includes information dating back to first agreements in 2015)	2020	Completed	
Design and publish new online and printable application forms for Discharge of Condition and Non Material Change applications	2020	Completed	
Introduce an internal monitoring form for capturing key information about planning decisions	2020	Completed	
Introduce more streamlined approach to report writing for Householder and small-scale applications ("fast-track applications")	2020	Completed	
Introduce an internal Consultation Checklist to ensure that we consult appropriately on planning applications (including BCC internal consultations)	2020	Completed	
Review impact of Phases 1 and 2 of Application Checklist on performance and customer service	2021	Completed	
Respond to DFI Planning's "call for evidence" in respect of the Departmental review of implementation of the Planning Act 2011	2021	Completed	

Continuing to monitor

1 Recommendation of the Internal Audit of Planning Applications 2019

2 Recommendation of the Internal Audit of Planning Enforcement 2019

3 Recommendation of the Internal Audit of Section 76 Planning Agreements 2017

Initiative / Action	Timeline	Progress	Responsible	Status
Continue to support the implementation of the replacement Planning Portal	Ongoing	Internal Project Board established. Project Plan prepared. Business Support Officer assigned project manager. Senior Planning Officer seconded to the regional project team. Project currently at design and configuration stage – BCC continues to assign staff to “sprint” workshops. BCC to decide whether to take on Intelligent Client Function role (contract management) on behalf of the 11 Planning Authorities.	EB	2
Ensure contingency in place to provide continued technical support for the current Planning Portal post end of contract	Ongoing	DFI Planning confirmed contract extension for current Planning Portal to December 2022. First wave implementation of new planning IT system expected Spring 2022.	EB	2
Continue to contribute to the Department’s Planning Forum – “task and finish” group setup to oversee implementation of the “John Irvine” report (review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Northern Ireland planning system)	Ongoing	BCC one of three councils representing local government on both the Planning Forum and Planning Forum sub-group. Providing staff to various workshops	EB	2
Improve the handling of telecommunication applications	Jun-21	Report template for telecom applications finalised and in use. Update to Application Checklist drafted to improve information requirements at validation stage. Consultant commissioned to prepare “technical factsheet” to assist officers consideration of PADs and applications	EB	2

Update Application Checklist to improve information requirements for outline and telecom applications, as well as other miscellaneous improvements	Sep-21	Feedback on areas for improvement received from Environmental Health and DAERA. Draft update prepared and to be finalised	EB	2
Implement Phase 3 of the Application Checklist to be applied to all applications except Householder and minor Local applications	Sep-21	Dependant on finalisation of updated Application Checklist (see above). Arrangements to be finalised	KM	2
Improve handling of the drafting and completion of Section 76 planning agreements including training for planning staff	Sep-21	PADs for Major schemes already identifying the requirement for draft S76 to be provided at validation stage. Review workshop to be held between Planning and Legal Services. Updates to be made to Application Checklist	EB	2
Publish a suite of model S76 planning agreement templates on BCC website	Sep-21	First draft of model S76 agreements prepared and to be reviewed	EB	2
3 Complete training on the Developer Contributions Framework for planning staff and relevant other service areas	Sep-21	To commence	EB	2
1 Process to ensure that lessons from complaints, judicial reviews and appeal decisions and shared	Sep-21	Approach agreed. Lessons learned database finalised. Implementation delayed due to COVID-19	KM	2
Review and update the Planning Committee Operating Protocol	Oct-21	Discussion workshop with Members held in March 2021 and feedback received	New Director	2
3 Prepare schedule of charges for monitoring fees	Dec-21	Case law and best practice in GB reviewed. Work delayed due to COVID-19	EB	3
3 Prepare internal procedures around S76 planning agreements including pre-application, application handling, post-decision and monitoring processes	Dec-21	Custom and practice established. Formal procedures drafted. Work delayed due to COVID-19	EB	3

Review the processes and administration around VU.CITY to ensure it is fully utilised as part of the DM process and the model is up to date	Dec-21	VU.CITY sent a list of recent Major permissions to model. Further work postponed due to COVID-19 and LDP Examination in Public	GS	3
3 Finalise arrangements for assessing viability including independent assessment of Viability Appraisals	Dec-21	Options appraisal carried out and work to be taken forward	EB	3
Implement the actions of the Internal Audit of Planning Enforcement 2019 and other areas for service improvement	Mar-22	New Operating Principles finalised. Work commenced on drafting new customer Guide to the Planning Enforcement Process. Letter templates and other process improvements linked to implementation of replacement Planning Portal	UM	3
Finalise new Model Planning Conditions for use by replacement Planning Portal. Publication of Model Planning Conditions on BCC website	Mar-22	Conditions drafted. Engagement with staff and other internal services ongoing. Draft Model Conditions shared with regional Planning Portal Project team for testing	EB	2
Examine opportunities for closer working between the Planning service and Building Control	Mar-22	To be considered by new Director of Planning & Building Control following their appointment	TBC	3
Pre Application Discussion service to be reviewed including more robust use of Planning Performance Agreements	Mar-22	Customer feedback received from Developers Forum and staff engagement ongoing	EB	3
Review corporate approach to planning service complaints	Mar-22	Corporate complaints handling currently subject to review	TBC	3
Consider the merits of introducing a Design Review Panel	Mar-22	To engage with RSUA and architectural industry to establish local interest in design panel and potential options for bringing forward	DOK	3