

<b>BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL</b>	
<b>Report to</b>	Chair & Members of Planning Committee
<b>Report Subject</b>	Quarterly Performance Information Quarter 3: <b>October to December 2021</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	Service Manager Development & Estates
<b>Directorate</b>	Regeneration and Community Services
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
<b>Key Words</b>	Performance Management Speed and quality of decision making Welsh Government Performance Monitoring

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 Every local planning authority in Wales is required to collect performance information regarding the speed and quality of decision making on all types of planning and related applications. This is submitted to Welsh Government on a quarterly basis.
- 1.2 This report considers the most recent data published by WG. The information relates to the third quarter of the last financial year i.e. **October to December 2021** It was published on the Welsh Government website on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022.
- 1.3 Due to the backlog of data as a result of Covid, 3 sets of quarterly data were released during March 2022. Rather than present a report on each set, I will include the headline data for April – June (Q1) and July- September (Q2) in the performance trend within this report that deals with the most recent return of Q3.

## 2.0 Content of the Report

- 2.1 I have included 3 tables to demonstrate performance;
- 2.2 Table 1 - ranks the 25 LPA's in order of speed of determining all applications "on time". This is defined as within the 8-week target period or longer time that may be agreed with the applicant/agent.
- 2.3 Table 2 – ranks the LPA's in Wales in respect of the average time (in days) taken to determine all applications.
- 2.4 Table 3 – shows decisions taken by Planning Committee that are contrary to the recommendation of its officers.

## 3.0 Performance Information

- 3.1 Table 1: this Council decided **84%** of all applications in time. This compares to a Welsh average of 79%.
- 3.2 The trend over the previous 3 quarters is 91%, 96%, 92% and now 84%.
- 3.3 Table 2: on average it takes **88 days** from registration to decision for this Council to decide each planning application. The Wales average is 108 days.
- 3.4 The trend over the previous 3 quarters is 81, 67, 88 and now again 88 days.
- 3.5 Table 3: **80%** of Planning Committee decisions were contrary to officer recommendation compared to an all Wales average of 13%.
- 3.6 The trend over the previous 3 quarters is 25%, 33%, 40% and now 80%.

## 4.0 Evaluation of Performance

- 4.1 Members should bear in mind that whilst this report considers the most recent data available, it does reflect performance from over 6 months ago. The data is strongly influenced by covid and in the local context, staffing issues. They are not necessarily representative of our "normal" service provision.
- 4.2 In terms of applications determined "on time" in Table 1, we have experienced a dip in performance. This is common to many LPA's. BGCBC is still above the all Wales average.
- 4.3 Table 2 looks at the average time taken to decide applications which is in my opinion a better measure of the "real world" experience of customers. The average time taken to decide an application in BGCBC has risen to 88 days. Officers are investigating means of reducing this figure and this work will include how all applications are determined including those by Planning Committee.

- 4.4 Finally, in Table 3 it is disappointing that we again return very poor performance when it comes to decisions made by Planning Committee contrary to officer advice.
- 4.5 There will always be occasions when Members legitimately take a decision contrary to advice for legitimate and defensible reasons.
- 4.6 However, the consistently higher than average returns remain a cause for concern. Approval of schemes that do not comply with policy lead to inconsistent decision making. Refusals contrary to advice have been the subject of successful appeals which have also resulted in costs awards against the Council for unreasonable and in some cases un-defensible decisions.

## **5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation**

- 5.1 Staff are currently working on measures to improve performance and this will be the subject of detailed discussions with the Chair.
- 5.2 Any substantive changes will be reported to Planning Committee.
- 5.3 This report is for information and consideration only. No decision is therefore required.

**Table 1**

**WG Quarterly DM Survey: Q3 21/22 - Oct to Dec 2021**  
**Percentage of Planning Applications Determined “On Time”**  
*(Ranked in Order of Performance)*

<b>Welsh Local Planning Authority</b>		<b>Percentage of All Applications Determined On Time</b>
		<b>% Decided in Time</b>
1	Merthyr	100
2	Neath Port Talbot	97
	Swansea	97
4	Vale of Glamorgan	96
5	Conwy	89
6	Torfaen	87
7	Carmarthenshire	85
	Powys	85
9	Brecon Beacons National Park	85
10	<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>	<b>84</b>
	Caerphilly	84
12	Ceredigion	83
13	RCT	80
	Monmouthshire	80
	Anglesey	80
	Denbighshire	80
17	Cardiff	78
18	Wrexham	74
19	Pembs Coast National Park	70
	Bridgend	70
21	Pembrokeshire	64
22	Gwynedd	48
	Flintshire	43
24	Snowdonia National Park	38
25	Newport	--
<b>WALES AVERAGE</b>		<b>79 %</b>

**Table 2**

**WG Quarterly DM Survey: Q3 21/22 - Oct to Dec 2021**  
**Average Time to Decide Applications in Days**  
 (Ranked in Order of Performance)

<b>Welsh Local Planning Authority</b>		<b>Average No. of Days Taken to Decide An Application</b>
1	Merthyr Tydfil	55
2	Conwy	67
	RCT	67
4	Swansea	70
5	Bridgend	74
6	Vale of Glamorgan	78
7	Neath Port Talbot	79
8	Anglesey	80
9	Pembrokeshire	85
10	Denbighshire	86
11	<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>	<b>88</b>
12	Cardiff	96
13	Gwynedd	97
14	Wrexham	99
15	Monmouthshire	116
16	Snowdonia National Park	122
17	Torfaen	129
18	Pembs Coast National Park	131
19	Ceredigion	132
20	Flintshire	137
21	Carmarthenshire	149
22	Brecon Beacons National Park	153
23	Powys	157
24	Caerphilly	245
25	Newport	--
<b>WALES AVERAGE</b>		<b>108 Days</b>

**Table 3**

**WG Quarterly DM Survey: Q3 21/22 - Oct to Dec 2021**  
**Decisions Contrary to Officer Recommendation**

(Ranked in Order of Performance)

Welsh Local Planning Authority		% Planning Committee Decisions Contrary to Officer Recommendation
1	Brecon Beacons National Park	0
	Bridgend	0
	Cardiff	0
	Merthyr	0
	Neath Port Talbot	0
	Pembrokeshire	0
	Pembs Coast National Park	0
	Powys	0
	Snowdonia	0
	Swansea	0
	Torfaen	0
	Vale of Glamorgan	0
13	Carmarthenshire	3
14	Gwynedd	8
15	Conwy	11
16	Anglesey	13
17	Wrexham	14
18	Denbighshire	17
19	Caerphilly	20
20	RCT	22
21	Flintshire	25
	Monmouthshire	25
23	Ceredigion	40
24	<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>	<b>80</b>
25	Newport	<i>no return</i>
<b>Wales Average</b>		<b>13 %</b>

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