

BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL	
Report to	Chair & Members of Planning Committee
Report Subject	Quarterly Performance Information
Report Author	Service Manager Development & Estates
Directorate	Regeneration and Community Services
Date of Meeting	February 2024
Key Words	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 Welsh Government publishes this data on its website. It is a useful source of comparative information where the Council can not only scrutinise its own performance, but benchmark the data against the 25 other Local Planning authorities (22 unitary authorities and 3 National Parks)
- 1.3 It is usual practise to present a report to Planning Committee to update Members on the most recent performance in the form of a league table. This report deals with Quarter 1 of 2023/24 i.e. April to June 2023.

2.0 Content of the Report

- 2.1 This report will examine three indicators:
- 2.2
 - i. Applications determined in time - This is defined as within the 8-week target period or longer time that may be agreed with the applicant/agent.
 - ii. Time Taken – the average time (in days) taken to determine all applications.
 - iii. Quality of decision making – decisions taken by Planning Committee that are contrary to the recommendation of its officers.

3.0 Performance Information

- 3.1 The latest data WG has published was on 15th December 2023 and covered Quarter 1 being April to June 2023.
- 3.2 i. BG decided **97%** of applications “in time”. This compared to an all-Wales average of 86%.
- 3.3 The trend for BGCBC over the preceding quarters was 99%, 93%, 95%, 90% and now 97%. This is consistently above the all-Wales average in each quarter respectively which was typically in the low to mid 80 percentile range.
- 3.4 ii. On average, it took **95 days** to decide each application against an all-Wales average of 103 days.
- 3.5 In the 4 preceding quarters to this one, the returns were 82, 70, 73 and 84 days. In each of the quarters, this was well above the Wales average which fluctuated between 94 and 123 days.
- 3.6 iii. **0%** of applications in this quarter decided by Planning Committee were contrary to officer recommendation. The Wales average was 5%.
- 3.7 This compares to returns of 17%, 17%, 0% and 0% in the previous 4 quarters.

4.0 Evaluation of Performance and Conclusions

- 4.1 Members should recognise that these performance figures represent a snapshot of performance for the given quarter and in this case are over 6 months old. There was a delay in publishing the figures and therefore could not be brought to Members attention until now.
- 4.2 The performance tables confirm our performance is relatively stable in terms of trends over the past year and given capacity, is satisfactory. Nevertheless, we continue to identify areas where we can improve.
- 4.3 Members will be aware that the service is currently operating with one less planning officer who is seconded to other duties associated with a changing out back-office software. Whilst some of this work is being allocated to an external consultancy, it does not fully compensate for losing one FTE.
- 4.4 The average number of days to decide an application is an important indicator. It gives a real world indicator of the time taken to decide an application having regard to extensions of time which are agreed in the interests of applicants as well as the Council but does of course result in slower decision making. The changes to the scheme of delegation agreed in autumn 2023 should help us improve in this area as all applications that are presented to Planning Committee inevitably take longer to process. Until the service is back to full strength and the benefits of the new software become embedded, it is anticipated that this change will improve our performance. However, this change will not reflect in the returns for some time.

5.0 Recommendation

5.1 No decision is required.

5.2 However, Planning Committee is invited to scrutinise the performance returns and officers will address any issues or questions at the meeting.

Table 1

WG Quarterly DM Survey: Q1 23/24
April to June 2023
Percentage of Planning Applications Determined “On Time”
(Ranked in Order of Performance)

Welsh Local Planning Authority		Percentage of All Applications Determined On Time
1	Caerphilly	99
2	Vale of Glamorgan	98
3=	Blaenau Gwent	97
3=	Anglesey	97
3=	Swansea	97
6	Pembrokeshire	95
7	Merthyr Tydfil	92
8	Monmouthshire	91
9	Powys	90
10	Carmarthenshire	89
11=	Gwynedd	88
11=	Brecon Beacons National Park	88
11=	Ceredigion	88
14	Conwy	87
15	Denbighshire	84
16	Newport	79
17	Wrexham	78
18	Rhondda Cynon Taff	77
19	Cardiff	74
20	Bridgend	69
21	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park	67
22	Torfaen	55
	Neath Port Talbot	--
	Snowdonia National Park	--
	Flintshire	--
WALES AVERAGE		86 %

Table 2

WG Quarterly DM Survey: Q1 23/24
April to June 2023
Average Time to Decide Applications in Days
(Ranked in Order of Performance)

Welsh Local Planning Authority		Average No. of Days Taken to Decide Each Application
1	Caerphilly	68
2	Pembrokeshire	72
3	Swansea	73
4	Conwy	77
5	Merthyr Tydfil	80
6	Rhondda Cynon Taff	84
7=	Gwynedd	86
7=	Bridgend	86
9	Anglesey	87
10	Vale of Glamorgan	88
11	Denbighshire	90
12	Cardiff	93
13	Blaenau Gwent	95
14	Carmarthenshire	103
15	Monmouthshire	104
16	Newport	117
17	Wrexham	119
18	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park	121
19	Torfaen	128
20	Ceredigion	158
21	Powys	159
22	Brecon Beacons National Park	185
	Neath Port Talbot	--
	Snowdonia National Park	--
	Flintshire	--
WALES AVERAGE		108 Days

Table 3

WG Quarterly DM Survey: Q1 23/24
April to June 2023
Decisions Contrary to Officer Recommendation
(Ranked in Order of Performance)

Welsh Local Planning Authority		% of Planning Committee Decisions Contrary to Officer Recommendation
1=	Blaenau Gwent	0
1=	Brecon Beacons National Park	0
1=	Bridgend	0
1=	Caerphilly	0
1=	Cardiff	0
1=	Conwy	0
1=	Merthyr Tydfil	0
1=	Monmouthshire	0
1=	Newport	0
1=	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park	0
1=	Pembrokeshire	0
1=	Powys	0
1=	Swansea	0
1=	Torfaen	0
1=	Vale of Glamorgan	0
1=	Wrexham	0
17	Anglesey	5
18	Rhondda Cynon Taff	7
19	Carmarthenshire	13
20=	Denbighshire	20
20=	Ceredigion	20
22	Gwynedd	29
	Neath Port Talbot	--
	Snowdonia National Park	--
	Flintshire	--
Wales Average		5 %
