



|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b>Subject:</b>              | Draft Planning Service Performance Framework   |
| <b>Date:</b>                 | 10th March 2026  |
| <b>Reporting Officer(s):</b> | Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control  |
| <b>Contact Officer(s):</b>   | Ciara Reville, Principal Planning Officer (Development Management)<br>Mark Whitaker, Acting Principal Planning Officer (Development Planning and Policy) |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Restricted Reports</b>                                |           |
| <b>Is this report restricted?</b>                        | <b>No</b> |
| <b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b> |           |
| After Committee Decision                                 |           |
| After Council Decision                                   |           |
| Some time in the future                                  |           |
| Never  |           |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Call-in</b>                               |            |
| <b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b> | <b>Yes</b> |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>1.0</b> | <b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>  |
| 1.1        | This report sets out a new Planning Performance Framework that provides for the regular reporting of the performance and continuous improvement actions of Belfast's Planning Service.  |
| 1.2        | It is intended that a performance report for the Planning Service will be produced on a yearly basis in line with the Performance Framework and that the Framework will bring a more formal structure to the performance management of the Service. |
| <b>2.0</b> | <b>Recommendation</b>   |
| 2.1        | The Committee is asked to note the contents of the Performance Framework (Appendix 1) and the intention to bring a Performance report to a subsequent Committee.  |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>3.0</b> | <b>Main Report</b>  |
| 3.1        | Belfast City Council's Corporate Plan 2025–2028 sets out how the Council will deliver the priorities of the Belfast Agenda, with a focus on building a sustainable, inclusive economy and a fair society. It also outlines the Council's vision, values and priorities for the city.  |
| 3.2        | <p>The Planning Service sits within the Department of Place and Economy, whose objective is to provide an effective and efficient planning service. The Departmental Plan includes the following performance measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver planning services including customer advice, pre-application discussions, planning application processing, Tree Preservation Orders, and enforcement.</li> <li>• Monitor delivery of the Local Development Plan Strategy and produce the Local Policies Plan (LPP).</li> <li>• Establish a Belfast Planning Partnership with agents, architects and developers to improve planning processes and support regional reform.</li> <li>• Progress preparation of the LPP, including local planning policies and land-use zonings aligned with the Eastern Transport Plan.</li> <li>• Key Performance Indicators (statutory): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Average processing time for major applications: 30 weeks</li> <li>○ Average processing time for local applications: 15 weeks</li> <li>○ % of enforcement cases processed within 39 weeks</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| 3.3        | <p>Since planning powers transferred to councils in 2015, Belfast City Council's Planning Service has continually worked to improve performance. Members will recall several improvement actions over the past decade, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Service Improvement Plan</li> <li>• 10 Operating Principles and Guide to the Planning Application Process</li> <li>• Application Checklist and Validation Checklist</li> <li>• Improvements to the Pre-Application Discussion process</li> <li>• Lean systems redesign project</li> </ul>   |
| 3.4        | <p>It is hoped that renewed and regular performance reporting will help to ensure that the Planning Service remains transparent, accountable and focused on continuous improvement. It will provide clear evidence of how effectively public resources are being used, support informed decision-making, and help to identify areas where change may be needed. Performance information will also enable the Planning Service to plan ahead, meet statutory and regulatory obligations, and improve customer experience by better understanding demand, service quality and outcomes. It is considered that consistent reporting will help to strengthen public confidence and support the delivery of an efficient, high-quality service aligned with the Council's priorities.</p>  |
| 3.4        | <p>Officers have produced a Performance Framework (<b>Appendix 1</b>). In drafting this, officers considered approaches used elsewhere in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, along with findings from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the NI Audit Office report on Planning,</li> <li>• the Public Accounts Committee report (2022), and</li> <li>• local audit reports.</li> </ul>   |
| 3.5        | <p>In the short-term, it is important to have proper measurement and reporting systems in place. In the longer-term, these performance measures will help drive improvements and support better-quality planning outcomes.</p>  |
| 3.6        | <p>The draft Planning Performance Framework uses best practice from other regions and outlines how the Council's Planning Service can meet its objectives through continuous improvement and by contributing to wider planning improvement work across Northern Ireland.</p>  |

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| 3.7        | <p>The draft Planning Performance Framework has four parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parts 1 and 2 set out the key objectives that define success</li> <li>• Parts 3 and 4 outline how the Planning Service will work to achieve these objectives</li> </ul>                                     |
| 3.8        | <p>Overall, this framework brings together all existing and ongoing improvement work and provides a single, strategic approach to performance management and customer service. It will allow the Council to track progress, show how planning contributes to city-wide outcomes, and monitor annual performance.</p> |
| 3.9        | <p>The framework will be implemented before the new performance year begins on 1 April 2026 and the first performance report will be brought to Committee alongside the annual monitoring reports for housing land, employment land and developer agreements in Autumn 2026.</p>                                     |
| <b>6.0</b> | <b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b>   |
| 6.1        | No financial or resource implications have been identified.  |
| <b>7.0</b> | <b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b>  |
| 7.1        | No Equality or Good Relations implications have been identified. There is no need for a Rural Needs Assessment.  |
| <b>8.0</b> | <b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>   |
|            | Appendix 1 –Belfast City Council Draft Planning Performance Framework  |