



Subject:	Updating customers on live Planning Enforcement cases
Date:	18 th August 2026
Reporting Officer(s):	Kate Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	No
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	
After Council Decision	
Some time in the future	
Never	

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To report to the Committee on proposed changes to the Planning Service's approach to providing updates on live enforcement cases to customers and elected representatives.
1.2	The proposed changes will necessitate some minor revisions to the Council's Planning Enforcement Strategy and these are set out in Appendix 2 . The opportunity has also been taken to make two further minor drafting changes in relation to the NI Planning Portal and vexatious complaints.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	That the Committee notes the revisions.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Council's Planning Enforcement Strategy sets out the Council's approach to investigating enforcement complaints. This includes, amongst many other aspects of the enforcement process, how customers and elected representatives are updated on live enforcement cases.

3.2	Following feedback from customers and elected representatives, it is proposed to change the Planning Service's approach to providing updates on live enforcement cases. At present, no information is given for data protection reasons, to safeguard the rights of investigations and ensure that outcome of investigations is not prejudiced.
3.3	Whilst these considerations remain applicable, the approach to updating customers and elected members has been reviewed following discussion with Legal Services. Under the revised approach, it considered appropriate to provide updates according to the stage at which the enforcement investigation has reached. The stages include: 1. a complaint has been received and an enforcement case opened 2. a site visit has been undertaken 3. the Planning Service is currently gathering evidence and assessing the case 4. the outcome of the investigation (including whether the case has been closed and reasons why, if the site is being monitoring, an appeal has been lodged etc).
3.4	The current Planning Enforcement Strategy is provided at Appendix 1 . A copy of the proposed revised Planning Enforcement Strategy is provided at Appendix 2 . The proposed changes in relation to providing updates are set out at paragraphs 19.3 and 19.4 of Appendix 2 .
3.5	<u>Other minor revisions</u> In making focused changes to the Enforcement Strategy in relation to the provision of updates, the opportunity has been taken to make two further minor drafting amendments to the Strategy.
3.6	<u>Link to the NI Planning Portal website</u> It is proposed to include a link to the NI Planning Portal at new paragraph 9.3 (Appendix 2) where customers can submit online enforcement complaints. This is the optimum channel for submitting enforcement complaints because it directs complainants to provide the necessary minimum information about the complaint and automatically populates the back-office system, improving efficiency.
3.7	<u>Removal of reference to "vexatious" complaints</u> The current Planning Enforcement Strategy states that the Council will not investigate vexatious complaints. In practice, very few if any vexatious complaints are received. Moreover, it is difficult to provide a clear definition of what a vexatious complaint is. Therefore, it is proposed that reference to the non-investigation of vexatious complaints is removed at paragraph 10.1. Should vexatious complaints be received, these can be managed on a case-by-case basis.
6.0	Financial & Resource Implications
6.1	The proposed amendments to the Planning Enforcement Strategy will have a modest impact on resources in terms of the Planning Service providing additional information to customers and elected representatives regarding the stage of a live enforcement complaint.
6.2	The promotion of the NI Planning Portal as the channel for submitting planning enforcement complaints will improve efficiency by ensuring that complaints are supported by minimum levels of information and automatically populating the information in the Planning Service's back-office system.

7.0	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
7.1	There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report.
8.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – current Planning Enforcement Strategy Appendix 2 – revised Planning Enforcement Strategy