



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

Planning Department

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE PLAN - 2024 / 2025

Date

Consulted within staff team

22 Mar /
/2024

Discussed & signed off by Director

23 / 4 /2024

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1.0 OVERALL PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE DEPARTMENT

1.1 Purpose and Scope of the Department

The purpose of Planning Services is to secure the sustainable development of Mid Ulster in a manner that provides for the social and economic well-being of the District, whilst enhancing Mid Ulster's environment for the enjoyment of the present and future generations. The Planning Service Leads for Local Planning and Strategic Planning lead the Planning Department with responsibility for delivering functions designed to:

- Lead Sustainable development through the creation of the Local Development Plan
- Manage Development in accordance with that Development Plan when making decisions on planning applications:
- Enforce planning controls taking appropriate, proportional and measured action where necessary to remedy breaches.
- Preserving and Enhancing Areas of historic, architectural or environmental importance and protecting trees of special amenity value

1.2 Responsibilities

The Planning Department is led by 2 Planning Service Leads (Strategic and Local) who report to the Chief Executive and who take overall operational responsibility for formulating preparing planning policy for the Local Development Plan and for enabling make sound planning decisions on development management and enforcement decisions. The Service Leads also takes responsibility for making planning decisions as delegated to them by the Council as well as instructing solicitors. The Service leads also take responsibility for ensuring the Planning Department is fit for purpose ensuring the right people are undertaking the right jobs with adequate tools and training to meet business needs within the resources available.

- Strategic Planning

This function is led by the Planning Service Lead – (Strategic Planning) who is responsible for the Local Development Plan for Mid Ulster District, Enforcement and Major applications processing. The section is also responsible for preparing supplementary planning advice, working and liaising with stakeholders on Planning Policy matters. The section also undertakes the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment and deals with other environmental matters such as tree preservation and conservation. In addition, the Service Lead for Strategic Planning is also responsible for major applications teams which deal with larger public, employment, or infrastructural developments as well as housing developments (over 50 units) which are due to be determined by Mid Ulster Council. This team also provides Mid Ulster Council's input into regionally significant applications. This is to synergise the development plan process with major investment opportunities.

In addition, the Service Lead (Strategic Planning) is also responsible for Enforcement team – investigating alleged breaches in planning control, serving notices and providing witness for prosecutions

- Local Planning

This function led by the Planning Service Lead – (Local Planning) who is responsible for processing local applications, which make up 99% of all submissions. It comprises, two area based teams. One is located at the Magherafelt Councils offices on the Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt, and the other at the Dungannon Council Offices at Circular Road Dungannon.

The respective teams deal with applications in the following Electoral Areas:-

1. Cookstown, Magherafelt, Carntogher and Mayola
2. Dungannon, Clogher and Torrent

In addition to researching and reporting on applications to the Committee on local planning applications, the teams also handle submissions for listed building and conservation area consents, non-material changes, Certificates of Lawful development and other consents under the Planning Act. They are also the front line for providing planning advice on a range of planning matters to all of our customers.

- Business and Technical Support

The business support team is led by the Business Support Manager who reports directly to the Service Lead for Local Planning. This team is responsible for administration of planning applications, managing files, receiving fees and financial accounting. The team also oversees correspondence tracking, dealing with most Environmental Information Requests under the EIR/FOI regulations. The team is also responsible for the administration of the Property Certificate system.

1.3 Customers & Stakeholders

Customers & Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customers & Stakeholders<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Applicants- Agent/Architects- Objectors- Complainants in relation to breaches of planning control- Planning Committee- Council Officers and Elected Representatives- Statutory consultees- Local Development Plan consultation bodies- Mid Ulster residents, business and interested parties

1.4 Performance Overview in 2023/24 (Retrospective Review)

2023/2024 Performance Response/ Overview (What we achieved- Measured Activities)	End of Year Progress Status: Activity was - Completed /Commenced/ Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make quality timely decisions on local applications 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make quality, timely decisions on major planning applications 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To efficiently enforce against breaches in planning control and protect our environs and amenities 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To progress the Local Development Plan towards adoption 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To work with the Department and other councils to improve the legislative and operational basis by implementing an action plan to improve how major planning applications are processed 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To conduct a customer survey to gauge customer satisfaction with development management services in Mid Ulster produce an action plan to see what improvement can be made to operational practice 	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To development an action plan to improve development management services taking into account customer views 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the property certificate service by providing a full on-line submission system including fee payment 	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To complete and implement the Service Review of staffing 	Complete

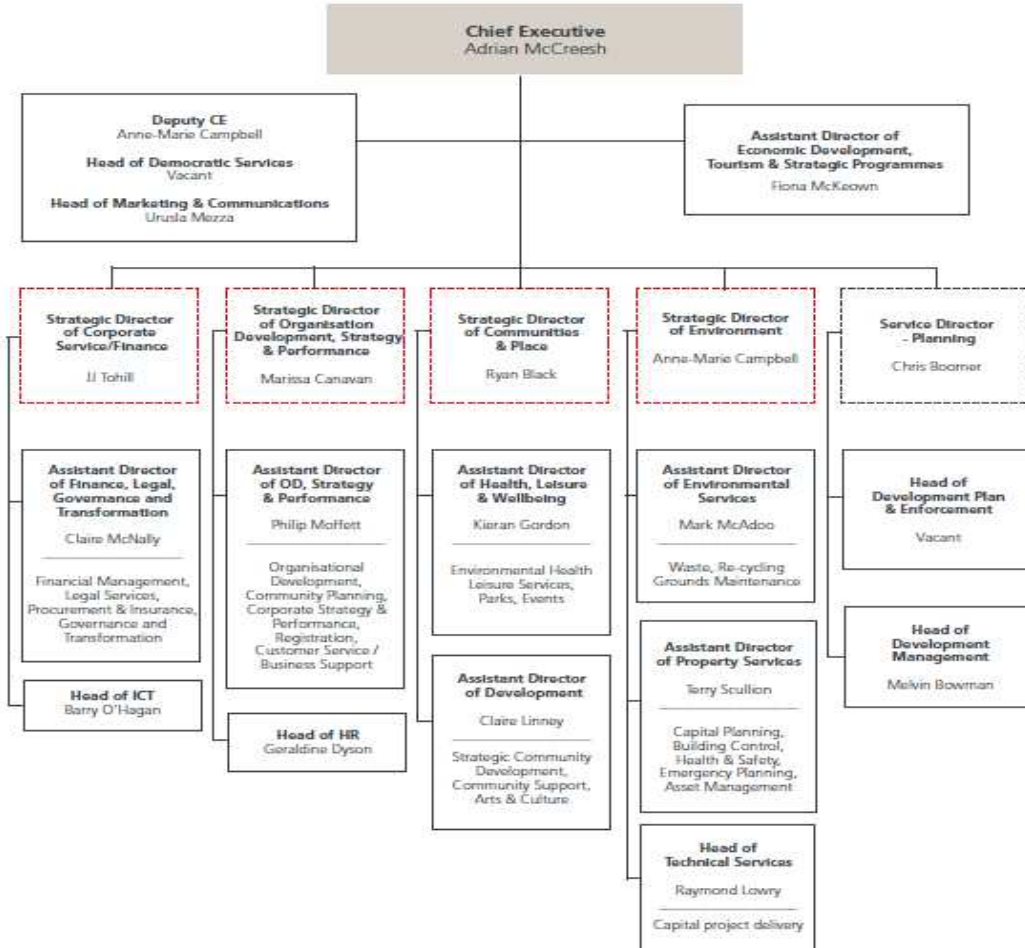
2.0 IMPROVING OUR SERVICES AND MANAGING PERFORMANCE - 2024/25

The following table provides an estimate of resources, financial and people, which the Department has access to throughout 2024-25 to deliver its actions, activities and core business.

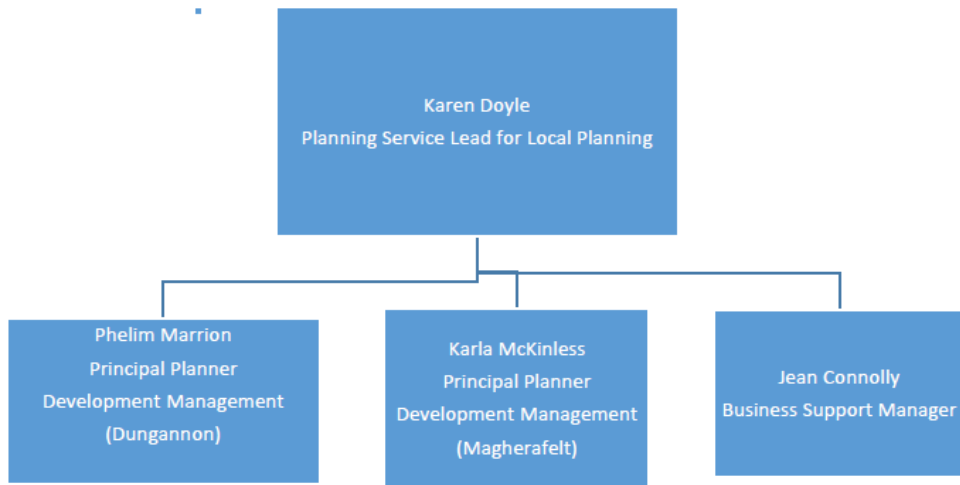
2.1 Budget 2024/25

Budget Headings	£,000
Service Leads and Business Support	203
Strategic Planning	750
Local Planning	745
Enforcement	257
Total Expenditure	1955
Application fees	1760
	95
Income	1855
Net Budget for 2024-25	100

2.2 Departmental Services - Council Structure - 2024/25



Planning Department Management Structure 2024-25



Staffing	No. of Staff
Service Leads	2
Principal Officers	6
Officers	27
Remaining Team	10
Total	46 (inc part time)

2.3 Service Work Plan - 2024/25

This plan outlines the core activities and actions, which will form your Department (by Services) or Departmental Service Work Plan for 2024-2025.

This is a high-level capture of the Department and the Service outcomes /activities/measures as well as some improvement undertakings which the services will focus on throughout 2024-2025.

The Plan links to hierarchy of other plans and measures such as:

1. Community Plan
2. Strategic plans e.g. Local Development Plan
3. 2024-2028 Corporate Plan priorities,
4. Annual Corporate Performance Improvement (PIP plan)
5. Corporate Improvement Project Plans (CIP's)
6. Statutory Indicators,
7. Corporate Health Indicators

Mid Ulster District Council's Improvement Objectives for 2024 to 2025 are:

1. Mid Ulster District Council will seek to reduce the environmental impacts of our own activities and will contribute to the improvement of the wider environment through local action.
2. We will ensure a more connected Mid Ulster where new technologies and ways of working, empower citizens to get the best services that matter to them.
3. To create cleaner neighbourhoods, where everyone takes responsibility for their waste and environment.
4. We will contribute to the on-going regeneration of our district by delivering a capital investment programme, enhancing facilities and opportunities for local people.

SERVICES WORK PLAN 2024/25

Service Name: Planning Service						
Link to Community Plan Theme:			Align to Corporate Plan Theme			
Service Objective (What do we want to achieve?):		What are the key activities we will deliver (actions):	By When (Date?)	Service Name /Lead Officers(s)	What difference will it make? (Outcomes)	How Will we Know? (Measures) clear measurement e.g. %, #, £, date etc.
No.001	To make quality, timely decisions on major planning applications	Providing pre-application advice, and validating, consulting, processing and recommending on planning application	Ongoing	Planning Service Lead – Strategic Planning. Emma McCullough (Principal)	Facilitate investment in those decisions most important the economy and provide homes	To Determine 50% of Major applications within 30 weeks
No.002	To make quality timely decisions on local applications. To be determining 50% of local planning applications within 15 weeks.	Validating, consulting, processing, and recommending on planning application	Ongoing	Planning Service Lead – Local Planning. Karla McKinless Phelim Marrion	Facilitate development investment in improving the economy and providing homes	To be determining 50% of local planning applications within 15 weeks.

SERVICES WORK PLAN 2024/25

Service Name: Planning Service						
Link to Community Plan Theme:			Align to Corporate Plan Theme			
CMP 1.1 Economic Growth - We prosper in a stronger & more competitive economy			Theme 1 : Our Service Delivery			
Service Objective (What do we want to achieve?):		What are the key activities we will deliver (actions):	By When (Date?)	Service Name /Lead Officers(s)	What difference will it make? (Outcomes)	How Will we Know? (Measures) clear measurement e.g. %, #, £, date etc.
No.03	To efficiently enforce against breaches in planning control and protect our environs and amenities .	Inspecting negotiating and where necessary ordering and prosecuting those who cause harm to our environment and others by refusing to abide by planning controls	Ongoing	Service Lead – Strategic Planning. Paul McClean.	It will improve the lives of our citizens by regulating or removing harmful unauthorised development	To conclude 70% enforcement investigations within 39 week of receipt of complaint
No.04	*To progress the Local Development Plan towards adoption . *Dependant on DFI*	To revise the plan timetable in accordance with the outcome of consideration of the submitted plan strategy to the Department and any set dates for public examination. Continue to Liaise with DFI on their lack of progress on their decision on moving the plan to examination.	Ongoing	Service Lead – Strategic Planning. Emma McCullough / Grace Heron/ Roisin McAllister.	To provide a sustainable framework for the future development of the Mid Ulster By progressing the Plan in line with the revised timetable.	By progressing the plan in line with a revised timetable.
No.05	To ensure that we have a system in place to monitor Judicial Review and other Legal challenges.	Establish a means of recording Judicial Review and other Legal challenges against the Service.	By Sept 2024	Service Leads.	Will provide a means of measuring the number and outcome of legal challenges.	By measuring if legal challenges are increasing or decreasing (less is better)

No.06	To review the current planning agent's satisfaction baseline questionnaire completed in Jan 2024.	Revise content by Mar 2025 with a view to initiating a wider public consultation by the end of 2025.	End 2025	Principal planning officers.	Will provide a wider measure of customer satisfaction.	Based on the responses received to any revised survey.
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2.4 RISK MANAGEMENT OF DEPARTMENT/SERVICES

The purpose of risk management is to manage the barriers which prevents the Council from achieving its objectives. This section of the service plan includes space for the Department to input their key risks (in summary form), which have been identified during the business planning process. The Council uses risk management to maximize opportunities and minimize risks. This improves its ability to deliver priorities and improve outcomes. This is why the Council deems it important to link business planning and risk management. Risk Management aims to:

- Help the Council achieve its overall aims and objectives
- Manage the significant risks the Council faces to an acceptable level
- Assist with the decision making process
- Implement the most effective measures to avoid, reduce and control those risks
- Balance risk with opportunity
- Manage risk and internal controls in the most effective way.

This table illustrates the risks identified to deliver the Department's/Services business as outlined in service plan for 2023-24.

Risk Ref Number	Description of Risk	Risk Rating	Mitigation Activity
1.	<i>That legislation, statutory consultees and current practice is creating undue delays in the planning system.</i>	9	<i>To work with the Department, consultees and other Councils to bring forward a regional action plan and to identify local reasons for delay and devise an action plan to improve performance.</i>
2.	<i>That the Department of Infrastructure causes further delay in progressing the Local Development Plan & Consult members on the options for enabling the plan to be progressed and action accordingly</i>	8	<i>Consult members on the options for enabling the plan to be progressed and action accordingly</i>
3.	<i>Failure to retain and attract staff with the right experience and training</i>	7	<i>Provide Training / follow PC/SP process.</i>
4.	<i>Failure to adequately manage our IT resource.</i>	7	<i>Train additional staff to administer and service the system</i>

Rating	Descriptor
16 - 25	Extreme Risk (immediate action required)
10 - 15	High Risk (urgent action required)
7 - 9	Moderate Risk (action required)
1 – 6	Low Risk (keep under review)

3.0 OUR STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

In carrying out our responsibilities, the Service is cognisant of the statutory duties placed upon the council in the delivery of its services. Whilst the Service operates, under various obligations it is however mindful of the changing context in which it operates and endeavours to mainstream the equality and rural needs duties in the design and delivery of our functions.

3.1 EQUALITY DUTY

The council and by consequence our Service is committed to contributing towards its part in working towards fulfilling obligations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to ensure adequate time, staff and resources to fulfil our duties.

The Service will also work towards adherence to the council's Equality Scheme ensuring equality duties, together with promoting positive attitudes towards persons with a disability and the participation of people with a disability in public life when carrying out our functions.

3.2 RURAL NEEDS DUTY

The Service will be mindful of the rural needs of its customers when carrying out its functions and subsequent responsibilities, particularly in developing any new policies, plans or strategies throughout the year. In line with the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 we will give due regard to rurality in terms of needs in carrying out the activities within our Service.