Report on	Planning System replacement
Reporting Officer	Barry O'Hagan
Contact Officer	Barry O'Hagan

Is this report restricted for confidential business?		Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon		No	x

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	To inform Council on the progress to date regarding the replacement of the Planning Portal system.

2.0	**Background**
2.1	The NI Planning Portal (NIPP) system, which is used by the 11 councils, is a Department for Communities system which predated local government reform on 1 April 2015.
2.2	The contract for the maintenance and support of this contract ends in March 2019.
2.3	Members will be aware that discussions have been continuing between councils and the DfC regarding the replacement of this system.

3.0	**Main Report**
	Plan and progress for identifying a new planning IT system.
3.1	The Discovery exercise has identified the key IT requirements of a new planning system and a potential recommended (at this time) solution.
3.2	At this stage it is envisaged that the new system will also include property certificates; however this will need to be confirmed prior to formal commissioning of any solution.
3.3	The Discovery phase also identified the following potential business solutions: • One shared IT system that is collectively managed / controlled • One shared IT system that is collectively managed / controlled but with local (district council and Department) control for specific functions • One shared public facing IT system with multiple independent back-office IT systems for each local district council and the Department • Twelve standalone IT systems – one for each local district council and the Department
3.4	The various potential solution options identified are summarised in appendix 1. Consideration of these options has resulted in the conclusion that option 2, a Shared system with local (district council and Department) control, provides the best technical solution for the twelve authorities. This solution provides the flexibility to meet all the requirements notified to date without having to compromise on user experience.

3.5	The second phase of this project will involve the development of a formal business case including the detailed analysis of costs, benefits, risks and value for money of the options above. The business case will be prepared by PA Consulting Group.
3.6	Whilst the initial discovery research has identified the preferred development of a bespoke system this potential recommendation will be subject to market testing with existing suppliers and costs analysis. (see appendix 2: business case development: New planning IT system for NI).
3.7	As part of the business case, the consultants will be working with central and local government to identify the costs, potential savings and benefits of a new IT system. This will include meeting up to 13 potential IT suppliers during the first two weeks in December, as part of a market sounding exercise.
3.8	The consultants will use this information as well as the outcomes from Discovery to identify potential options for a new planning IT system or systems. A long list of options will be considered and sifted to produce a short list. The criteria used for sifting these options will be developed in the coming weeks. This will include the potential suitability of these options, such as the functionality of the proposal, as well as the feasibility of implementation with issues such as data migration and timescales for implementation.
3.9	The shortlisted options will then be appraised using HMT Green Book guidance and the Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation. The key elements of this appraisal are outlined below and will be developed further during December to reflect the feedback from the market sounding exercise: • estimate the monetary costs and benefits; • identify and compare non-monetary benefits (such as usability by staff and public); • risk assessment; • outline affordability and funding considerations; and • plan for the project to be appropriately monitored, managed and evaluated.
3.10	The intended outcome is for PA Consulting Group to develop a business case that will provide an impartial assessment of the available options which will identify a preferred option for a new planning IT solution, and recommend arrangements for implementation of this preferred option. The business case will then be considered by each of the councils and the Department to agree a way forward.
3.11	Within the discovery phase data migration from the legacy system has been addressed separately. (Appendix 2: data migration)
3.12	It is envisaged that the business case will enable the councils and the Department to make an informed decision on how best to take the project forward in January /Feb 2018.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial & Human Resources Implications** Financial: Each council and the Department have agreed to contribute to the Discovery phase and formulation of the business case in the amount of £12,000. The officers have been informed that the work to date has only cost £2,000. Very indicative costs (without any market testing) from the discovery stage (as per Deloitte) has indicated that a bespoke system could cost £4-6m for the 12 authorities. The business case will consider this in more detail.

	To date the Department has not confirmed their approach to funding the replacement system.	
4.2	**Equality and Good Relations Implications** Not applicable	
4.3	**Risk Management Implications** The planning portal Governance Board continues to have representation from Council's Planning Manager and Head of IT system. The project and the potential risk to normal operations within Council's planning department will continue to be monitored closely during the progression of the business case and the commissioning and implementation of the new system. It is currently anticipated that the commissioning of any significant new system will require substantial software development and testing, which in turn will require the extension of the contract for the existing system to maintain the current planning portal beyond its scheduled expiry in March 2019.	
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**	
5.1	That Committee notes the above.	
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**	
	Appendix 1: Solution options Appendix 2: Data Migration	