

## Cyngor Sir CEREDIGION County Council

**REPORT TO:** Thriving Communities Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** 22 June 2023

**LOCATION:** Chamber / Hybrid

**TITLE:** Development Management Service

**PURPOSE OF REPORT:** To provide an update on the planning and enforcement caseloads

**REASON SCRUTINY HAVE REQUESTED THE INFORMATION:** Members requested that officers provide an update on the planning and enforcement caseloads

### **BACKGROUND:**

In December 2022, a report was presented to the Thriving Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the Development Management Service. The report centred on a 2021 Audit Wales review of the Planning Service in Ceredigion.

The review set out 10 recommendations relating to governance arrangements and to improving service capacity.

In response to those recommendations relating to governance arrangements, it was reported that significant changes to the Constitution had been agreed including new Terms of Reference, Operational Procedures, Codes of Practice and Delegated Powers. It was explained that training had provided to all Members after the elections in May and these changes have now been embedded with procedures and practices being adopted well.

In response to performance issues, it was necessary to look at tackling issues in four main areas of the development management process – validation, consultee delays, phosphates and staff capacity to deal with cases.

### **CURRENT POSITION**

#### Validation

Validation refers to the stage where cases are checked to see whether the appropriate plans, supporting documents and fees have been provided to register an application. Ideally, cases should be registered within a week of submission. At the worse point in 2022, this stage of the process was running 8 weeks late, so cases were often reaching officers at a point where decisions should normally be issued. By the end of December 2022, additional resources and training had turned this issue around so that most applications within a day or two of being submitted. This position has been

sustained with 100% of valid applications being registered within 7 days of receipt between December 2022 and the end of May 2023.

A significant number of applications however remain invalid. Staff therefore spend time chasing additional information or returning applications.

### Consultee Responses & Phosphates

It was reported that capacity issues within the ecology section and the difficulties faced by the phosphate issue had contributed to some delays in processing cases. To address capacity, extra support has been provided by secondments from the Planning Policy Team and an agreement with Powys County Council who also provide support.

Phosphates remains a difficult issue. New guidance has led to some cases being cleared where there is no mitigation. In other cases, a proforma is being used to collect additional information to judge the phosphate impact of a proposal. It remains a technical and time-consuming process.

### Staff Capacity and Use of Consultants

Due to the inability to recruit, consultants (Capita) were engaged and started to support the team processing planning applications and enforcement cases in September 2022.

At the highest point in 2022 the number of outstanding planning applications was 511 and there were 550 enforcement cases. The planning caseload at the end of March 2023 was 382 cases with the enforcement caseload remaining static at the 550 cases. Targets for 2023/24 are that the planning application caseload is reduced to 300 cases and the enforcement caseload to 450 by the end of March 2024.

A short presentation will be provided at the meeting to provide Members with further information on caseloads, recruitment and internal Development Management Standards.

**Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why**      No as this discussion and is not producing or developing policy

**WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS:**

**Summary:**  
**Long term:**  
**Integration:**  
**Collaboration:**  
**Involvement:**  
**Prevention:**

**RECOMMENDATION (S):**

**No formal recommendations, discussion for information only.**

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION (S):**

**To provide Members with an update.**

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<b>Date of Report:</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
<b>Acronyms:</b>	