

# **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **Economic and Community Regeneration Cabinet Board**

23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015

### **Report of the Head of Planning**

Nicola Pearce

#### **Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected:** All

#### **Planning – Consideration of: the Report Card for Planning Policy**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1 To present for Scrutiny the Report Card for the Planning Policy Unit.

#### **Executive Summary**

2 In accordance with the approved Divisional Business Plan for Planning, each Business Unit within the division is required to complete a Report Card for each financial year.

3 This interim report updates Members on the progress made over the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the current financial year (i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June) and in particular outlines:

- The ongoing performance against last year's Action Plan and Targets;
- The ongoing challenges and opportunities faced in the short and medium term; and
- The progress being made in respect of the actions and targets for the 12 months from April 2015 to March 2016.

#### **Planning Policy Report Card**

4 Following a recent restructure the Planning Policy Unit now comprises the Planning Policy team, Countryside and Wildlife team and the Planning Service Technical Support team. Consequently, the portfolio covered by

the Planning Policy Unit comes under both Economic and Community Regeneration Board and Environment and Highways Cabinet Board.

- 5 The Report Card, set out in Appendix 1, summarises the service priorities, key measures and key actions for the Planning Policy Unit.

### **Consultation Outcome**

- 6 Employees within the individual services have been consulted and contributed towards the development of the Report Card.

### **Financial Impact**

- 7 The work delivered is fully covered by a combination of existing revenue budgets and grant income.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8 Not applicable.

### **Workforce Impacts**

- 9 These are covered in the appended Report Card.

### **Legal Impacts**

- 10 Not applicable.

### **Risk Management**

- 11 A Risk Matrix for the Directorate has been prepared which incorporates the risks within this service area.

### **Recommendation**

- 12 This item is for information only.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision**

- 13 Not applicable

### **Implementation of Decision**

14 Not applicable.

### **Appendices**

15 Appendix 1 – Planning Policy Report Card

### **List of Background Papers**

16 Planning Business Plan 2015-16

### **Officer Contact**

17 Ceri Morris – Interim Planning Policy Manager Tel: 01639 686320 / E-mail: [c.morris1@npt.gov.uk](mailto:c.morris1@npt.gov.uk)

## PLANNING POLICY UNIT

### REPORT CARD

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: 1<sup>st</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015



<b>WHAT WE DO</b>	<b>WHO WE WORK WITH</b>
<p>Following a recent restructure the Planning Policy Unit now comprises the Planning Policy team, Countryside and Wildlife Team and Planning Service Technical Support.</p> <p><b>The Planning Policy Team (PP)</b> is responsible for statutory duties in respect of the preparation and delivery of the Local Development Plan in addition to all supporting evidence and associated non-statutory planning policy documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance, thereby ensuring that development is delivered in a planned and sustainable way in accordance with the agreed Corporate Priorities and Objectives of the Council. In addition, the team is responsible for delivering upon the requirements of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013, walking and cycling strategy and scheme development, environmental policy development and income generation through sponsorship of infrastructure.</p> <p><b>The Countryside and Wildlife Team (C&amp;W)</b> is responsible for maintenance of the rights of way network, advising on the extent of the adopted highway network, advising the authority on all aspects of biodiversity conservation, delivering the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Local Biodiversity Action Plan, in addition to acting as advisor on woodland management and woodland funding as part of the Coed Cymru network.</p> <p><b>The Planning Service Technical Support Team (TS)</b> is responsible for both administrative and IT support (including GIS expertise) to both the Planning Policy Section and Development Management Section.</p>	<p><b>PP</b> – all Departments of the Council, statutory consultees including Welsh Government, Natural Resources Wales, neighbouring Local Authorities, consultants, local businesses, developers, elected Members, voluntary organisations, environmental groups / stakeholders, walking and cycling organisations, voluntary organisations, local schools and members of the public.</p> <p><b>C&amp;W</b> - All departments of the Council, volunteers, community members, other wildlife and access related organisations, businesses, landowners and members of the public.</p> <p><b>TS</b> - Principally the Planning Policy Section and Development Management Section, also other Council Departments (as appropriate), consultants, developers, members of the public.</p>

### HOW ARE WE DOING?

## HOW MUCH DID WE DO IN 2014-15?

**PP** - Successfully updated the substantial evidence base which supports the LDP, including further technical work on the level of growth and Strategic Flood Consequences Assessment. Taking account of the new evidence and representations received from the Deposit Consultation stage and Alternative Sites Consultation stage, a Focussed Change consultation was undertaken on the LDP and the responses were compiled and addressed within a comprehensive document forming part of the evidence base to support the LDP. In addition 5 draft Supplementary Planning Guidance documents (SPGs) were prepared for key areas of the Plan. The LDP, along with the substantial evidence base, was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination. The LDP Examination in Public commenced in January 2015 with the Hearing Session phase completed over a seven week period.

Delivered new cycling initiatives across the County Borough, finalised embedment of the Roundabout Sponsorship Scheme.

**C&W** – Increased the amount of ecological advice to other departments and developed standard Biodiversity Protocols (released 2015) reducing the need for external consultants; provided ecological and access information to assist in new developments, including specific advice in relation to multiple windfarm sites such as Pen Y Cymoedd wind farm along with other larger scale developments including Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon and Opencast coal sites; the management plan and the declaration was approved at cabinet for the new Local Nature Reserve at Glanrhyd and Cwm du Glen; a number of grant funded projects were delivered in relation to the local biodiversity action plan; advice for internal departments and external landowners on woodland management and creation was provided; a number of projects to improve access along key routes forming part of the Public Rights of Way network were delivered; a number of key objectives relating to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan have also been delivered.

## HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

**PP** – All stages of Plan preparation completed in accordance with the timetable and Community Involvement Scheme as set out in the Delivery Agreement which has been negotiated with the Welsh Government. Managed the delivery of new cycleway schemes including way marking and promoting 112 miles of new routes in Swansea Bay. Successfully managed the roundabout sponsorship scheme generating £30k in the previous financial year. With regard to the current financial year, the scheme has generated circa £10k to date. Downsized staffing to achieve FFP savings.

**C&W** – Delivered numerous projects as part of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan and Biodiversity Action Plan through grant funding; these included habitat management and creation, school and volunteer engagement, a review of the local biodiversity action plan (the new version approved in early 2015), projects specifically to monitor high profile species such as Honey Buzzards and Bats, and investigations

in relation to the geomorphology of Baglan Burrows; removing physical barriers to access, etc. Through the Coed Cymru Officer landowners were specifically aided to deliver tree planting to reduce the impacts of flooding. Interaction with other departments is improving and we are seeing an increase in consultation rates from within the council whilst the existing service to the planning department continues to be delivered. Secured £130K of external grant (including match funding) to deliver biodiversity and access related projects. Maintained 750km of Public Rights of Way with sample surveys demonstrating that 67% are 'easy to use'. Secured a vital link to Bridgend over the River Kenfig as part of the Wales Coast Path. Increased ecological consultancy advice to other departments. Downsized staffing and service to achieve FFP savings

### **STORY BEHIND THE PERFORMANCE**

**PP** – the work of the LDP team (i.e. in respect of the statutory duties of the preparation of the Local Development Plan) is set out in The Town & Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2015. Furthermore, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2008 a 'Delivery Agreement' was established between the Council and the Welsh Government setting out:

- The Timetable for preparing the LDP (i.e. the dates by when key stages in the Plan's preparation will be achieved); and
- The Community Involvement Scheme setting out who, when and how the Council proposes to consult and engage with various stakeholders throughout the Plan preparation process.

With agreement from the Welsh Government, the Delivery Agreement was subsequently revised in May 2011 and again in July 2013.

The Council is required to submit its Deposit LDP to the Welsh Government for Examination to determine whether the Plan is fundamentally 'sound'. There are 10 prescribed tests for assessing the soundness of a LDP which are set out in 3 categories namely Procedural, Consistency and Coherence & Effectiveness. These tests were and continue to be the subject of examination by the Planning Inspectorate during the Examination in Public which commenced on the 11<sup>th</sup> March and is ongoing.

To date the LDP team has lost 2 Planning Officer posts which were deleted from the staffing structure as a contribution towards the Council's FFP. An additional post will be lost by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016. Whilst to date all deadlines have been achieved in respect of Plan preparation, with the pending loss of a 3<sup>rd</sup> post, significant challenges lay ahead in respect of resources available for future LDP Monitoring / Review, preparation of SPG and maintaining an up to date evidence base.

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 requires a new look at provision of walking and cycling facilities, whereby pedestrian and cycle routes must be mapped within all qualifying settlements – the Council is currently out to consultation on its Existing Route Map.

**C&W** – The need for savings led to re-evaluating the role of the Countryside and Wildlife Team to now provide a greater emphasis on consultancy style advice to other departments. It is becoming increasingly difficult to meet the statutory duty for the conservation, including enhancement, of biodiversity. With emerging changes in legislation a new approach to biodiversity conservation in Wales is going to change the approach taken in addition to strengthening the Councils duty.

### MANDATORY CORPORATE INDICATORS

#### Average Days Sick / FTE

FTE Days Lost (1 <sup>st</sup> April to 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2015)	Average FTE - Employees	Average FTE – Sick Days
45	19.5	2.31

**Note:** the Council sickness figure for Quarter 1 was 2.2 FTE days, so in comparative terms, the sickness levels for Planning Policy only slightly exceeds the Council figure for the same period. This figure was as a direct result of one officer being on long-term sickness. The period of sickness was managed in accordance with the Council's new sickness management procedure and the officer has now returned to work.

**Staff morale (staff survey developed by Corp Strategy)** - to be completed during 2015/16.

**% of staff received PDR's in last 12 months** – 100% although they are due for renewal later in the year.

**% of staff satisfied or very satisfied with their job** – to be completed during 2015/16.

#### NEXT KEY ACTIONS FOR 2015/16

What?	Who?	By When?	Outcome
In accordance with the Service Level Agreement (i.e. an agreement between the Council and the Planning Inspectorate Wales), conclude the Examination in Public (EIP), including the Matters Arising Changes (MACs) which will themselves require consultation and deliver an adopted LDP.	LDP Team	January 2016	Ongoing
Update, consult upon and adopt the 5 strategically important SPGs which	LDP Team	March 2016	Ongoing

are essential to support the LDP going forward.			
Complete the joint SPG for Fabian Way through collaborative work with colleagues in the City & County of Swansea.	LDP Team	December 2015	Ongoing
Establish systems and procedures for monitoring the performance of the emerging LDP.	LDP Team	March 2016	Ongoing
Prepare and submit a Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment to the Welsh Government.	LDP Team	January 2016	Ongoing
Complete the Active Travel Bill commitment in relation to the preparation of an Existing Route Map for Neath Port Talbot.	LDP Team	January 2016	Ongoing
Ensure the Local Authority complies with the statutory duty for Biodiversity Conservation under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.	Countryside & Wildlife Team	Ongoing	Ongoing
Continue to increase earlier engagement with all departments on biodiversity matters and release standard Biodiversity Protocols for use by all departments and provide training when requested.	Countryside & Wildlife Team	Ongoing	Ongoing
Secure external funding to deliver the Local Biodiversity Action Plan and deliver projects that include volunteer and public engagement.	Countryside & Wildlife Team	March 2016	Ongoing – funding secured and numerous projects delivered in 1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter.
Continue to deliver biodiversity advice to Planning to ensure legislation and policy is applied as appropriate.	Countryside & Wildlife Team	Ongoing	Ongoing
Provide specialist woodland creation and management advice to internal departments and external landowners, including aiding in securing external funding.	Countryside & Wildlife Team	Ongoing	Ongoing
Ensure the Local Authority complies with the statutory duty for Biodiversity Conservation under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.	Countryside & Wildlife Team	Ongoing	Ongoing
Contribute towards the delivery of the goals and objective requirements of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.	Countryside & Wildlife Team	Ongoing	Ongoing
Amend our management and maintenance regimes associated with our Public Rights Of Way network	Countryside & Wildlife Team	March 2016	Ongoing
Continue to carry out maintenance and minor improvements on the Wales Coast Path.	Countryside & Wildlife Team	Ongoing	Ongoing
Register a new network of rights of way around the former Welfare Hall,	Countryside &	Ongoing	Ongoing



Glynneath, at Godre'r Graig and at Clyne.	Wildlife Team		
Continue to assist the Planning Policy Team and Development Management Team in the delivery of the Council's Planning Function.	Planning Service Technical Support Team	Ongoing	Ongoing