



## RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

**SUBJECT:**

**Rhondda Cynon Taf Planning Service Annual Performance Report for 2014/ 2015.**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT:**

The purpose of the report is to outline the contents of the Planning Service Annual Monitoring Report 2014/2015, and seek approval for its submission to the Welsh Government.

**DELEGATED DECISION (Date):** That the Planning Service Annual Monitoring Report 2014/2015 is approved for submission to Welsh Government.

  
**Chief Officer Signature**

**CHRISTOPHER LEIZ**  
**Print Name**

**20/11/15.**  
**Date**

**The decision is taken in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government Act, 2000 (Executive Functions) and in the terms set out in Section 5 of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution**

*Ben*

CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

19/11/15

DATE

*Dee*

OFFICER CONSULTEE SIGNATURE

19/11/15

DATE

Directorate:	
Contact Name:	
Designation:	
Tel.No.	

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014 - 2015  
REPORT TO ACCOMPANY DECISION OF  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**Part 1**  
**(Non Confidential)**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF  
PLANNING SERVICE ANNUAL  
PERFORMANCE REPORT 2014/2015**

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to outline the contents of the Planning Service Annual Monitoring Report 2014/2015, and seek approval for its submission to the Welsh Government.

## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that:

The contents of the Planning Annual Monitoring Report (attached at Appendix 1) are agreed prior to Service Director Planning submitting the document to the Welsh Government.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Welsh Government, for the first time this year, has published an all Wales Performance Framework for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in Wales. The framework sets out each authority's performance on a Good/Red, Fair/Amber and Improvement Needed/Red, basis judged against a set of published standard measures. These measures include a wide range of issues including status of the LDP and housing land supply; determination times for planning applications; speed of enforcement action; Member overturns at Committee; appeals performance; public speaking at Committee; and accessibility of the planning website.
- 3.2 In addition to this performance framework Welsh Government has introduced a requirement for each LPA to submit an Annual Performance Report (APR) which offers the opportunity to set a narrative around the performance framework itself. The APR will give a description of the geographic, economic and corporate conditions the Planning Service operates in; outlines staffing and budget issues; any major projects that are ongoing and gives the opportunity to highlight any best practice the Service is undertaking.

## **4. KEY FINDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT**

- 4.1 The Service only had one 'Improvement Needed/Red' score in the 18 measures in Performance Framework. This related to the fact that the County Borough currently does not have a five year housing land supply. The APR sets out how this will be resolved through the ongoing LDP review.
- 4.2 In support of the APR the Welsh Local Government Data Unit provided each local authority with a range of performance data for their service set against the All Wales average. In 8 out of the 11 areas measured, RCT was at or above the Welsh average.

- 4.3 The Welsh Local Government Data Unit also undertook a customer survey on behalf of all LPAs in Wales. In RCT, the majority of responses (60%) were from local agents, 27% were from members of the public and 21% of respondents had their most recent planning application refused. RCT was rated above the Welsh average on all 7 of the questions that were asked.
- 4.4 The APR highlight's the Service's involvement in major initiatives such as the LDP review, the Treforest Industrial Estate Local Development Order, our Developers' Forum and cross service work such as the Pontypridd Lido and Vibrant and Viable Places. It also highlights the significant changes that have been made to the way the Council's Development Control Committee operates.
- 4.5 The APR also sets out areas where we are not doing so well and areas that need to be addressed in the future. These include the time taken to deal with major applications, the housing land supply and the use of technology both to drive more efficient ways of working and to deliver better services to our customers.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The Council's Planning Service generally compares well in relation to the rest of Wales in the suite of measures contained in the new Performance Framework issued by Welsh Government. There are areas that need to be addressed but there is also work that is innovative and exemplar in a Wales context.



STRONG HERITAGE | STRONG FUTURE  
**RHONDDA CYNON TAF**  
TREFTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR

# **Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Planning Authority (LPA)**

## **PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) – 2015-2016**

**Covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 –  
31<sup>st</sup> March 2015**



## **Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Planning Authority (LPA)**

### **PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) – 2015-2016**

**Covering the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015**

#### **PREFACE**

*Introduction to the report by the Cabinet Member responsible for the planning service, or equivalent.*

*It is with great pleasure that I am able to introduce the first Planning Annual Performance Report for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. Regeneration and Planning is a key service for the Council and is at the forefront of creating opportunities for people to live, work and invest in the County Borough.*

*I see planning as being a positive tool in promoting growth and prosperity and I am pleased that the proactive approach we take to creating opportunities for growth to happen is recognised by the development industry.*

*2014/15 has seen some significant changes in the way we deliver our service not least the reduction in our Planning Committee from all 75 Members to a well trained, specialist committee of just 18 Members.*

*I am also pleased to see that despite the financial pressures we all face in local government that the service is still performing well in many areas and we are committed to address the areas where we are not doing so well within the priorities of the Council and the resources available to us.*

*Major work is underway on projects such as our Local Development Plan Review and the Treforest Industrial Estate Local Development Order for which I am grateful to Welsh Government for their financial support. These are alongside the significant changes we are responding to brought about by the new Planning Act and the advent of Strategic Development Plans.*

*There were some exiting proposals approved during the period including the new Town Centre at Talbot Green and the Royal Mint Visitor centre along with planning permission granted for over 1700 new homes and I am confident that our positive planning service will continue to create opportunities for a range of new developments in the coming year.*

*(Councillor Robert Bevan, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Planning)*

#### **CONTEXT**

*This section sets out the planning context within which the local planning authority operates.*

Rhondda Cynon Taf covers an area of the South Wales Valleys stretching from the Brecon Beacons in the north, to the outskirts of Cardiff in the south. It comprises a mixture of urban, semi-suburban and rural communities, situated in mountains and lowland farmland.

Rhondda Cynon Taf is one of the largest Local Authorities in Wales, formed in 1996 from the former Boroughs of Rhondda, Cynon Valley and the majority of Taff Ely. The County Borough covers an area of 424 square kilometres with a population of 234,410 (2011). The area has 75 electoral wards, of which 22 are Communities First Areas. Strategic highway links with the wider region are provided by the M4, A470 and A465. A range of bus and rail services provides public transportation links across the region.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has a total of 154 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), of these 16.9% are in the most deprived 10% in Wales. Rhondda Cynon Taf also has 2 LSOA in the top 10 most deprived in Wales. The most deprived LSOA in RCT is Tylorstown, closely followed by Penywaun. Over all Tylorstown is the 5<sup>th</sup> most deprived ward in Wales and also ranking highest for income and employment. Penywaun is the 9<sup>th</sup> most deprived in Wales overall.

However, the County Borough is rich in culture and landscape quality with a wealth of heritage and tourist attractions. The University of South Wales is located in Treforest on the outskirts of Pontypridd and the Royal Mint is located in Llantrisant. The Wales Spatial Plan identifies Pontypridd and Aberdare as key settlements and Llantrisant as a strategic opportunity area. Treforest Industrial Estate is a regionally significant employment area with further significant and vibrant employment areas in the Llantrisant/Talbot Green area.

*Planning background, including previous adopted or abandoned development plans.*

## **Local Development Plan**

The Council adopted its Local Development Plan in March 2011. The aims of the LDP are to

- *Build sustainable communities that ensure everyone has access to housing, jobs and essential services and that all new development is supported by necessary social and physical infrastructure. This will be achieved by focussing new growth in principal towns and key settlements;*
- *Ensure that Rhondda Cynon Taf achieves its potential by maximizing the advantages of its strategic location, both in terms of the Capital Region and global economy. It will also maximise opportunities for inward investment in Hirwaun and Llantrisant / Talbot Green;*
- *Deliver a better quality of life by ensuring our communities are vibrant, healthy and safe, provide access to a range of cultural, commercial and leisure activities and protect our natural heritage and built environment;*
- *Develop and protect the County Borough for future generations so that physical and natural resources are protected, the challenges of climate change are met and new development is in sustainable locations and of the highest environmental standards.*

The core strategy for the LDP advocates a different approach for development in the north and south of the County Borough. The north of the County borough comprises the former Rhondda and Cynon Valley Council areas with challenges around coalmining legacy, deprivation and connectivity. The south of the County Borough lying between the M4 and A470 corridors is generally, flatter, better connected and has a stronger economy and housing market.

The emphasis in the Northern Strategy Area is on building sustainable communities and halting the process of depopulation and decline. Development proposals in the North are expected to provide regeneration and growth to address the problems of deprivation and higher levels of social and economic need.



In the south of the County Borough the emphasis is on sustainable growth that benefits Rhondda Cynon Taf as a whole. Development proposals in the Southern Strategy Area are expected to promote sustainable development by providing a managed form of growth to consolidate existing settlement patterns; have regard to the social and economic function and identity of settlements and the surrounding countryside; address existing or potential capacity needs to provide necessary infrastructure and reduce the need to travel.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy**

Following a Public Examination and subsequent Inspectors report the Council implemented the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014. The Charging Schedule contains 3 charging zones for residential development in Rhondda Cynon Taf. A 'high' viability area (Zone 3) in the South (£85 per square metre), a 'low' viability area (Zone 1) in the North (no charge at all) and a 'medium' viability area (Zone 2) across the 'middle' of RCT covering Tonyrefail and Pontypridd (£40 per square metre). The schedule also proposed flat charges across RCT for retail and healthcare development.

### **Housing Land Availability**

The Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS) (2015) indicated that based on the residual method, the Council had a 2.4 year housing land supply on 1 April 2015. The JHLAS (2014) indicated that we had a 2.8 year housing land supply on the 1 April 2014; this is a reduction from 3.7 years in 2013. The total number of housing completions for 2014/15 was 553 which is an improvement of 19 from the previous year. During 2014/15 there have been 114 affordable dwellings built which is a large increase is from 2013/14.

### **Strategic Search Area F and Renewable Energy**

During 2014 -15 there has also been activity with a number of schemes for energy generation in Rhondda Cynon Taf. During 2014/2015, a further 9 wind turbines were installed at Mynydd Bwllfa, Hirwaun, which is within the Strategic Search Area F (SSAF). This development has a generating capacity of **22.5 MW**. Planning permission was granted for **19.01 MW** of renewable energy capacity in the form of wind turbines, all within, or within 5 kilometres of SSAF. A further **10.35 MW** of solar energy was approved within large solar farms, whilst a small scale hydro energy project was permitted, which would produce a further 36 KW of energy. A Waste Wood to energy plant was also approved within an industrial unit, which would create a further **4MW** of energy.

*Place and fit within the community strategy and/or wider strategic and operational activity of the authority.*

In 2014/15 *Delivering CHANGE* was Rhondda CynonTaf's Single Integrated Plan. It sets out how partners will seek to address the key issues faced in the County Borough that ultimately will make it a better place to live, work and visit.

The Plan replaces a number of different partnership plans we previously had to produce, including the:

- Community Strategy;
- Children & Young People's Plan;
- Health Social Care and Well Being Strategy;
- Community Safety Plan;

- Local Housing Strategy.

The Local Service Board for Rhondda Cynon Taf, represents the partner organisations of the area and is the lead body for the Plan, with responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the actions through partner organisations. The Board members are: the Chief Executive and Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council; the Chair and Chief Executive of Cwm Taf Health Board; the Chief Superintendent of the Northern Division in South Wales Police; the Chair of Interlink (County Voluntary Council); and a representative from Welsh Government.

The joint vision is that all people in Rhondda Cynon Taf are safe, healthy and prosperous. Needs across our communities have been assessed and key priorities identified to address what will have the biggest impact on achieving this goal.

Regeneration and Planning has played a significant role in helping to deliver the aims and objectives of the Plan and in particular the 'Prosperity' element which aims to ensure that:

- People have the education and essential skills to secure employment.
- People in financial need receive the right advice and support.
- People live in safe, appropriate housing in sustainable and vibrant communities.
- Businesses are supported to thrive and grow

The way the Service goes about its business focuses on facilitating regeneration and economic benefits. Certain specific schemes may be directly delivered, but the focus of these and the other service activities is about helping others deliver to support economic growth

*Existing and previous major influences on land use (e.g. heavy industrial, agricultural, energy, transport).*

Rhondda Cynon Taf covers an area of the South Wales Valleys stretching from the Brecon Beacons in the north, to the outskirts of Cardiff in the south. It comprises a mixture of urban, semi-suburban and rural communities, situated in mountains and lowland farmland.

The Northern Strategy Area comprises the upland and valley areas of Rhondda Cynon Taf. The area covers the Rhondda Fawr and Fach and the Cynon Valley.

The main strategic road links within the Strategy Area are provided by the A4119, A470, A4058, A4233, A4059 and A465. A well-established network of bus and rail routes provides public transport provision. Bus provision is provided by a network, which serves the Key Settlements. Main bus stations are located at Tonypany and Aberdare. The passenger rail service connects the Rhondda Fawr and the Cynon Valley with Pontypridd and Cardiff.

The Northern area of the County Borough suffered significant decline since the widespread closure of the collieries in the South Wales Coalfield in the mid 1980's. The Strategy Area does however, have a strong sense of community pride, many towns and villages with fine architectural history and a spectacular landscape that rivals that of the adjoining Brecon Beacons National Park and the southernmost tip of the Park extends into the County Borough.

The Southern Strategy Area has experienced considerable growth in recent years. The area has seen significant new house building and inward investment that has transformed the economy of the area. The key location of the Southern Strategy area means that it has a vital role to play in ensuring the future economic prosperity of all of Rhondda Cynon Taf. Economic growth however, must be carefully managed in order to ensure that the social and environmental needs of the Strategy Area are fully addressed.

*Historic/landscape setting of the area, including AONBs, conservation areas etc.*

Rhondda Cynon Taf is an area with a rich and diverse natural environment. Designations in the County Borough include Special Areas of Conservation, many Sites of Special Scientific Interest, conservation areas, historic parks and gardens, numerous scheduled ancient monuments and a Historic Landscape designation in the Rhondda Valleys in the north.

The area also has strategic landscape areas. In the north of the county borough which are designated to protect the distinctive upland/valley landscape area with particular protection given to the unspoilt valley slopes and ridges which form a visual backdrop to the settlement in the area. In the South SLAs have been identified to protect the distinctive landscape of the area. Particular consideration has been given to the protection of the unspoilt low lying farmland, common land and gentle valley slopes which form a visual backdrop to the settlements of the area.

In a Wales context, the County Borough is of particular importance with over 20% of the area being classified as Priority Habitat and the extent and diversity of semi-natural habitat, is very high.

*Urban rural mix and major settlements.*

Rhondda Cynon Taf covers an area of the South Wales Valleys stretching from the Brecon Beacons in the north, to the outskirts of Cardiff in the south. It comprises a mixture of urban, semi-suburban and rural communities, situated in mountains and lowland farmland.

The County Borough has Principal Towns and Key settlement as designated by the LDP. The Principal towns are: Pontypridd, Aberdare and Llantrisant (including Talbot Green). These towns are important hubs for social and economic activity by acting as gateways for new investment, innovation and sustainable development. The position of each of the towns in respect of the strategic transportation network means that these settlements are important to the promotion of regeneration in Rhondda Cynon Taf and economic growth in the wider region. Each of the Principal Towns has been identified as a 'Hub Settlement' in the Wales Spatial Plan.

Key Settlements are geographically smaller and less strategically significant than the Principal Towns. Nevertheless these settlements provide important services and act as centres for commercial and community activity. For the purpose of the LDP Key Settlements are defined as Tonypany, Tonyrefail, Treorchy, Mountain Ash, Porth, Ferndale, Llanharan and Hirwaun. These key settlements act as focal points for growth in Rhondda Cynon Taf in the LDP. Whilst Llanharan and Hirwaun currently play a different role in their local areas from that of other Key Settlements, both settlements are in excellent strategic locations and

are capable of accommodating significant additional residential and commercial development.

*Population change and influence on LDP/forthcoming revisions.*

The County Borough has a population of 234,410 (2011), this is an increase of 1.1% since the 2001 census. The 2011 Census showed that population growth was actually higher than previously projected, although household growth was lower than projected for the years up to 2011. The new population projections will be assessed as part of the review of the Local Development Plan and will influence the level of housing provision in the plan which currently seeks to provide 14,385 new dwelling over the plan period 2011-2021.

## **PLANNING SERVICE**

*Setting within wider organisation, including organisation chart. How is the department structured? What is the reporting line to the Chief Executive? Are the development management and forward planning team co-located? Are they headed by a single separate head of service? If not, do they report along the same lines?*

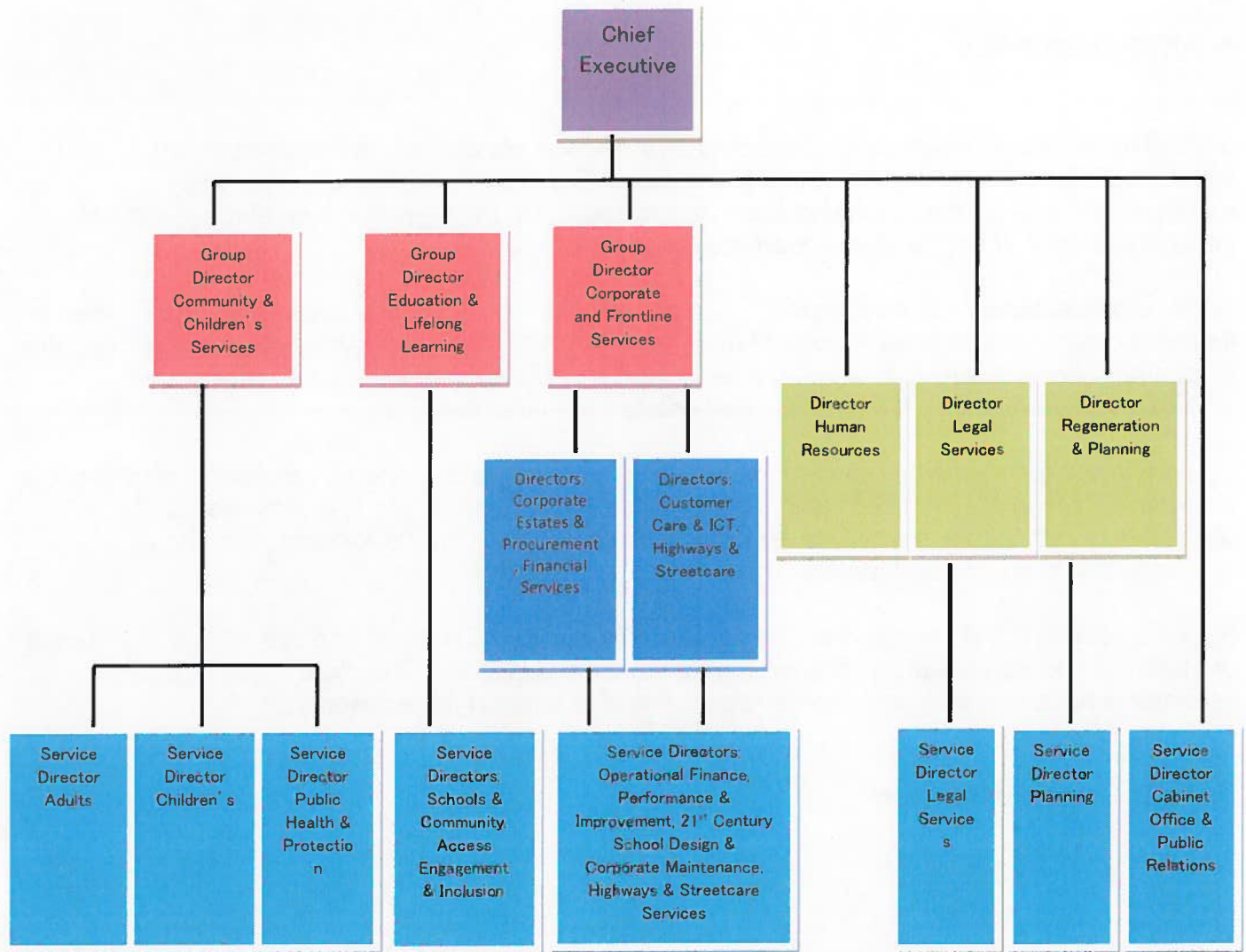
*Wider organisational activities impacting on the service – how has the department responded to financial constraints imposed during budget setting? What cross departmental activities has the department been involved in or been affected by, e.g. closer joint working in advance of Williams implementation, IT changes, real estate rationalisation?*

*Operating budget – including budget trend over 3 years, and fee income. Does the planning department retain fee income? Is this used to calculate its operating budget? Has a discrepancy between expected fee income and actuals affected the forward planning or operational activity of the department?*

**Regeneration and Planning sits within the Chief Executive's Division, and provides a wide range of statutory and non statutory, predominantly frontline services. The clear focus of these services is balanced and sustainable regeneration to support the economy.**

***Table 1: Corporate Structure***

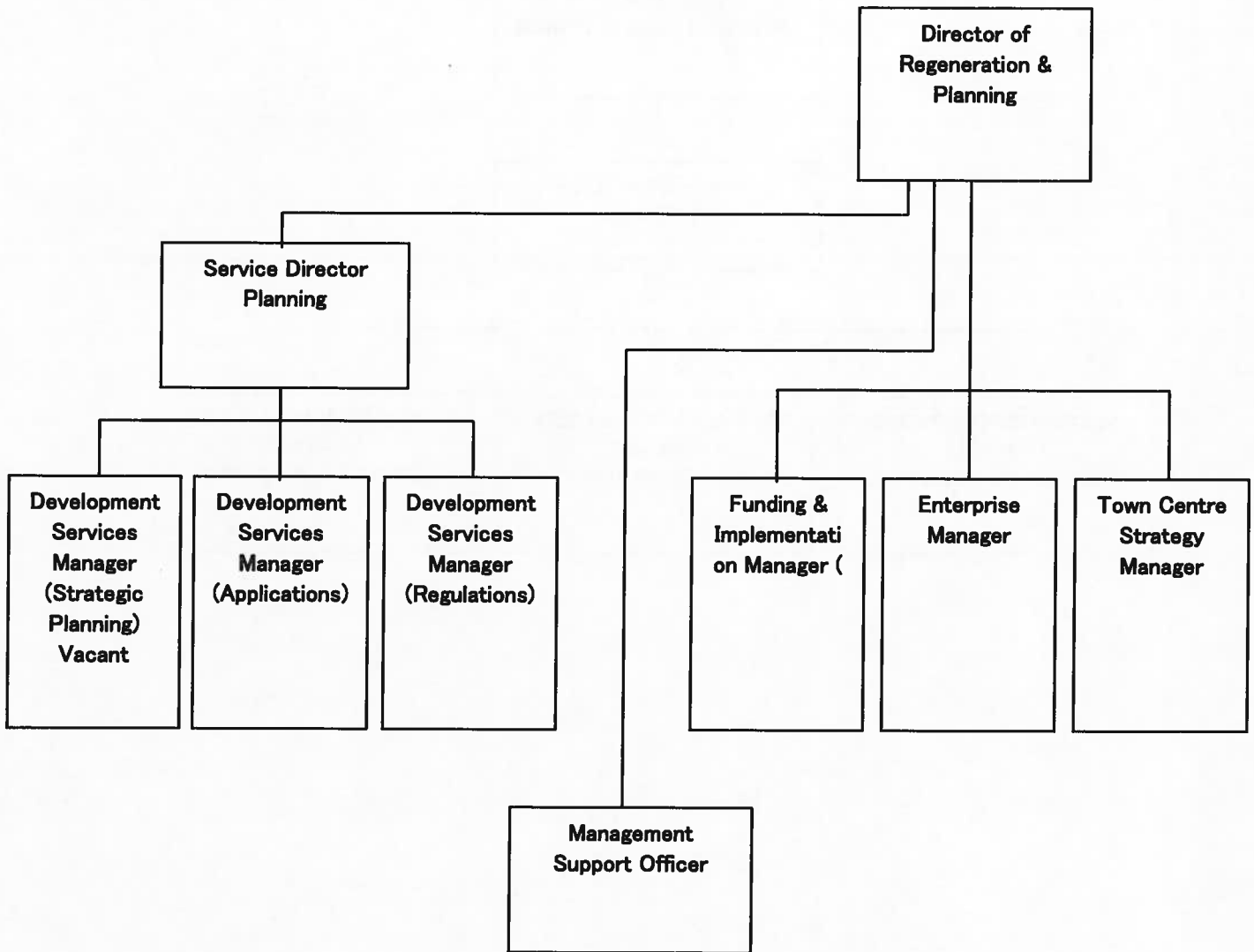




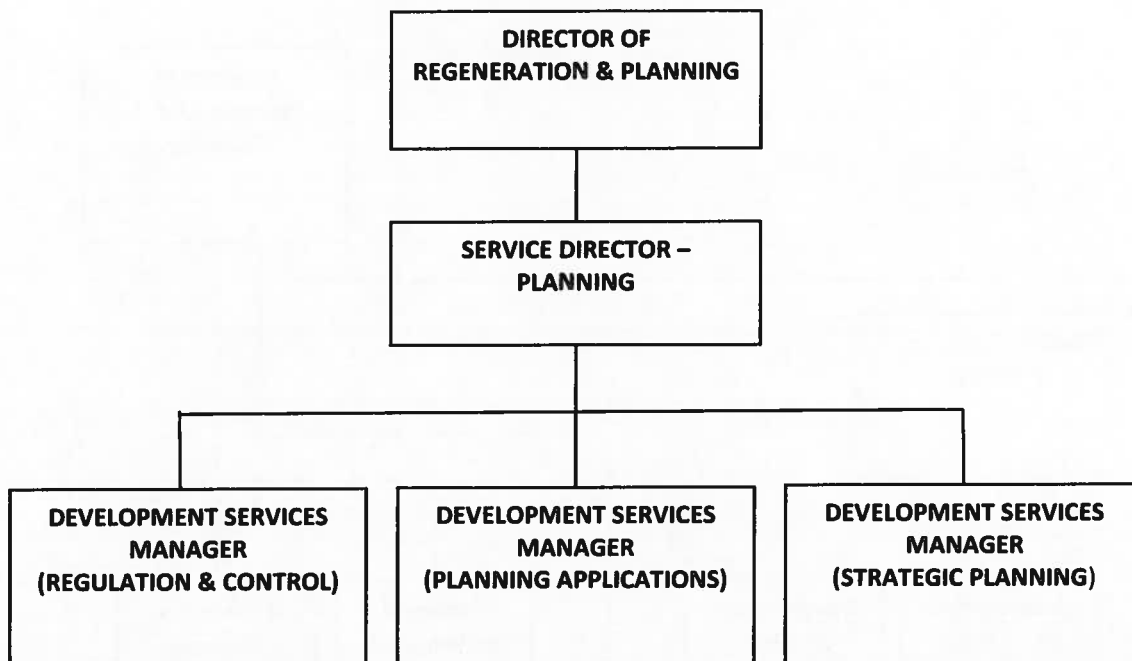
In 2014/15 The Planning Service comprised a Development Control Team primarily responsible for planning applications and enforcement but also includes urban design and the conservation/protection of historic environments; a Development Plans Team responsible for the LDP, Joint Housing Land Availability, Community Infrastructure Levy and Housing delivery (including residential planning applications) and Building Control Team which includes responsibility for Dangerous Structures.

However, as a result of Local Government budget cuts and in response to the Council's medium term financial plan, Regeneration & Planning staff were consulted on a Service wide restructure in November 2014. As a result of this restructure 12 posts were lost from the Planning Service itself which resulted in a new structure being implemented on 1 April 2015 which is shown in the structure charts below.

*Table 2: Regeneration & Planning Management Structure*



*Table 3: Planning Service - Senior Management Team*





*Table 4: Planning Applications Team*

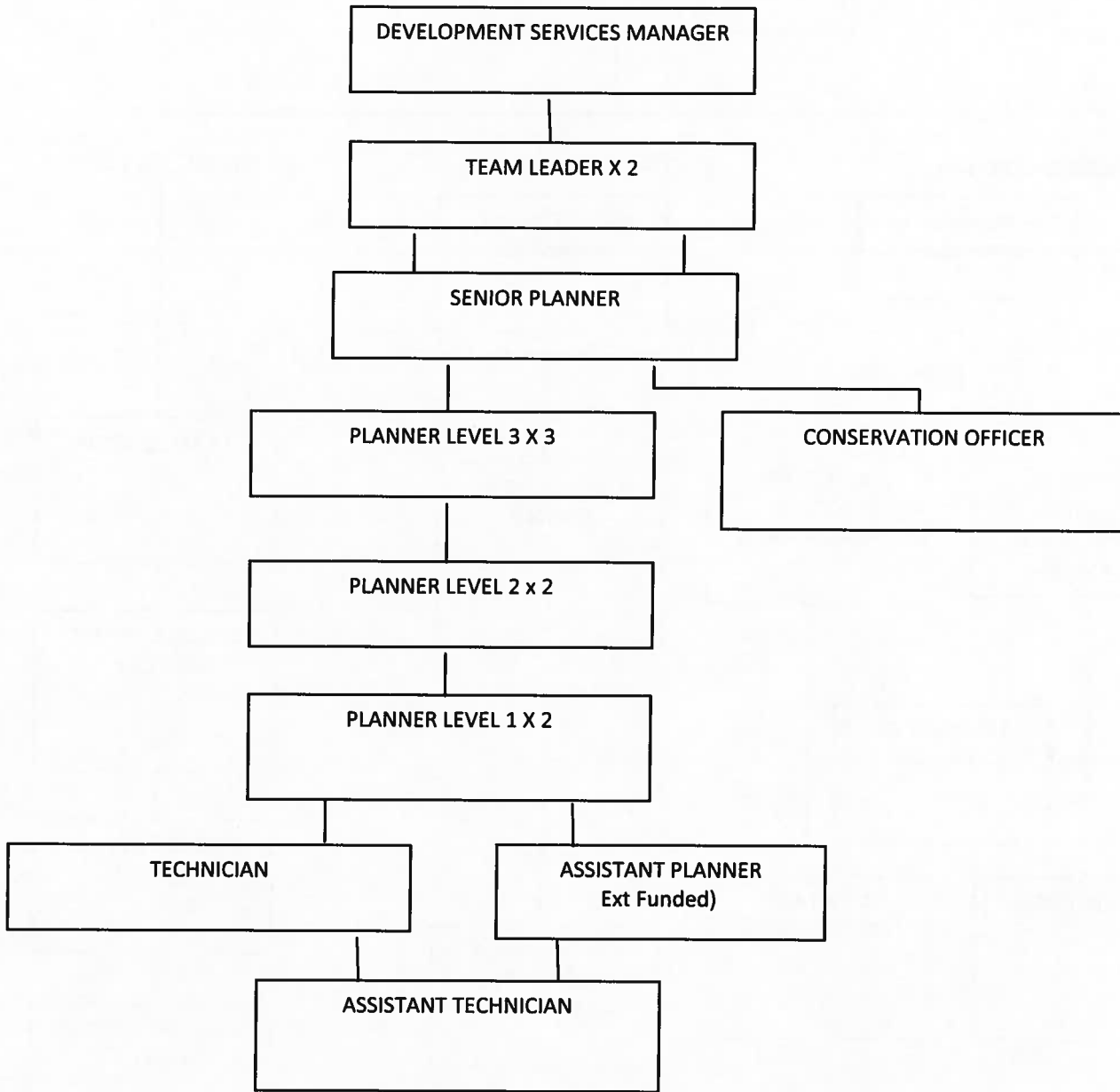
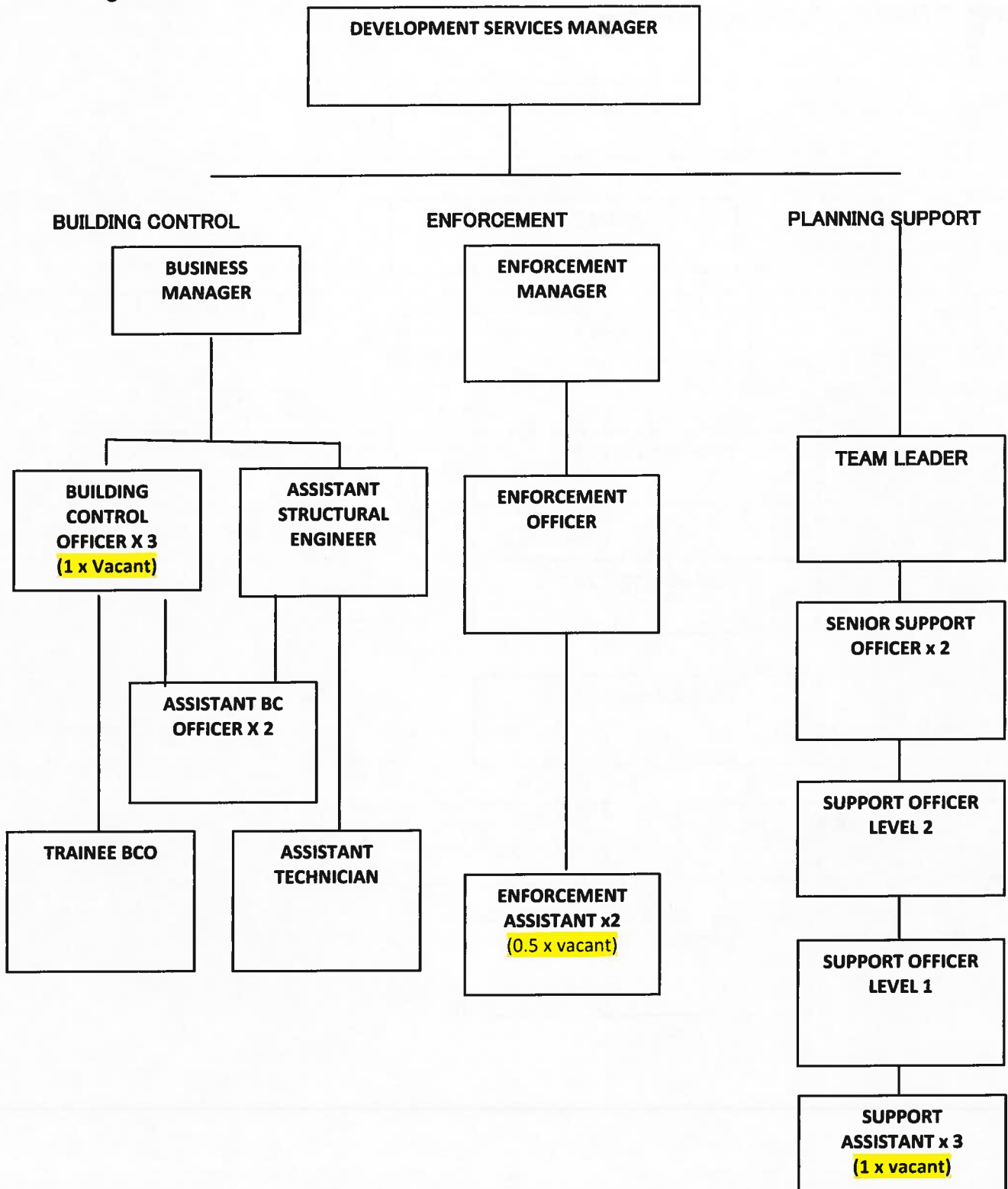
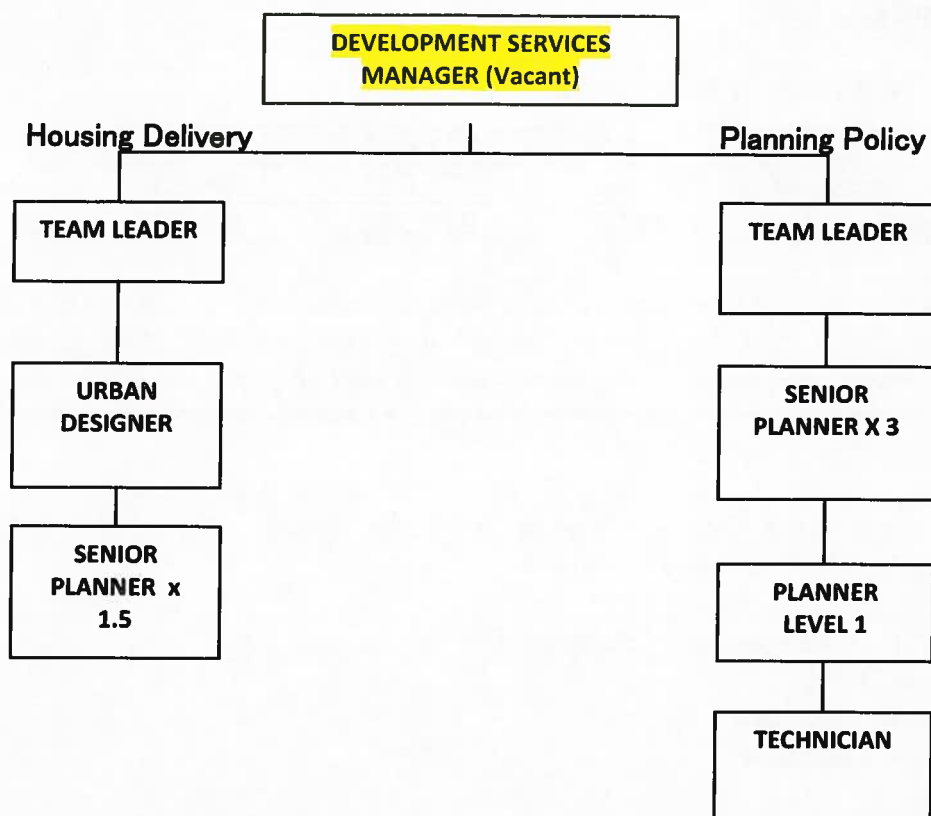


Table 5: Regulation & Control Team



**Table 6: Strategic Planning Team**



Regeneration and Planning are currently located in two separate locations within Pontypridd. The Regeneration Service is based at Ty Pennant and Planning at Sardis House alongside, Highways and Street Care, Drainage and Land Reclamation, CCTV and Countryside. Front of house is one of the Council's main One4All customer service centres. Plans are in place to relocate Regeneration into Sardis House. The co-location of the two services is anticipated to further enhance the integrated approach that we take to Regeneration, Economic Development and Planning activities.

*Wider organisational activities impacting on the service – how has the department responded to financial constraints imposed during budget setting? What cross departmental activities has the department been involved in or been affected by, e.g. closer joint working in advance of Williams implementation, IT changes, real estate rationalisation?*

*Operating budget – including budget trend over 3 years, and fee income. Does the planning department retain fee income? Is this used to calculate its operating budget? Has a discrepancy between expected fee income and actuals affected the forward planning or operational activity of the department?*

In addition to the significant restructure and budget cuts described above, the Service has had to deliver efficiency savings of between 5% and 10% over the 3 years previous and the Regeneration and Planning Service has reduced its budget by just under 40% over the period

Planning application fee income has been significantly below the target needed to achieve a balanced operational budget (see table below). This situation has been managed through

reducing the workforce through natural waste and freezing vacant posts and under-spend elsewhere in the Service.

#### *Planning application fee income against budget*

Year	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Income received	704,445	731,632	604,838
Budgeted income	913,500	913,500	913,500

*Staff issues – what is the current staffing level of the department? What are the current plans for staff skills development and succession planning? Are any vacancies being carried? Has the service had to manage with redundancies (with reference to budget section above)? Has a loss of skills through sickness absence or other reasons, adversely affected the department? What are the coping mechanisms for this?*

The current staffing levels of the service are as shown in the structure charts above. Current vacancies are highlighted in yellow and these are:

- Development Services Manager (Strategic Planning)
- Building Control Officer
- Planning Support Assistant
- 0.5 Enforcement Assistant

The service restructure implemented on 1 April has resulted in a loss of staff and along with it a loss of some specialist skills. This will clearly have an impact on how the service is delivered and to what level. The impact of these changes and reductions will be assessed and reported in the 2015/16 Annual Performance Report.

The Regeneration and Planning Service has a structured training programme and budget supported by team meetings and 1:2:1s. Training for the staff in the Planning teams in the period included:

- Supporting a planning policy officer to achieve a masters degree
- Training in preparing sustainability appraisals for the LDP
- Supporting an aspiring manager through a leadership programme
- Crime prevention through design
- Health Impact Assessment competency
- SUDs for planners
- Planning Law updates
- Planning Wales RTP1 conference
- Training in relation to our back office systems
- Training in relation to changes to the Building Regulations

The focus for training over the coming period will be on implementing the Planning Bill and the Positive Planning Agenda, and developing more flexible skills to evolve and grow under the current financial and service changes and to ensure that staff in Regeneration and Planning are at the forefront of creating opportunities for people to live, work and invest in the county borough.

## **YOUR LOCAL STORY**

*Workload. What are the current planning pressures the service is facing? What is the status of the LDP? Is development/monitoring/revision proceeding as planned? What is the impact on support of development management services, e.g. for master planning? What is the DM workload per officer?*

*Reference to the Annual Monitoring Report (as an attachment). In the absence of an AMR, the authority should report on its progress towards adoption of the LDP, and any key issues arising in the year.*

During the year RCT's DC team has operated within the context of the financial constraints faced by local authorities in Wales. Accordingly, it was challenging to try and maintain and improve levels of service and performance.

During the year the Council received 1636 applications and determined 1398 applications. These figures equate to a workload of 148 applications dealt with by officer per year (based on 11 case officers).

As a result of staff vacancies and a number of maternity leaves DC planners and technical support staff worked closely together in order to minimise any delay in dealing with received applications in terms of validating, plotting etc in order that they were progressed with the applications as quickly as possible and get the file to the DC case officer.

We have sought to work closely and engage with our customers (through measures such as the availability for members of the public of a DC Duty Officer in the office, the organising and holding of a developer (mainly the larger, national volume house-builders) forum, together with a Local Agents forum) in order that we get a clear understanding, at all levels as to those areas of service delivery are most important to our customers and the areas of service delivery in which we do well and those in which (in the customers eyes) we could improve. In addition such interaction gives us the opportunity to explain the challenges we as a LPA currently face.

The Council has taken the decision to significantly change the make-up of its Development Control Committee. The Committee has been reduced in size from 75 Members (all Members of Council) to 18 Members. This has required a significant amount of time and close working with appropriate Members in order to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. It is anticipated that an outcome of this change will be a greater involvement with Local Members in planning application proposals as they (the 57 who are no longer on Committee) are now free to become involved during the planning consideration process and express a view in respect of proposals in their area, without fear of potential pre-determination.

The Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted on 2 March 2011. The Council has just submitted (October 2015) the fourth AMR to be prepared since the adoption of the LDP. Whilst the pattern of growth in some areas is slower than anticipated at the time of writing the LDP, evidence collected through the monitoring process suggests that good progress is being made in the delivery of the majority of LDP targets relating to the implementation of the Plan's policies and allocations. It is anticipated that the development that has taken place in Rhondda Cynon Taf since the adoption of the LDP, coupled with the projected future investment



from the public and private sector will ensure that the LDP core strategy is successfully delivered. The Council is in the process of statutory review. The 2014/15 AMR is attached at Appendix 1

*Current projects. Any specific items of research, best practice development or other initiatives being undertaken within the planning service. Examples could include a "development team" approach to major applications, work on a Local Development Order or process reviews.*

### Treforest Local Development Order

With the assistance of Welsh government funding the Service is in the process of developing a Local Development Order for the Treforest Industrial Estate. Treforest Industrial Estate is one of Wales's largest and oldest business estates, strategically located only 6 miles north of Cardiff city centre.

The estate sits at the funnel point of the main arterial trunk roads into Cardiff and is only 5 minutes drive time north from Junction 32 of the M4 motorway via the A470 and 10 minutes drive time from Junction 34 of the M4 via the new Church Village Bypass. The Estate also benefits from Treforest Estate railway station which provides a twice hourly train service reaching Cardiff in 23 minutes, with onward travel to London.

Treforest Industrial Estate and Parc Nantgarw cover a substantial area of developed land, with a further 11 acres of undeveloped land. There are around 300 units on the estate and a number of vacant units. The Council is looking to undertake a range of actions which promote and improve Treforest Industrial Estate and to make it easier for businesses to expand or create new premises. Part of this includes the intention to prepare a **Local Development Order**, which would create a simplified planning process within the boundaries of the estate. The LDO will permit a range of defined uses on development sites and within existing units, and physical works to and around buildings.

The LDO will definitively identify which uses and building operations will be included, and such developments would be exempt from the requirement for planning permission subject to a series of clearly defined conditions.

The LDO will be accompanied by a 'Design Code' setting out the parameters of permitted development, and showing how they apply to different parts of the estate. The LDO would last for 10 years, and would be monitored on an annual basis against a series of indicators to assess whether it is successful.

### Committee Changes

From 2004 until the Annual General Meeting of Council in May 2011, the Authority discharged its development control functions by means of one Co-ordinating Development Control Committee comprising all 75 Council Members and three non-politically balanced "Area" Development Control Committees in respect of the Rhondda, Cynon Valley and Taff-Ely areas with memberships of all Members from the respective areas plus one Chair and Vice for all the Committees.

At the January 2014 meeting of the Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee Members considered the report of the Service Director Planning which explored the relationship between the outcome of planning appeals and whether or not the planning decision had been contrary to the recommendation of officers. The report highlighted that:-

- In a national context the Council made more decisions contrary to officer recommendation than other Councils in Wales;
- Statistically, there is a far greater probability that a refusal contrary to recommendation will end up at appeal;
- The majority of appeals lost following refusals contrary to officer recommendation involved highways reasons for refusals.

As a result a working group was formed in order to consider the issues in more depth and, at the same time, consider the implications of the Welsh Government's new draft Planning (Wales) Bill which was launched for consultation in December 2013. The working group was informed that the introduction of the Planning (Wales) Bill was likely to regulate the size of planning committees and it appeared that it was the Welsh Government's intention to move toward smaller dedicated planning committees.

The Committee recommended to Council that a small dedicated Development Control Committee should be introduced for the 2014/15 municipal year. (Based on the recommendation put forward to the Welsh Government by Ove Arup this would entail a committee with a minimum of 11 and a maximum of 21 Members.) In line with this Council in May 2014 resolved to introduce a politically balanced membership of 18 Members. This number would help ensure that there is a sufficient membership to overcome any potential burdens in relation to declarations of prejudicial interests and quorum/absence issues that may arise in a committee comprising of a smaller number of Members.

At the same Council meeting changes were also made to the powers delegated to officers on planning decisions which have led to an increase in the percentage of decisions made under delegated powers, a significant reduction in the percentage of applications being determined against officer recommendation and an increase in the percentage of appeals won by the Council.

### Business Process Re-engineering

A 'Lean' style process review has been rolled out across the majority of application types following a pilot review of Householder applications.

Process Mapping Workshops were held to include all staff, and the outcome highlighted a number of areas of potential waste, including:

- High number of hand-offs, where work is passed on from one person to another
- Potential for blockages, where certain staff have specific skills and/or access to IT software
- Admin tasks which add little value, such as multiple plan copying, or were duplicated at different stages

The outcome of the Householder Review was a radical redesign of the process. All staff played their part, and were affected to a greater or lesser degree by the trial. A small team of two

planning and two support staff were selected to run a trial for 6 months. All householder applications were dealt with by this new team.

A flexible approach was taken to tasks and responsibilities, with additional IT equipment, systems and training provided, on both IT and planning related topics. The aim was to streamline the whole process. Existing tasks not related to householder applications were passed to other staff in the sections. Team Leaders changed the way they managed staff taking part in the trial, so that applications coming their way for signing off could be turned around promptly in line with the new, mainly electronic, process.

### Developer Forum and Agents Forum

The Council's Developer Forum, the only one in Wales, is a joint initiative between the Council, the large housing PLCs, local house builders, registered social landlords and the HBF. The forum meets quarterly to discuss current issues and ways in which barriers to house building in RCT can be reduced. A lot of work has been done in terms of understanding viability and commerciality, it was a vehicle that was used to deliver a successful CIL (the house builders did not attend our CIL examination!) and work is ongoing to reduce the number of conditions on consents, develop a shared/live decision notice, speed up assessment of contaminated land studies and reduce some double handling around planning permissions and highways agreements. It is clear that the housing industry values this approach and it has been held up as good practise by the HBF.

The Council also operates a regular local agents' forum, where it receives feedback from our regular customers, and provides advice on new legislation, policies and working practices.

### **Cross Service Projects**

#### Vibrant & Viable Places Programme

In 2014/15 the Council received grant approval of £6.480 million from Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Framework towards a programme of regeneration activity in the settlement area of Pontypridd.

The programme consists of the following initiatives that will be priority work for the Division in 2015/16 :-

- **Creating Homes above Retail Premises** is renovating vacant space above retail premises in Pontypridd Town Centre. Homestep Plus is purchasing and renovating properties targeted at first time buyers through a low cost home ownership/shared equity scheme.
- **Heat & Save Ponty** is providing energy efficiency measures in over 400 homes.
- **Regenerating Lady Windsor Colliery Site** is preparing baseline information to support the future development of the site for new housing.
- **Pontypridd Hub** is developing a major redesign of the YMCA building to create a multipurpose facility creating new and improved facilities including workspace for



social enterprise and business, a fitness suite, a café and a suite of dedicated arts facilities.

- **Pontypridd Townscape Enhancement Programme+** is renovating and improving commercial buildings in the town centre.
- **Regeneration of Taff Vale Site** is unlocking the potential of the site and presents a major opportunity for a mixed use development at the heart of Pontypridd town centre.

#### Other Projects

- **Pontypridd Lido Restoration** work was in train to transform and bring back into use the derelict; disused Grade 2 listed Lido in Ynysangharad Park, Pontypridd as a high quality regional visitor attraction. The outcome of this work will be reported in the 2015/16 APR.
- **Aberdare Townscape Heritage Initiative** is renovating, restoring and improving vacant and derelict commercial buildings in the town centre of Aberdare.
- **Town Centre Partnership** funding is bringing traders and stakeholders together in Aberdare and Porth Town Centres to develop a partnership approach to improving the commercial environment.
- **Business Improvement District** feasibility funding is bringing local businesses and other stakeholders together in Pontypridd Town Centre and exploring ways to improve the local trading environment.

*Local pressures. Major applications or other planning issues having a disproportionate impact on the efficiency of the service. Could include specific development pressures, enforcement issues such as major site restoration issues, monitoring compliance of conditions with non-devolved consents (e.g. wind energy applications) or applications of national significance (e.g. LNG storage site).*

Whilst there are signs of improvement in economic conditions there are still some challenges facing development in the Northern Strategy Area

Many potential development sites in the county borough suffer from coal mining and heavy industry/contamination legacy issues. This in the case of a number of larger sites has made it more difficult to deliver proposed development in a timely manner, due to the technical challenges and resultant costs associated in dealing with such matters.

The Authority introduced a Community Infrastructure Charging Levy (CIL) which has proved a particular challenge in terms of its operation and administration. This has had implications for larger schemes in particular on already partially negotiated S.106 Agreements

*Service improvement. What were the recommendations of the previous service improvement plan? In future years, this will also refer to actions identified in the previous Annual Performance Report (ideally they will share actions). Performance Framework. What are the*

*identified areas for improvement set out in Annex A? What steps will the authority take to address these? How will they be resourced? How will success be measured?*

The Service is one of the Council's key priorities, and its activity is therefore clearly set out in the Council's WPI plan, which is regularly reviewed and monitored, by the service / managers, Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and the Council.

The Service has good arrangements in place for gathering, analysing, understanding and acting on feedback from customers and partners. The nature of this service is that it is outward facing, it engages with partners, stakeholders and customers continually.

The areas identified for improvement over the coming period are:

- The Local Development Plan review and participation in the Strategic Development Plan is important to ensure that the policies are still effective to deliver the priorities of the Council, thus delivering for the community. This will be particularly important in delivering housing development and encouraging economic activity on our employment sites which will resolve the current issues identified by the AMR in terms of activity on employment land and a 5 year land supply
- The development of employment areas, either existing or allocated for in the LDP, needs increased focus and partnership working. We will need to consider how we enable the relevant landowners (including Welsh Government) to promote employment sites.
- The information and engagement which the Service undertakes electronically needs development across all of our functions.
- There needs to be better use of technology in Service delivery, to maximise the use of limited resources.
- The time taken to determine major planning applications is below average, and despite the complexity of the large majority of these cases, more innovative ways of dealing with them need to be explored.
- Whilst there are good management arrangements within the service, in terms of team meetings 1:1s etc, these do focus on performance and progress, and more support is required to stimulate innovative thought and development. Management arrangements need to encourage creative approaches to service delivery.

## WHAT SERVICE USERS THINK

In 2014-15 we conducted two customer satisfaction surveys aimed at assessing the views of people that had received a planning application decision during the period. The first covered the period April 2014 - September 2014 and the second covered the period October 2014 - March 2015. The following feedback is based on the combined results of both surveys.

The surveys were sent to 499 people, 13% of whom submitted a whole or partial response. The majority of responses (60%) were from local agents. 27% were from members of the public. 21% of respondents had their most recent planning application refused.

We asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements about the planning service. They were given the following answer options:

- Strongly agree;
- Tend to agree;
- Neither agree nor disagree;
- Tend to disagree; and
- Strongly disagree.

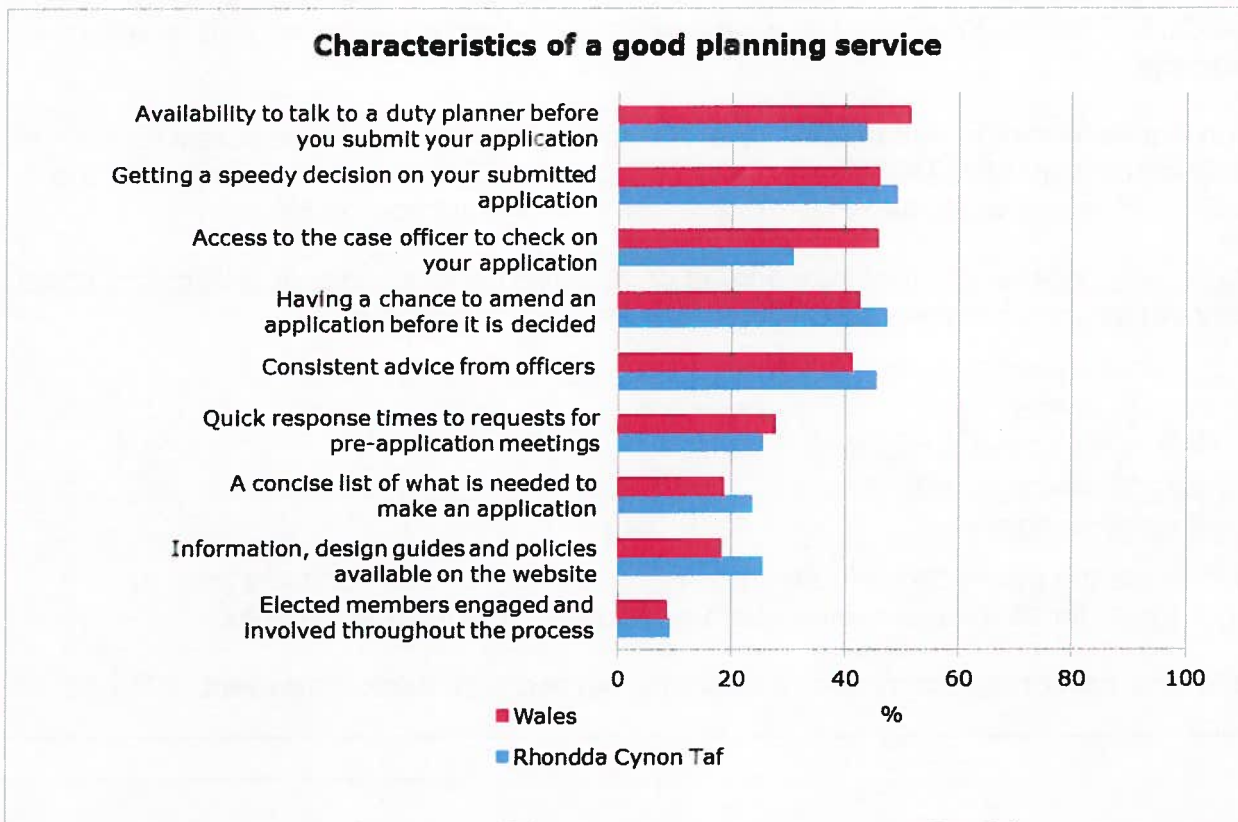
Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents that selected either 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree' for each statement for both our planning authority and Wales.

**Table 1: The percentage of respondents who agreed with each statement, 2014-15**

	<b>%</b>	
<b>Percentage of respondents who agreed that:</b>	<b>Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA</b>	<b>Wales</b>
The LPA enforces its planning rules fairly and consistently	59	45
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	63	57
The LPA gives help throughout, including with conditions	56	48
The LPA responded promptly when they had questions	71	55
They were listened to about their application	67	56
They were kept informed about their application	55	46
They were satisfied overall with how the LPA handled their application	66	57

We also asked respondents to select three planning service characteristics from a list that they thought would most help them achieve successful developments. Figure 1 shows how often each characteristic was selected as a percentage of the total number of selections. For us, 'getting a speedy decision on a submitted application' was the most popular choice.

**Figure 1: Characteristics of a good planning service, Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA, 2014-15**



Comments received include:

"RCT were helpful through all stages of the application, particularly where amendments and additional information were required. It was easy to gain access to the appropriate personnel when required and they were always willing to assist." [sic]

"Inconsistent advice on similar applications by differing officers. Very slow response to pre-application queries." [sic]

" One case officer per application causes delays in sorting things out."

## OUR PERFORMANCE 2014-15

This section details our performance in 2014-15. It considers both the Planning Performance Framework indicators and other available data to help paint a comprehensive picture of performance. Where appropriate we make comparisons between our performance and the all Wales picture.

Performance is analysed across the five key aspects of planning service delivery as set out in the Planning Performance Framework:

- Plan making;
- Efficiency;
- Quality;
- Engagement; and
- Enforcement.

### Plan making

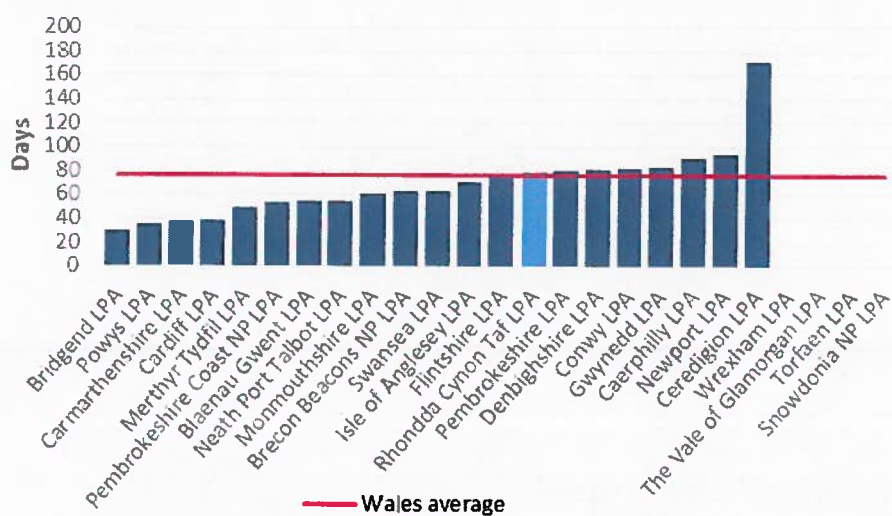
As at 31 March 2015, we were one of 21 LPAs that had a current development plan in place. We are required to submit an Annual Monitoring Report in October 2015. This document has been prepared.

During the APR period we had 2.8 years of housing land supply identified, making us one of 18 Welsh LPAs without the required 5 years supply.

### Efficiency

In 2014-15 we determined 1,398 planning applications, each taking, on average, 79 days (11 weeks) to determine. This compares to an average of 76 days (11 weeks) across Wales. Figure 2 shows the average time taken by each LPA to determine an application during the year.

**Figure 2: Average time taken (days) to determine applications, 2014-15**

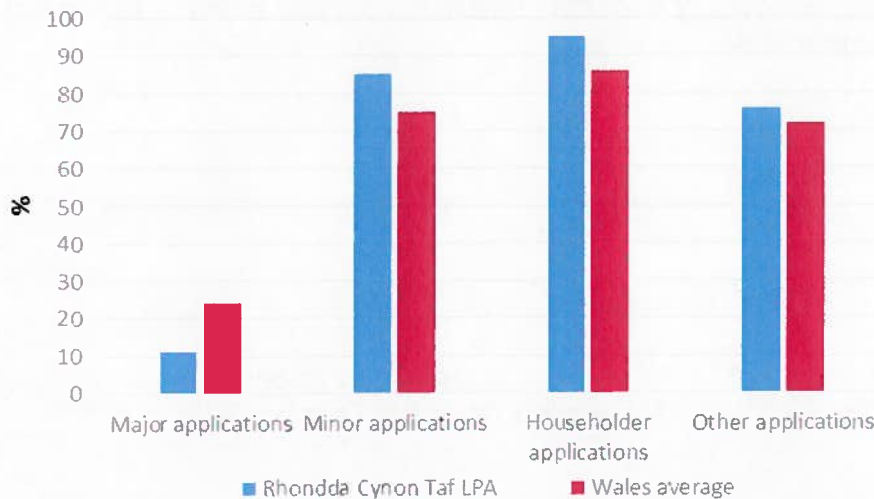


79.9% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This compared to 73% across Wales, which effectively meets the 80% target.



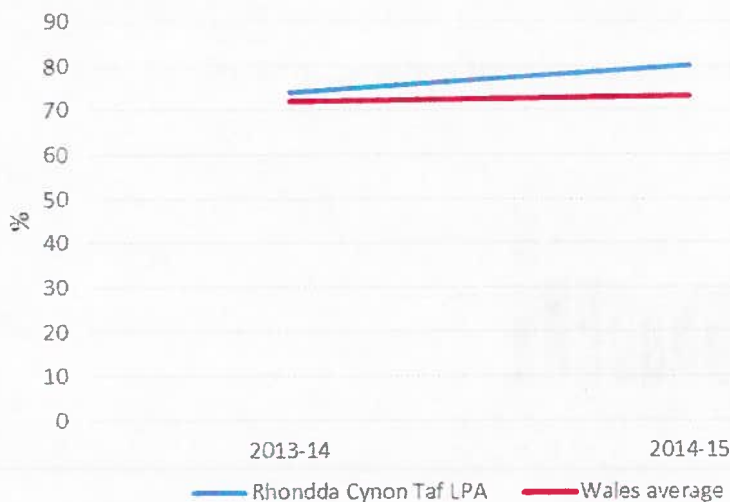
Figure 3 shows the percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales across the four main types of application for our LPA and Wales. It shows that we determined 95% of householder applications within the required timescales.

**Figure 3: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales, by type, 2014-15**



Between 2013-14 and 2014-15, as Figure 4 shows, the percentage of planning applications we determined within the required timescales increased from 74%. Wales saw an increase this year.

**Figure 4: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales**



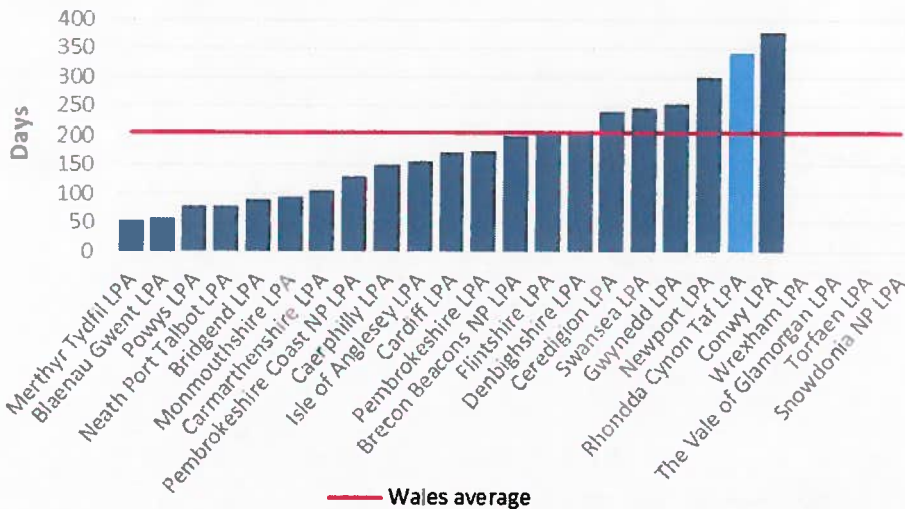
Over the same period:

- The number of applications we received increased;
- The number of applications we determined increased; and
- The percentage of applications we approved increased.

## Major applications

We determined 38 major planning applications in 2014-15, 16% (6 applications) of which were subject to an EIA. Each application (including those subject to an EIA) took, on average, 343 days (49 weeks) to determine. As Figure 5 shows, this was the second longest average time taken of all Welsh LPAs.

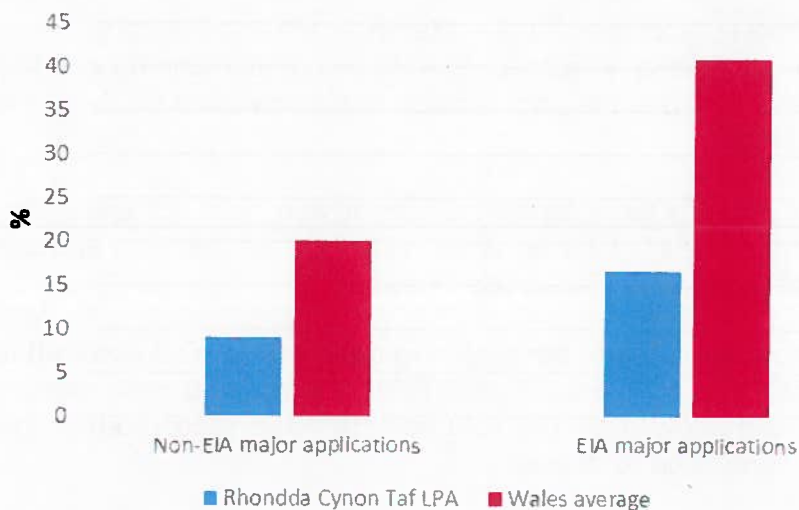
**Figure 5: Average time (days) taken to determine a major application, 2014-15**



11% of these major applications were determined within the required timescales, the fourth lowest percentage of all Welsh LPAs.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales by the type of major application. 9% of our 'standard' major applications i.e. those not requiring an EIA, were determined within the required timescales during the year.

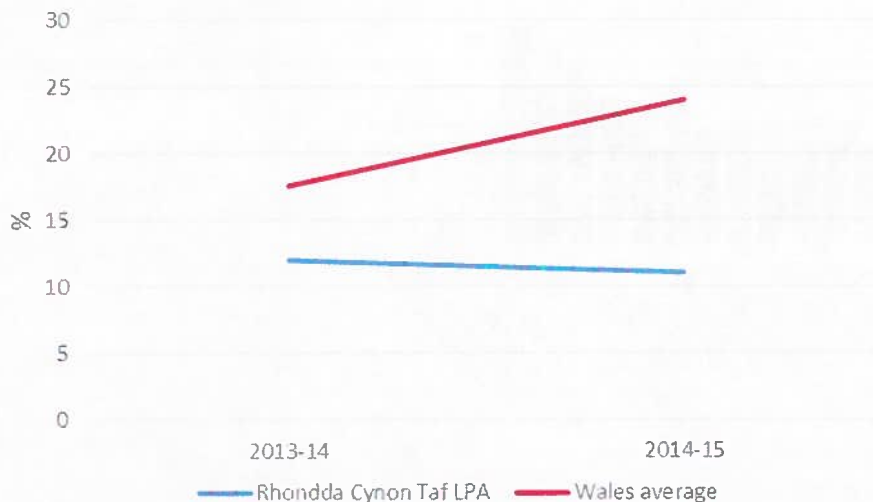
**Figure 6: Percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales during the year, by type, 2014-15**



Since 2013-14 the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales had decreased from 12%. In contrast, the number of major applications determined increased as had the number of applications subject to an EIA determined during the year.

Figure 7 shows the trend in the percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales in recent years and how this compares to Wales.

**Figure 7: Percentage of major planning applications determined within the required timescales**



Over the same period:

- The percentage of minor applications determined within the required timescales increased from 78% to 85%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales increased from 89% to 95%; and
- The percentage of other applications determined within the required timescales increased from 70% to 76%.

## Quality

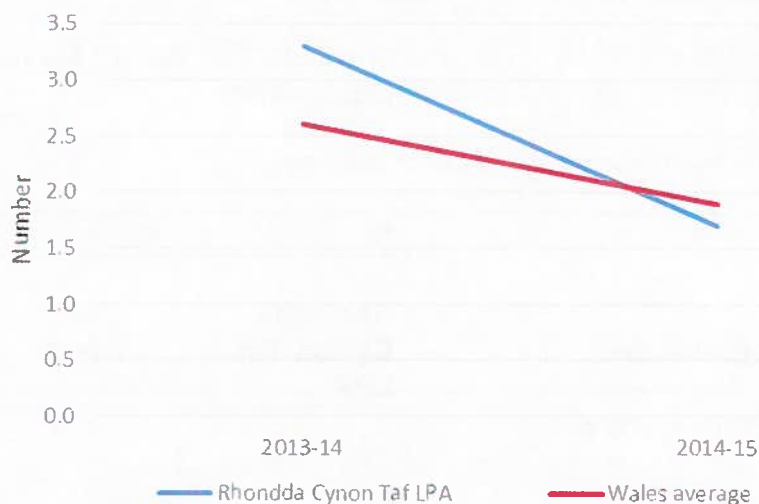
In the last two quarters of 2014-15 (October 2014 – March 2015) our Planning Committee made 64 planning application decisions, which equated to 9% of all planning applications determined. Across Wales 7% of all planning application decisions were made by planning committee over the same period.

2% of these member-made decisions went against officer advice. This compared to 11% of member-made decisions across Wales. This equated to 0.1% of all planning application decisions going against officer advice; 0.7% across Wales.

In 2014-15 we received 28 appeals against our planning decisions, which equated to 1.7 appeals for every 100 applications received. Across Wales 1.9 appeals were received for every 100 applications. Figure 8 shows how the volume of appeals received has changed since 2013-14 and how this compares to Wales.



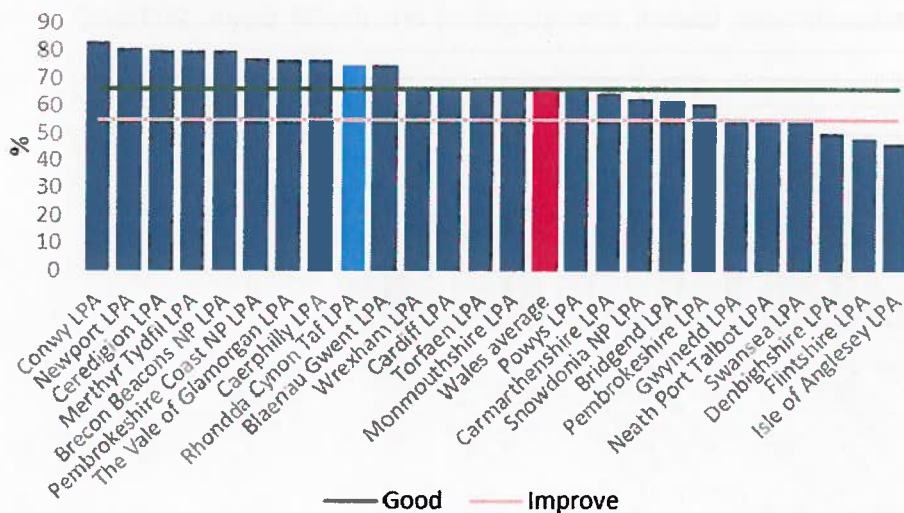
**Figure 8: Number of appeals received per 100 planning applications**



Over the same period the percentage of planning applications approved increased from 91% to 92%.

Of the 32 appeals that were decided during the year, 75% were dismissed. As Figure 9 shows, this was higher than the percentage of appeals dismissed across Wales as a whole and we were one of 14 LPAs that reached the 66% target.

**Figure 9: Percentage of appeals dismissed, 2014-15**



During 2014-15 we had 1 application for costs at a section 78 appeal upheld, making us one of the 5 LPAs to have at least one such application upheld in the year.

### Engagement

We are:

- one of 22 LPAs that allowed members of the public to address the Planning Committee and of all Councils in Wales we offer the widest public participation with each speaker being afforded 5 minutes and no limits on the number of speakers; and

- one of 20 LPAs that had an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access, track their progress (and view their content).

As Table 2 shows, 63% of respondents to our 2014-15 customer satisfaction survey agreed that the LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application.

**Table 2: Feedback from our 2014-15 customer satisfaction survey**

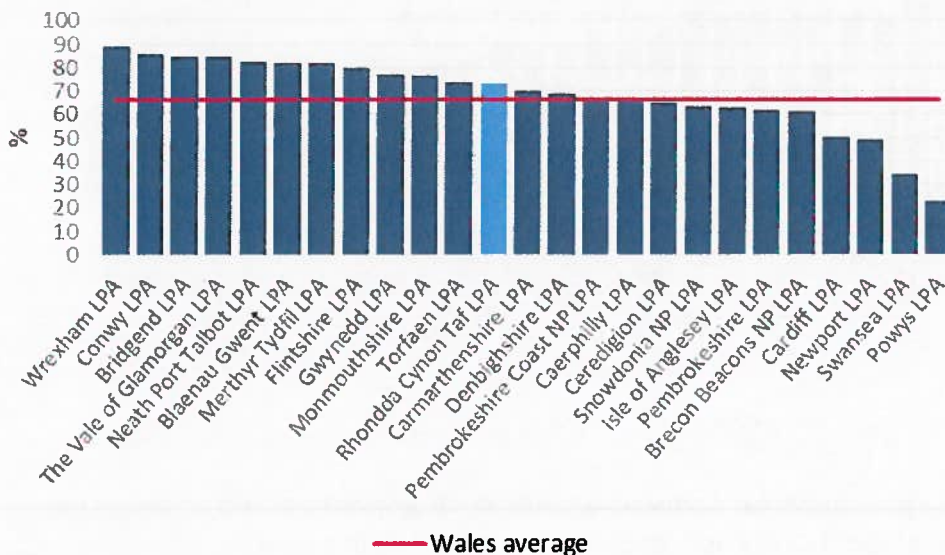
	%	
Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA	Wales
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	63	57
They were listened to about their application	67	56

### Enforcement

In 2014-15 we investigated 312 enforcement cases, which equated to 1.3 per 1,000 population. This was the fourth lowest rate in Wales. <sup>1</sup>

We investigated 73% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. Across Wales 66% were investigated within 84 days. Figure 10 shows the percentage of enforcement cases that were investigated within 84 days across all Welsh LPAs.

**Figure 10: Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days, 2014-15**

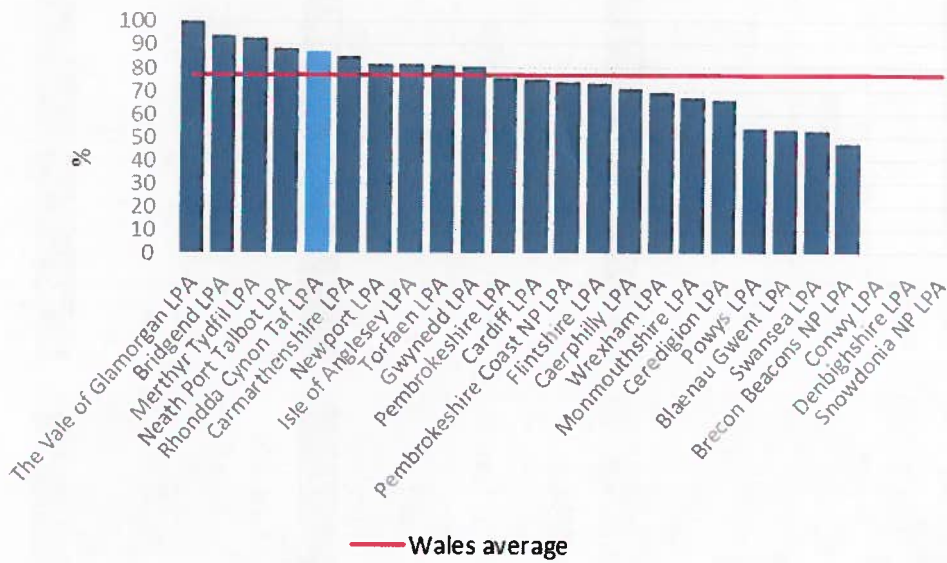


Over the same period, we resolved 220 enforcement cases, taking, on average, 93 days to resolve each case.

<sup>1</sup> Robust comparisons are not currently available as only 14 of the 25 LPAs supplied data for this indicator.

87% of this enforcement action was taken within 180 days from the start of the case. As Figure 11 shows this was the fifth highest percentage in Wales.

**Figure 11: Percentage of enforcement cases resolved in 180 days, 2014-15**



## ANNEX A - PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

### OVERVIEW

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE	WALES AVERAGE	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA LAST YEAR	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA THIS YEAR
<b>Plan making</b>						
Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes
LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<12	13-17	18+	60	N/A	N/A
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes
The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	>5	4-4.9	<4	4.2	4.5	2.8
<b>Efficiency</b>						
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	Not set	Not set	Not set	24	12	11
Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set	206	No Data	343
Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	>80	60.1-79.9	<60	73	74	80
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set	76	No Data	79
<b>Quality</b>						
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	Not set	Not set	Not set	11	3.4	2
Percentage of appeals dismissed	>66	55.1-65.9	<55	66	48	75
Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0	1	2	0	0	1
<b>Engagement</b>						



MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE	WALES AVERAGE	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA LAST YEAR	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA THIS YEAR
Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes		No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes		No	-	No Data	-
Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access, track their progress (and view their content)?	Yes	Partial	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Enforcement</b>						
Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days	Not set	Not set	Not set	66	No Data	73
Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	Not set	Not set	Not set	71	No Data	No Data
Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application received within 180 days from the start of the case (in those cases where it was expedient to enforce)?	Not set	Not set	Not set	77	No Data	87
Average time taken to take enforcement action	Not set	Not set	Not set	175	No Data	93

**SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>01. Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?</b>	
<b>'Good'</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
A development plan (LDP or UDP) is in place and within the plan period	N/A	No development plan is in place (including where the plan has expired)

<b>Authority's performance</b>	<b>Yes</b>
The Council adopted its LDP in March 2011 and is in the process of undertaking its statutory 4 year review.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>02. LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
The LDP is being progressed within 12 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed within between 12 and 18 months of the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement	The LDP is being progressed more than 18 months later than the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement

<b>Authority's performance</b>	N/A
N/A	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>03. Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>		<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
An AMR is due, and has been prepared		An AMR is due, and has not been prepared

<b>Authority's performance</b>	Yes
The Council has submitted four Annual Monitoring Reports	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>04. The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
The authority has a housing land supply of more than 5	The authority has a housing land supply of between 4	The authority has a housing land supply of less than 4

years	and 5 years	years
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<b>Authority's performance</b>	<b>2.8</b>
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Housing need was based on the 'apportionment' exercise carried out by SEWSPG. The figure attributed to Rhondda Cynon Taf was broadly in line with the 2008 household projections issued by Welsh Government. This resulted in a housing target in the plan of 14,385 new dwellings.

This target meant that on average, 950 dwellings needed to be completed per year over the 15-year plan period 2006-2021.

Our annual monitoring reports have previously attributed the shortfall to the downturn in the global economy. There is no doubt that the recession has had an effect on the housing market in RCT

However, the latest Household Projections issued by Welsh Government in February 2014 paint a different picture as to how the plan is performing against actual and up to date housing need.

Even using the highest factors of deviation from the base figures (eg, low deaths, high births, high immigration and economic aspiration) only 10,000 new dwellings will be needed to meet projected housing need between 2011 and 2031. (extending the plan period by 10 years)

These figures suggest that we need to deliver on average 500 dwelling completions per year. Looking at past build rates and the current upturn in completions (average of around 500 per annum for the last three years), this appears to be a sound delivery rate.

Furthermore, in the 2014 Joint Housing Land Availability (JHLA) study for Rhondda Cynon Taf published on 31/03/15, the development industry and the Inspector agreed that there is capacity to deliver almost 4,000 dwelling completions between 2014 and 2019, on average almost 800 houses per year, on large (allocated and windfall) sites, with a further 100 completions per year on average on small sites.

This is more than necessary to meet the need identified in the new projections, including sufficient margins to absorb any reductions from sites that may become stalled unexpectedly.

It is anticipated that the review of the LDP will rectify the situation of a 5 year land supply



## SECTION 2 - EFFICIENCY

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>05. Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required</b>	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	11
<p>4 (11%) major applications out of 38 were determined in time. It is recognised that performance in this category is below average and that the Council sits in the bottom quartile. However, a number of these applications related to some very significant schemes (major retail schemes, large scale residential schemes), which have historically proved challenging sites to bring forward due to their legacy of previous industrial use. In addition a number a renewable energy schemes dealt with during the year were the subject of revisions which required further time to consider.</p> <p>Performance on major applications is identified as a priority improvement area for the Service</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>06. Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days</b>	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	343
<p>This figure puts the Council in the bottom quartile when compared to other Welsh LPAs. However, as indicated above there have been a number of complex applications which have significantly skewed this figure.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>07. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required</b>	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Between 60% and 80% of applications are determined within the statutory time period	Less than 60% of applications are determined within the statutory time period

<b>Authority's performance</b>	80
<p>79.9% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This compared to 73% across Wales, which effectively meets the 80% target.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>08. Average time taken to determine all applications in days</b>	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	79
<p>The average time taken to determine all of the Council's planning applications during this period was 79 days.</p>	

### SECTION 3 - QUALITY

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>09. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice</b>	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>2% of these member-made decisions went against officer advice. This compared to 11% of member-made decisions across Wales. This equated to 0.1% of all planning application decisions going against officer advice; 0.7% across Wales.</p> <p>The changes to the Council's Planning Committee set up, scheme of delegation and Member Training programme (described earlier in this document) have had a significant impact on the percentage of decisions made against officer recommendation.</p>	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>10. Percentage of appeals dismissed</b>	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
More than 66% (two thirds) of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Between 55% and 66% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal	Less than 55% of planning decisions are successfully defended at appeal

<b>Authority's performance</b>	<b>75</b>
No further comment	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>11. Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
The authority has not had costs awarded against it at appeal	The authority has had costs awarded against it in one appeal case	The authority has had costs awarded against it in two or more appeal cases

<b>Authority's performance</b>	<b>1</b>
<p>This single case was a result of an appeal against non-determination and an application where Committee resolved that they would have refused the application contrary to officer recommendation.</p>	

**SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>12. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>		<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
Members of the public are able to address the Planning Committee		Members of the public are not able to address the Planning Committee

<b>Authority's performance</b>	<b>Yes</b>
The Council allows each speaker 5 minutes to address the Committee and there is no limit on the number of speakers.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>13. Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>		<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
Members of the public can seek advice from a duty planning officer		There is no duty planning officer available

<b>Authority's performance</b>	<b>-Yes</b>
There is an officer on hand to provide face to face and telephone advice to customers between the hours of 9 and 4:30	



<b>Indicator</b>	<b>14. Does the local planning authority's web site have an online register of planning applications, which members of the public can access track their progress (and view their content)?</b>	
<b>"Good"</b> All documents are available online	<b>"Fair"</b> Only the planning application details are available online, and access to other documents must be sought directly	<b>"Improvement needed"</b> No planning application information is published online

<b>Authority's performance</b>	Yes
No further comment	



## SECTION 5 – ENFORCEMENT

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>15. Percentage of enforcement cases investigated (determined whether a breach of planning control has occurred and, if so, resolved whether or not enforcement action is expedient) within 84 days</b>	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	73
We investigated 73% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. Across Wales 66% were investigated within 84 days.	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>16. Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases</b>	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	No Data
Data to be collected this year	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>17. Percentage of enforcement cases where enforcement action is taken or a retrospective application received within 180 days from the start of the case (in those cases where it was expedient to enforce)</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	<b>87</b>
The Council's performance is in the top quartile of Welsh LPAs	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>18. Average time taken to take enforcement action</b>	
<b>"Good"</b>	<b>"Fair"</b>	<b>"Improvement needed"</b>
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

<b>Authority's performance</b>	<b>93</b>
The Council's performance in resolving enforcement cases (220 cases) in an average time of 93 days puts it in above the Welsh average figure.	

## SECTION 6 – SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS

The purpose of the Sustainable Development Indicators is to measure the contribution the planning system makes to sustainable development in Wales.

The Sustainable Development Indicators will be used to measure the progress against national planning sustainability objectives, set out in Planning Policy Wales, and can be used to demonstrate to our stakeholders the role and scope of the planning system in delivering wider objectives. The information will also be useful to local planning authorities to understand more about the outcomes of the planning system and help inform future decisions.

<b>Authority's returns</b>	In quarter 1 full response provided In quarter 2 full response provided In quarter 3 full response provided In quarter 4 full response provided
No missing data	

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD1. The floorspace (square metres) granted and refused planning permission for new economic development on allocated employment sites during the year.</b>
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<b>Granted (square metres)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	0

<b>Refused (square metres)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	0

Throughout the monitoring period there were some significant planning permissions granted for employment use, as well as many medium and smaller permissions including a 16ha mixed use B1 site at Parc Eirin Tonyrefail. In addition to the allocated sites, the Council annually monitors the 103 operating employment sites across the County Borough, which consist of approximately 1,550 primarily B1, B2 and B8 employment units. As well as ensuring the ability of new sites to come forward, the LDP also plays a key role in protecting and managing these sites. The monitoring process indicated that there was an average vacancy rate of employment units of 14% across these operating sites. Some of these sites also have considerable areas of cleared or undeveloped land within them for further new development opportunities.

The Council again acknowledges that the specific target is not being met with regards to the delivery of our allocated employment land. That is not to say that there is considerable, encouraging economic activity on our existing employment sites. This is in the form of the continued creation of new business within these sites, with 785 new business created in RCT in 2013, whilst there have been the considerable new planning permissions and developments on these existing sites, as mentioned above, for this year. Accordingly, it has also been considered that this monitoring indicator could be amended to better reflect the employment activity in the County Borough.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD2. Planning permission granted for renewable and low carbon energy development during the year.</b>
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<b>Granted permission (number of applications)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	6

<b>Granted permission (MW energy generation)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	10

Prior to the 2014-15 monitoring period, there were 54 industrial sized wind turbines constructed and operating within Rhondda Cynon Taf, with a total (approximate) capacity of 63.4 MW. During the monitoring period a further 9 wind turbines with a 27 MW capacity, were fully installed for operation within the SSAF at Mynydd Bwllfa.

A further 10 wind turbines were permitted in Rhondda Cynon Taf during 2014-15, with a joint capacity of 19 MW of energy. Two considerable Solar farms were also permitted during the year with a joint capacity of 10.36 MW, whilst a further renewable energy-from-waste in-building proposal has been approved with a 4.0 MW capacity. Smaller renewable wind and hydro schemes were permitted in the SSA with a further generating capacity of 0.0465 MW (CI 12).

Preparatory work is also in place for the installation of the cross-authority development for 76 turbines with a 101MW capacity 'Pen Y Cymoedd' (Head of the Valleys) scheme.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD3. The number of dwellings granted planning permission during the year.</b>
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<b>Market housing (number of units)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	1,427

<b>Affordable housing (number of units)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	204

Although below the annual target figure, the construction rate during 2014-15 represents a continued increase on previous years' building activity, of 3.6% on last year's total or a 33.6% increase on that for 2012-13. It is further evidence that there is a continued delivery of new houses in Rhondda Cynon Taf, both market and affordable, with 4,076 dwellings built since the start of the plan period. 553 of these were built during the 2014-2015 AMR period whilst 1,784 dwellings were approved.

The global economic recession had a significant effect on the operations of the housing market in the early years of the LDP. The situation in Rhondda Cynon Taf mirrored that of many South East Wales authorities. The under-performance of the housing market locally was attributable to economic conditions and not necessarily to the availability of land. Now that the level of housebuilding activity has improved with the economic climate, it is becoming more important to reconsider the housing land requirement as well as land supply issues.

The result of the Joint Housing Land Availability Study (2015) illustrates an issue with medium-term land availability, since it indicates that there is sufficient housing land to last for only 2.4 years (reduced from 2.8 years in 2014), compared to the requirement for authorities to have a 5-year supply. The housing land supply is calculated using the residual method, based on the adopted LDP housing land requirement, LDP housing land allocations and other sites with planning permission. The annual JHLAS reports have attributed this low figure partly to the proportion of brownfield land in the supply (where a longer lead-in time after grant of planning permission is required, to allow for site preparation), and partly to the effect of the large strategic sites (that have development programmes well in excess of 5 years). However, it is also increasingly clear that the LDP housing land requirement is unrealistically high. In common with other authorities in Wales with an adopted LDP, where the housing land requirement appears to be well above the construction industry's capacity to deliver, the residual method produces an annually increasing shortage, which despite the improved levels of housebuilding activity presents an increasingly unattainable target each year. This scenario will persist until such time as the plan period has been rolled forward, involving a revised housing requirement figure based on evidence of housing need derived from the latest available population and household projections, and a reassessment of the supply of sites for housing.

However, in terms of the actual monitoring targets as they stand, it is accepted that they are not being achieved and it is unlikely that this will be addressed without specific intervention.



It is considered that the forthcoming review of the LDP will form the basis of the necessary intervention in the delivery of housing through this plan led process. One such avenue of intervention may well be the analysis and interpretation of the updated Household Projections issued by Welsh Government in February 2014. For example, based on a broad calculation using these revised figures, 9,500 new dwellings will be needed to meet projected housing need between 2011 and 2031 and therefore a much lower annual build rate of around 500 dwellings per year.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD4. Planning permission granted and refused for development in C1 and C2 floodplain areas during the year.</b>
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<b>Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that DID NOT meet all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that did not meet all TAN 15 tests which were REFUSED permission on flood risk grounds</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that MET all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	<b>765</b>

During 2014 – 15, 932 dwellings were approved with sustainable drainage systems as part of their proposal. This was from a total of 1611 dwellings that were approved from applications of over 5 dwellings. This is just over half of such permissions, although many applications were for outline permissions

During 2014-15, no highly vulnerable development was permitted in C2 floodrisk zones that didn't meet all TAN 15 tests.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD5. The area of land (ha) granted planning permission for new development on previously developed land and greenfield land during the year.</b>
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<b>Previously developed land (hectares)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	149

<b>Greenfield land (hectares)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	24

553 dwellings were completed of which 350 were on previously developed land, which is a percentage of 63.3%

The indicator suggests that there has been a marked and steady increase in residential development completions on brownfield or previously developed land over the past year. This is further encouraging considering that this is a percentage of a far higher total of overall completions. It is hoped that this pattern continues over the period of the plan, with the delivery of further brownfield sites allocated in the LDP.

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD6. The area of public open space (ha) that would be lost and gained as a result of development granted planning permission during the quarter.</b>
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<b>Open space lost (hectares)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	0

<b>Open space gained (hectares)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	3

No further comment

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>SD7. The total financial contributions (£) agreed from new development granted planning permission during the quarter for the provision of community infrastructure.</b>
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<b>Gained via Section 106 agreements (£)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	<b>3,051,161</b>

<b>Gained via Community Infrastructure Levy (£)</b>	
<b>Authority's data</b>	<b>237,354</b>

No further comment

