



RECORD OF DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION

Key Decision

✓

SUBJECT:

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Planning Annual Performance Report 2016-2017.

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

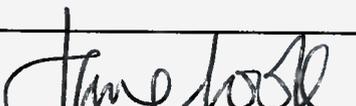
In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, this report has been prepared to accompany the intended officer decision of the Director of Regeneration and Planning as described below.

The purpose of the report is to outline the contents of the Planning Service Annual Performance Report 2016-2017, and seek approval for its submission to the Welsh Government.

DELEGATED DECISION (OCTOBER 2017):

It is agreed that:

The Planning Annual Performance Report for the year 2016-2017 is submitted to Welsh Government.


Chief Officer Signature

JANE COOK
Print Name

26.10.2017
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

CONSULTATION



26/10/17

CONSULTEE CABINET MEMBER SIGNATURE

DATE



26/10/17

CONSULTEE OFFICER SIGNATURE

DATE

CALL IN PROCEDURE RULES.

IS THE DECISION DEEMED URGENT AND NOT SUBJECT TO CALL-IN BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

NO ✓

If deemed urgent - signature of Mayor or Deputy Mayor or Head of Paid Service confirming agreement that the proposed decision is reasonable in all the circumstances for it being treated as a matter of urgency, in accordance with the overview and scrutiny procedure rule 17.2:

.....
(Mayor)

.....
(Dated)

NB - If this is a reconsidered decision then the decision cannot be called in and the decision will take effect from the date the decision is signed.

FOR CABINET OFFICE USE ONLY

PUBLICATION & IMPLEMENTATION DATES

PUBLICATION

Publication on the Councils Website:- 26/10/17.

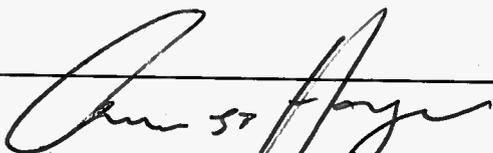
DATE

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

Note: This decision will not come into force and may not be implemented until the expiry of 5 clear working days after its publication to enable it to be the subject to the Call-In Procedure in Rule 17.1 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

Subject to Call In the implementation date will be 3/11/17.

DATE



Secretary to the Cabinet Signature

CARLTIAN S J HANAGAN

Print Name

26.10.17

Date

Further Information

Directorate:	Regeneration and Planning
Contact Name:	Simon Gale
Designation:	Service Director, Planning
Tel. No.	01443 494716

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

A REPORT TO ACCOMPANY A DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION AND PLANNING

OCTOBER 2017

RHONDDA CYNON TAF PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016-2017

AUTHOR: SIMON GALE, SERVICE DIRECTOR OF PLANNING

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 It is recommended that:

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

3. REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1 It is considered that the content of the report is a true and accurate record of the monitoring of the Performance of the Planning Service for the year 2016-2017.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Welsh Government, publishes 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.

- 4.2 In addition to this performance framework Welsh Government has 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.

5. KEY FINDINGS OF THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 5.1 The Service had 'Improvement Needed/Red' scores in 3 areas of the 18 measures in Performance Framework. The first related to the fact that the County Borough currently does not have a five year housing land supply; the second relates to the percentage of decisions that Committee made that are contrary to officer recommendation; and the last relates to performance in relation to appeal decisions.
- 5.2 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 7 out of the 11 areas measured, RCT was above the Welsh average. The 4 indicators we were below on were: percentage of appeals lost; the award of costs at appeal; the percentage of decisions made under delegated powers was less than the all Wales average; and the percentage of Committee decisions made contrary to officer recommendation.
- 5.3 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 agents. 10% were from members of the public. 17% of respondents had their most recent planning application refused.
- 5.4 The Service was again rated above the Welsh average on all 7 of the questions that were asked. The Data Unit highlighted comments received which included: *"RCT always a pleasure to deal with. Officers are available, respond to requests, give timely advice, answer straight questions with straight answers, and give you the impression that they want to work to make development happen."* And *"I feel that the department are helpful and eager to provide a good and effective service."*

5.5 The APR highlights the Service's involvement in major initiatives such as the Treforest Industrial Estate Local Development Order, our Developers' Forum and cross service work such as the Taff Vale project and the facilitating housing initiative. It also highlights the work the Service is contributing to on a regional basis.

5.6 The APR also sets out areas where we will need focus on in the coming year. These include our appeal performance, the housing land supply shortfall, Strategic Opportunity Areas, regional working and the implementation of our new back office system to drive more efficient ways of working and to deliver better services to our customers.

6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening form has been prepared for the purpose of this report. It has been found that a full report is not required at this time.

7. CONSULTATION

7.1 None required.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

9.1 The Annual Performance Report is a statutory requirement from Welsh Government.

10. LINKS TO THE COUNCILS CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/SIP

10.1 The effectiveness of the Regeneration and Planning Service plays an important role in delivering the overall objectives of the Council by ensuring the service creates opportunities for people and companies to live and work and invest in the County Borough.



11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1** The Council's Planning Service generally compares well in relation to the rest of Wales in the suite of measures contained in the 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.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

**A REPORT TO ACCOMPANY A DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF
REGENERATION AND PLANNING**

October 2017

Item:

Background Papers

Annual Monitoring Report 2016-2017

Officer to contact: Simon Gale

Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA

**PLANNING ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT (APR) –
2017-18**

PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that I am able to introduce the third 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.

2016/17 has seen the Regeneration & Planning Service build on their co-location in the same building the previous year and we are seeing the benefit of the teams working more closely than ever before.

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.

Some of the major work of note included the adoption of the Treforest Industrial Estate Local Development Order (for which I am grateful to Welsh Government for their financial support) and the granting of planning permission for the major commercial proposal at the Taff Vale site in the centre of Pontypridd. The work the team has done in supporting the Council's school's development programme is also worthy of note.

Housing completions in RCT continue to be encouraging and I am pleased to see our Housing Developer's Forum go from strength to strength. I am confident that this coupled with the unique initiatives that officers are currently progressing are having a positive effect on housing delivery in RCT.

Finally, I am excited by the work the Service has brought forward in terms the Strategic Opportunity Areas recently agreed by our Cabinet. This forward thinking approach shows how Regeneration & Planning can be at the forefront of place shaping, positive planning and creating opportunities for investment and prosperity. This work will certainly be a priority for the Service in the coming year.

(Councillor Robert Bevan, Cabinet Member for Enterprise Development and Housing)

CONTEXT

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

- *Planning background, including previous adopted or abandoned development plans.*
- *Place and fit within the community strategy and/or wider strategic and operational activity of the authority.*
- *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 latest population projections suggest that the need for new homes in the County Borough is considerably less than the 14,385 originally targeted in the Local Development Plan.

PLANNING SERVICE

This section should in the main be drawn from sections prepared and approved for department's internal service report.

- 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?

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.

It is important to note that this Service recognises its role in facilitating regeneration and economic development. 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.(see team structures below)

The planning service includes both the strategic planning and development management functions. Key is the continuing development and monitoring of the Council's planning policy and related initiatives.

The Development Management service considers applications under the Planning Act and Building Regulations applying and enforcing the requirements of the Building Act to ensure the health and safety of people in and around buildings. The Service also undertakes activities such as urban design, enforcement, planning obligations, the conservation/protection of historic environments and dangerous structures.

- 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?

The Service is responding to the Council's drive to shape and transform its delivery of services in the light of continuing reductions in external funding and pressures in demand. The commercialism workstream challenges service areas to highlight opportunities where the development and expansion of discretionary and chargeable services may be possible, both to existing and new clients, and thus contribute to the Council's overall budget position.

Officers are currently exploring opportunities to offer services such as pre-submission validation checks, a fast track upgrades option for householder applications, formalising and actively promoting the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs), introducing an enhanced chargeable pre-application advice service and offering a development completion service.

There is also increasing engagement in a more strategic approach to planning on a regional basis with officers working closely with colleagues across the region in developing a consistent and coherent approach to evidence collecting that will ultimately support a regional approach to strategic planning.

The Service is taking the lead on the City Deal Housing work-stream and at Director level heads a group of housing and planning officers from across the region and Welsh Government. The group is looking to develop potential areas of intervention through the City Deal and wider regional initiatives that will help unlock stalled sites, promote the expansion of the SME sector and encourage an increase in self and custom build homes in the region all with the overall aim of increasing housing supply and promoting economic prosperity.

Finally, the Service is in the process of upgrading its planning back office system. Whilst this is set out in greater detail later in the report, it has the overall objective of making the planning process more efficient, establishing a sound platform for agile working and allowing an enhanced digital service to our customers.

- **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?**

Operating budget over last three years

Year	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Operating Budget	£752,223	£815,882	£1,317,306

In 2015/16, for the first time in many years planning application fee income exceeded the target income figure (albeit only by £1,492). However, in 2016/17 we saw a significant fall in fee income of £194,443. Whilst the overall number of applications received was relatively consistent with previous years the Council did not receive the number of larger ‘major’ applications which attracted higher application fees, than it did in 2015/16.

Planning application fee income against budget

Year	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15
Income received	£720,549	£914,992	£657,302
Budgeted income	£913,500	£913,500	£913,500

In addition to ongoing budget cuts, the Service has delivered efficiency savings of between 5% and 10% over the 3 years previous and the Regeneration and Planning Service has reduced its budget by more than 40% over the period.

- **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 structures of the Planning Applications, Enforcement, Housing Delivery, Spatial Planning and Development Plans and Planning Process Teams and Building Control are shown on the shown above charts.

During the year the Service has operated within the context of the financial constraints faced by local authorities and the need to absorb the changes to the operation of the planning system in Wales. Accordingly, and as in the previous year it was challenging to maintain and improve levels of service and performance.

During the year the Council lost its dedicated Conservation Officer and whilst the post resource was retained this was utilised to create a further general planning officer post within the team. It was considered that this would create a more rounded general resource for the Service going forward.

The current staffing levels of the service are as shown in the structure charts above.

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:

- BCO Apprenticeship course.
- BCOs Changes in Legislation and Updated Codes of Practice on Fire Regulations
- PACE (for interviews under caution resulting from unauthorised works)
- In-house Management Development Programme
- Bilingual online services
- Implications of the Wales Planning Bill MORAG
- ILM Level 5 Coaching & Mentoring Overview
- Town Centre Regeneration
- Wales Enforcement Conference 2016
- Wales Planning Conference 2016
- Planning Law Seminar for Local Planning Authorities
- Active Travel
- Inclusive Design in the Built Environment
- The Structural Repair of Windows in Listed and Historic Buildings
- Listed building structural issues
- In house E-purchasing Training
- In house training on report writing
- In house training on back office systems
- Business and Administration Level 2 Course
- Planning Support Officers have been shadowing officers on householder/minor applications and site visits

YOUR LOCAL STORY

- **What is the status of the LDP? Is development/monitoring/revision proceeding as planned?**

Local Development Plan

The Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted on 2nd March 2011. The LDP provides a land use framework which forms the basis on which decisions about future development in the County Borough are based. The Council will submit its sixth AMR in October 2017. The findings of the AMR show that housing delivery continues to increase with 716 new homes completed in RCT in 2016/17, the highest since the Plan was adopted. The AMR shows encouraging signs in terms of economic activity and strong performance against sustainable development indicators

Community Infrastructure Levy

Following a Public Examination and subsequent Inspectors report the Council implemented the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on the 31st 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.

The total CIL income in 2014/15 was £0 and in 2015/16 was £279,467.17
Total CIL income in 2016/17 was £84,731.11

Strategic Income in 2016/17 was £67,872.60
Strategic income carried forward from 2015/16 was £223,956.24
Balance of Strategic CIL income £291,828.84

Local CIL income in 2016/17 was £12,621.95

No 'Strategic' CIL has been spent to date.

- What is the DM workload per officer?

During the year the Council received 1297 applications and determined 1171 applications. These figures equate to a workload of 118 applications dealt with by officer per year (based on 11 case officers).

- 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.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT

The LDP sets out an ambitious program for sustainable economic growth and regeneration in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The approach taken in the Plan looks even more ambitious when set against the backdrop of the global economic recession. Inevitably the results of the monitoring exercise indicate certain areas have fared better than others. Some of the headline figures are as follows:

- 716 new dwellings were built in the County Borough during 2016-2017. This represents a 25.8% increase on the number of new dwellings constructed during 2015-2016 (569) and a 29.5% increase on 2014-2015 (553);
- 236 new affordable dwellings were built in the County Borough during 2016-2017. This represents a 140.8% increase on last year's total (98) and a continued increase on previous years' building activities.
- The Council approved proposals for 569 new dwellings during 2016-2017; and
- The overall vacancy rate for Principal Town and Key Settlement retail centres was 12.4% during 2016-2017, which is a small increase on the previous year's rates of 10.6%. This is 3% above the UK average vacancy rate which stands at 8.7% as of January 2016 but is just below the Welsh average of 12.5%.

Since the adoption of the LDP in 2011, it is considered that the following elements of the Plan are making good progress in delivering the targets set out in the LDP. These include:

House Building

During 2016-2017, a total of 716 new dwellings were constructed in Rhondda Cynon Taf including 236 new affordable homes. This takes the total number of new dwellings constructed in the County Borough since 2006, (the technical start of the plan period), to 5,361. Applications for a further 569 dwellings were permitted through this past year, contributing to a total of 7,589 dwellings permitted since the adoption of the LDP in 2011.

Although these substantial figures indicate a continued positive growth in the house building industry in Rhondda Cynon Taf since the adoption of the LDP, the build rates do not meet those identified in the LDP. As indicated in our Joint Housing Land Availability Study (2016) we have a reduced housing land supply of 1.3 years based on the residual method of calculation.

Considering recent and longer standing permissions, the housing targets are not an issue of immediate concern. It is however acknowledged in the LDP AMR that housing allocations, particularly in the Northern Strategy Area are not quite coming forward at the rate they were anticipated. The Council has been proactive in seeking methods of intervention to boost the delivery of housing in RCT. This includes the unique Developer Forum, Strategy for Enabling Housing Development and further work to identify the viability of our allocated sites and then identify methods of financial leveraging to enable their development.

Strategic Sites

During 2016-2017, the development of a new college campus for the Cynon Valley, on the Robertstown Strategic Site, neared completion. The ongoing refurbishment of the former Aberdare Station as a function suite for the college also commenced. This will provide significant numbers of new jobs for those working in the college whilst also contributing to the training and development of the local population. Planning permission was also granted for a supermarket on the Robertstown Strategic Site during 2015-2016.

In Hirwaun there has been an approval of an outline application for 2,000m² of retail development within the local centre element of the site. It is anticipated the development of the Strategic Site will be aided by the dualling of the A465 to Hirwaun. The Cardiff Capital Region 'City Deal' provides further investment opportunities for the Heads of Valleys area, including transport schemes such as the electrification of the rail line as part of the South East Wales Metro and the extension of the passenger rail service to Hirwaun.

There has previously been an approval for the construction of wind turbines on Maerdy Colliery. Section 106 planning obligations attached to the development will provide a significant contribution to the road network and leisure elements of the strategic site.

The 2014-2015 AMR also noted the approval of an outline application on the Cwm Coking Works site for the demolition of the existing structures, (retention of listed towers), site remediation, land restoration and development to provide a mix of uses including 851 residential units (use class C3), a primary school and open space.

Work has been completed on the infrastructure (including new access) to facilitate the 10,976m² gross floorspace superstore on the Mwyndy-Talbot Green Strategic Site (along with the wider infrastructure), which was permitted during the 2014-2015 monitoring period. The wider Town Centre was approved for approximately 34,000m² of retail and further significant leisure, office and hotel. This wider town centre has consent comprising A1 retail space, A2 financial and professional service space, A3 food and drink space, B1 office space, a cinema, hotel, car parking and related infrastructure.

Discussions are ongoing with the landowners of the former Phurnacite plant in Abercwmbol with a view to bringing the site forward for development.

Retail Development

The LDP allocates land for the development of between 34,400sqm and 36,400sqm of new retail floorspace.

Permission for a small local retail centre was implemented during the 2016-2017 monitoring year, as part of a larger application, which also included housing on Bryncae Industrial Estate, Llanharan. In the Principal Town of Pontypridd a new Poundland store opened in June 2016. Both schemes combine to provide an overall total of 909m² of gross convenience/comparison retail floorspace implemented throughout 2016-2017.

As stated above, work has been completed on the infrastructure (including new access) to facilitate the 10,976m² gross floorspace superstore on the Mwyndy-Talbot Green Strategic Site (along with the wider infrastructure), which was permitted during the 2014-2015 monitoring period. The wider Town Centre was approved for approximately 34,000m² of retail and significant leisure, office and hotel floorspace. The permission at the Llanilid Strategic Site will also see the creation of the local centre there, with some retail element. During the previous monitoring period a S106 agreement was signed granting planning permission for a supermarket including access improvements on the Strategic Site in Hirwaun.

In 2016-2017 permission was granted for 885m² of convenience/comparison retail floorspace. The applications include a large retail unit on the ground floor of the former

Boot Hotel, which is along the primary shopping frontage within Aberdare town centre and a convenience store as part of a mixed-use application for retail and residential at the former Hirwaun Nursery site, Aberdare.

Since the adoption of the LDP, a further 7,717m² of new retail floorspace has been built at Pontypridd Retail Park. It is recognised there has been considerable development interest within the retail sector in the County Borough over the last few years.

Employment Led Development and the Economy

The LDP allocates 98 hectares of land for employment purposes.

The 4.17ha allocation at Hirwaun Industrial Estate (NSA 14.2) has continued to implement its consent for a sustainable waste resource recovery and energy production plant at Fifth and Ninth Avenues, with two buildings erected to date and significant ground works undertaken.

During 2016-2017 the Council also granted permission for a new B2 unit with ancillary B1/B8 at Llantrisant Business Park comprising 2,200m² of gross industrial space, whilst also granting a B1 office-led development at the former Taff Vale Precinct Site in Pontypridd. This latter permission is for a mixed use development of B1 (office), A3 (food and drink), D1 (non-residential uses) and D2 (leisure and assembly); the permission will see up to 14,693m² of floor space over three buildings.

The former Sogefi site in Llantrisant has also received planning permission for a bus depot which forms the first phase of a complete redevelopment of the site as Edwards Coaches Headquarters. The second phase includes a large new business park with significant opportunities for inward investment. The relocation of the company to a larger site ensures the continued growth of a highly successful, local business and major employer in RCT.

Whilst not granted on allocations, these permissions are testament to the recovering economy and the willingness of companies to invest in RCT, as well as making a further contribution to the Council's employment land bank.

As with the housing sector, the global economic recession has had an effect on commercial and industrial development and accordingly it is understood why significant allocated employment sites have not come forward. That being said, there have been many examples of considerable investment in the sector during the plan period, in addition to those mentioned above.

It should also be noted that there is continued development and redevelopment of our existing 102 employment sites, which contain approximately 1,687 units. The monitoring process indicates that there is an average vacancy rate of 9.0% (4.8% lower than 2015-2016) across the employment units of these operational sites.

The Council will continue to review its options to improve the delivery of its employment sites and achieve its target in terms of the implementation of the LDP.

In terms of overall prosperity, the number of individuals in professional occupations particularly has increased significantly within the Borough since the 2013-2014 data. There

has also been a significant rise in the number of individuals employed in the associate, professional and technical occupations within Rhondda Cynon Taf since 2011. Indeed the 2016-2017 percentage for this associate, professional and technical category in Rhondda Cynon Taf has overtaken the overall percentage for Wales, being 1.9% higher, which is quite considerable in terms of actual numbers.

The data for Rhondda Cynon Taf gives the total number of people employed in the nine specified occupation categories as being 104,200 individuals as of December 2016, this is above those figures witnessed in 2014 (97,325) and 2011 (93,600) respectively.

Additionally the number of businesses births within RCT has increased significantly compared with previous years. Data is released approximately 11 months after the reference period, as such, the latest available data relates to the 2015 calendar year when the business birth rate in Rhondda Cynon Taf was 925 which is a positive increase from previous years of 790 (2014), 785 (2013) and 505 (2012). This trend is reflected in the lower number of economically inactive people during this monitoring period also. These statistics are testament to the recovering economy and the willingness of companies to invest in RCT.

Furthermore, as the economy recovers, opportunities to secure meaningful employment related inward investment in Rhondda Cynon Taf will hopefully increase. The City Deal and the major investment associated with it will hopefully see greater commercial development across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Having regard to the encouraging evidence outlined above, it is not considered that a review of the employment allocations is necessary at this stage.

Sustainability Appraisal Monitoring

The findings of the Sustainability Appraisal monitoring element of the LDP, indicates that overall, the plan is travelling in a positive direction for almost all of the aspects of sustainability; these being the indicators for Employment, Health, Transport, Built Environment, Landscape, Water, Climate Change, Energy, Land/Soils, Air Quality, Culture and Heritage and Waste. Indicators for Communities are seeing some elements being met whilst others are not currently being achieved. The delivery of Housing is not wholly being met in line with the specific requirements of the Indicator, although as mentioned throughout this report, significant housing is being delivered.

- **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.

The Service is clear that its activity is focussed on creating opportunities for people and business to live, work and invest in RCT. We seek to secure *outcomes* including housing, employment and business, regeneration projects, and town centre regeneration, for which the realisation of the full economic benefits will be long term. The Service is, in line with the Council's priorities, successfully delivering a wide range of outcomes, and securing funding to deliver further outcomes, with reducing resources.

The Service also recognises the importance of the above priorities in the context of the Cardiff Capital Region 'City Deal' and the need to work in a collaborative manner with its neighbouring strategic partners in order to maximise beneficial outcomes for all across South East Wales.

Over the year the Service has sought to focus on the following:

Facilitating Housing

In line with the Council's priorities, the range and choice of quality housing is being improved as housebuilding figures are increasing, and developments are being delivered by the private sector in both the northern and southern parts of the County Borough. The Service, through its Developer Forum, with the major/volume houses builders is seeking to develop innovative strategies to further encourage house building in those more marginal areas, where issues of viability continue to deter building in any great numbers.

The Council's continues to operate its Developer Forum , where the Council brings together the private sector to collectively reduce the planning hurdles for residential development including progress towards a new and innovative system to reduce the number of planning conditions and develop a 'live' decision notice model that can be accessed by both the applicant/agent and the LPA.

The service continues to lead on large scale projects aimed at stimulating further housing investment across the County Borough. The Council recognises that housing construction can have significant economic benefits for the County Borough thorough the provision of large numbers of constructions jobs and further job creation and protection through the supply chain process and increased spending in the surrounding area. This is in addition to the regenerative impacts new housing developments can bring to our communities and at a basic level, the provision of decent homes across all tenures.

As well as leading on the City Deal Housing Theme, officers have also been working with colleagues in the Council's Strategic Housing, Corporate Estates and Finance teams with a view to identifying innovative ways to facilitate housing delivery. These ideas include new ways of using Council land, finances and borrowing/lending powers to assist the private sector in bringing forward development where there is currently market failure. Officers are in the process of seeking approval to pilot a 'Plot Shop' concept which is essentially a 'one stop shop' approach where a potential custom builder could access land, finance, architects plans, and planning and building regulations approval all in one go through a Council run website to be known as a 'Plot Shop'.

In simple terms a Plot Shop is akin to a marketing suite (either physical or virtual) from where the sale of building plots is administered and promoted to the public. It is like a 'municipal estate agent' or the marketing facility a traditional big developer would provide for a large housing project.

Strategic Opportunity Areas

The Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020 "The Way Ahead" has building a strong economy as a priority. The Regeneration and Planning Service is leading on considerable work being progressed within the Council and with partners which supports this priority right across

RCT. However, to date, the areas where there is greatest scope for *strategic* development to support the economy within RCT and the wider Cardiff Capital Region, have not been collectively identified as Strategic Opportunity Areas.

At this time, in the context of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the Valley Taskforce, it was felt critical that the Council identifies and works towards the delivery of economic growth in those regionally important areas where there is significant potential to create jobs and prosperity both across RCT and for the wider region.

The Service has taken the Local Development Plan (LDP) as a starting point, and considering recent economic activity, the potential for regional significant growth, the ability of the private sector and other partners to deliver, together with the scale of opportunity and significance regionally, a number of Strategic Opportunity Areas have been developed.

The areas are:

- Cynon Gateway – Energizing the Region
- The Wider Pontypridd, Treforest – Edge of the City, Heart of the Region
- Pontypridd Town – Pivotal in the Region
- A4119 Corridor: Regional Rhondda Gateway
- Llanilid on the M4: Driving the Regional Economy

These draft outline strategies include a wide range of activity which is both short and long term for delivery by a range of partners. What links them is the ability for them to deliver significant economic growth and jobs within Rhondda Cynon Taf and the region.

To make sure that the Council maximises the benefits which could come from this the Service will work with partners and share the strategies.

Importantly the Council needs to work appropriately, meaning that some of the projects are currently being delivered, others could potentially be progressed with the right partners and funding, whilst others need feasibility work.

These outline strategies include some potential opportunities which are much longer term, or which following feasibility, may not be deliverable for a variety of reasons.

Finally, whilst the Strategic Opportunity Areas are based around the strategy of the LDP, the full extent of all the areas does not necessarily coincide with the allocations currently within the LDP. As noted, the areas have been identified on the basis of potential for economic growth, in some cases in the long term.

It is recognised that these Outline Strategies do not give the areas outside current LDP allocations any planning status. In developing future planning policy, either locally, regionally or nationally, consideration is being given to how these areas could contribute to economic growth and therefore review them for potential inclusion.

Taff Vale Site

The Taff Vale redevelopment project led by the Regeneration and Planning Service has continued to make significant progress during 2016/2017 with further important milestones achieved.

A multi disciplinary design team was appointed in late 2016 along with a demolition contractor to clear the remaining on site structures. This demolition was successfully undertaken by the end of March 2017 with minimal disruption to the town. A main construction contractor was appointed to work with the design team in June 2017 to take the project development to RIBA Stage 4.

A full planning application for this landmark development was made in July 2017 comprising three buildings that will accommodate office, leisure / library, food and drink space with more than 1200 jobs coming to the town centre. The Council's Planning & Development Committee approved the application in September 2017.

The Welsh Government have announced that Taff Vale will be the new headquarters of Transport for Wales, the next rail franchise and the Metro Operator making it a nationally important investment in Wales.

VVP Programme Management and Delivery

The Service has continued to take a key role in the delivery of the VVP programme. The initial three year programme of regeneration investment supported by Welsh Government was completed at the end of March 2017 although some of the supported projects are continuing to be delivered using other sources of investment and match funding. The VVP investment has allowed the Council and its partners in the private, public and third sectors to successfully deliver a range of regeneration projects. This approach has developed momentum for further investment and improvement which will be an immediate focus for the Service.

The VVP Programme has delivered investment of £8.3 million to date supported by Welsh Government support of more than £6.5 million. The match funding levered in will also significantly increase by the time the projects are complete. The VVP Programme has achieved significant outcomes across the projects supported including – more than 100 jobs created / accommodated, 10 business premises improved with 1934 m² of business floorspace created / refurbished, 30 housing units created / brought back into use, 310 households with improved energy performance following installation of energy efficiency measures. These outcomes will significantly increase when the VVP Programme projects are complete. The projects are:

- From Vacant to Viable – Creating Homes Above Retail Premises
- Homestep Plus – Homing in on the Empties
- Heat and Save Ponty
- Pontypridd Hub / YMCA
- Lady Windsor Colliery Site
- Pontypridd Townscape Enhancement Programme
- Taff Vale Redevelopment

Houses in Multiple Occupation – Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).

There has been increasing concerns over the proliferation of Houses of Multiple Ownership (HMO's) in the Treforest ward over the past 25 years, in direct correlation with the

expansion of the University of South Wales (previously University of Glamorgan). This has been mirrored in many other University Cities and Towns around the country and has partly been the reasoning behind the changes in planning legislation (February 2016) to give Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) the opportunity to formally control proposals for HMO's within their communities. Residents of such properties, particularly students are often transient, with a high turnover of population within these communities.

In recent years, the perceived negative effects of HMO's on the community of Treforest have been increasingly raised by the local, permanent residential population. Regeneration and Planning have also had difficulty in refusing what they consider to be inappropriate applications for HMO's, with most being overturned at appeal.

Accordingly, a research project was undertaken by officers to gain an understanding of the extent and depth of the problems associated with HMO's across Rhondda Cynon Taf and in particular the disproportionate concentration of HMO's in the Treforest ward. This concluded that certain impacts can be managed and mitigated by the Local Authority, albeit with resource implications. This would include parking, refuse handling and estate agents' signs. Similarly, all HMO's would require a license that set out further requirements and standards to be upheld.

However, even the best managed areas of HMO would still have a substantially different character compared to residential areas with settled populations. It was further identified that Treforest accounts for 94% of the HMOs within Rhondda Cynon Taf and 32% of all households within the ward are in HMO. When compared to the Council's average of 1.3% and the national average of 2.8%, there is clearly an issue with high concentration of HMO's within Treforest.

Following on from that work, officers have undertaken further research into the reasoning behind, and the content of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG's) that have been prepared to address the issues associated with HMO's across Wales and UK. This evidence and research has now been brought together to formulate a Draft SPG that will, if adopted, sit under the Council's Local Development Plan. This SPG will play a significant role in assessing applications for planning permission in relation to HMO's and informing the decisions on them. The SPG will also provide valuable clarity for applicants, objectors and occupiers associated with HMO applications and properties.

Treforest Industrial Estate and Parc Nantgarw Local Development Order 2017 (LDO)

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. This includes the preparation of a Local Development Order (LDO), to create a simplified planning process within the boundaries of the Estate, including Parc Nantgarw and Upper Boat Business Park. The LDO permits a range of defined uses on development sites and within existing units, and physical works to and around buildings.

The Service continued with the production of the LDO, having further discussions with the flood risk consultants employed by the Service and Natural Resources Wales. This was to ensure that the LDO could be taken forward in a way that appropriately responds to and manages risk of flooding, as part of the area sits within a flood plain.

The above discussions were concluded. A final version of the LDO was produced and sent to the Welsh Government for their approval, in line with statutory procedures. The Welsh Government raised no objection to the LDO.

The Council's Cabinet then took the decision to adopt the LDO in July, and it was formally adopted on 8th August 2017. It is now available for use by businesses on the Estate and those who wish to relocate there. The adoption of the LDO was publicised by email and by flyers and details of it are on the Council's website.

The LDO is a legal document and definitively identifies which uses and building operations are exempt from the requirement for formal planning permission subject to a series of clearly defined conditions. Developers will still need to apply for a "Letter of Compliance", and the aim is to send these out within two weeks of the application being made. The LDO lasts for 10 years, and will be monitored on an annual basis against a series of indicators to assess whether it is successful.

The LDO will be accompanied by a 'User Guide' setting out the parameters of permitted development, and showing how they apply to different parts of the Estate. This is currently in production and will be published later this year.

System upgrade

In a continuing drive to improve the service and to streamline processes, the department, along with our ICT colleagues, undertook a review of the current planning system.

The current system, although a "supported" product will over time become antiquated and cumbersome, highlighting the need to move to a more scalable and enterprise driven system with closer integration with its EDRMS and LLPG capabilities. This will mean that the Council's ability to exploit Digital opportunities around system integration, workflow and more Agile Working maybe exploited.

The Service has now committed to a wholesale upgrade of the back office system which will be undertaken in late 2017, early 2018.

The commitment of the Council and the Service to invest in a system upgrade shows clear intention to continue to improve and develop the service whilst realising long-term benefits in term of integration and automation, efficiencies and mobile/agile working.

- **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).**

Within the year the Service has considered a number of major significant planning applications, with some reaching the point of formal determination and some still in the system awaiting determination.

These application schemes represent significant financial investments within the county borough, both from the private and public sector. The considered schemes include a

number of school site re-developments and new schools, as part of the Council's 21st century schools programme; the redevelopment of the former Taff Vale Shopping Precinct site in Pontypridd town centre; significant sized (400+ units) residential schemes (Cefn yr Hendy, Miskin); and, the proposed expansion of Hanson's road stone quarry at Graig y Hesg, Glyncoch, Pontypridd.

The processing and consideration of such applications are often very time intensive in terms of officer resource and are usually relatively high profile thereby requiring timely actions and careful management through the development management process.

- **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). For each of these:
 - Have they been implemented?
 - If no, what are the obstacles and what is being done to overcome them?
 - If yes, have positive changes been observed as a result?
 - Have any secondary or new issues emerged to be addressed?
 - What are the next steps, if any?

Last year's APR identified three specific areas for improvement. These were:

Recognising that the Council does not have a 5 year land supply prioritising the housing delivery objectives initiative to maximise the amount of new homes coming forward in the County

Prioritised improvement in the handling of major applications to find further gains in dealing with them in the timeliest manner.

Procuring a back office system that will allow us to exploit mobile and agile working to its greatest extent and identify efficiencies in the way that applications are processed. This will include making sure public access to information is as wide as possible and in a bilingual form.

In terms of housing, (and as discussed elsewhere in the report) there were very encouraging returns in the volume of completions in the year and work on initiatives such as the plot shop and the use of Council resources is at an advanced stage.

In terms of major applications we determined 27 major planning applications in 2016-17, none of which were subject to an EIA. Each application took, on average, 170 days (24 weeks) to determine.

Last year the APR document statistics provided by WG indicated the Service performance against this indicator as being 346 days (we noted, however, that it considered performance, taking into account the way of measuring the time taken to determine applications introduced in the Dear CPO letter issued by Welsh Government on 3 November 2014, was in fact 204 days).

Notwithstanding the fact that 204 days was above the then Welsh average this indicator continued to be targeted for improvement and performance improved last year with the

result that performance of 170 days is now significantly better than the Welsh average of 250 days.

The percentage of major applications approved in time has also improved from 38% to 59%. However, given the significance of major applications, improving performance on these large proposals will still remain a priority.

In terms of the back office system, The Service has now committed to a wholesale upgrade of the Idox system which will be undertaken in late 2017, early 2018, with a view to making the planning process more efficient, establishing a sound platform for agile working and allowing an enhanced digital service to our customers.

- **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 will play a leading role in promoting and bringing forward the Strategic Opportunity Areas described earlier in the report which will deliver regional employment and housing delivery opportunities in the wider context of the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. This is seen as a high priority for the Service in the forthcoming year.

In the coming year we Service will continue to prioritise major applications and look to find further gains in dealing with them in the timeliest manner. It is anticipated that continued dialogue with developers and bodies, such as the Developer Forum, will lead to a greater use of initiatives such as a live decision notice drop-box, whereby early identification of potential conditions can be highlighted and subsequent actions in addressing those issues be monitored and recorded by all parties (LPA, applicant/developer, agent etc..).

The Service will look to address its performance in respect of success in defending planning appeals. It recognises that this year its performance has slipped markedly from being above the Welsh national average last year to being well below this year. This fall is largely explained by a particular issue in respect of the consideration of change of use from class C3 dwellings to Class C4 HMO's in a single Ward (Treforest) within RCT. The Service is actively working towards the adoption of an SPG document which will give detailed guidance in this area. Changes to the structure and size of the Council's Planning committee are expected to enhance its effectiveness and there is a structured programme of Member Training in place.

WHAT SERVICE USERS THINK

In 2016-17 we conducted a customer satisfaction survey aimed at assessing the views of people that had received a planning application decision during the year.

The survey was sent to 377 people, 8% of whom submitted a whole or partial response. The majority of responses (60%) were from local agents. 10% were from members of the public. 17% 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.

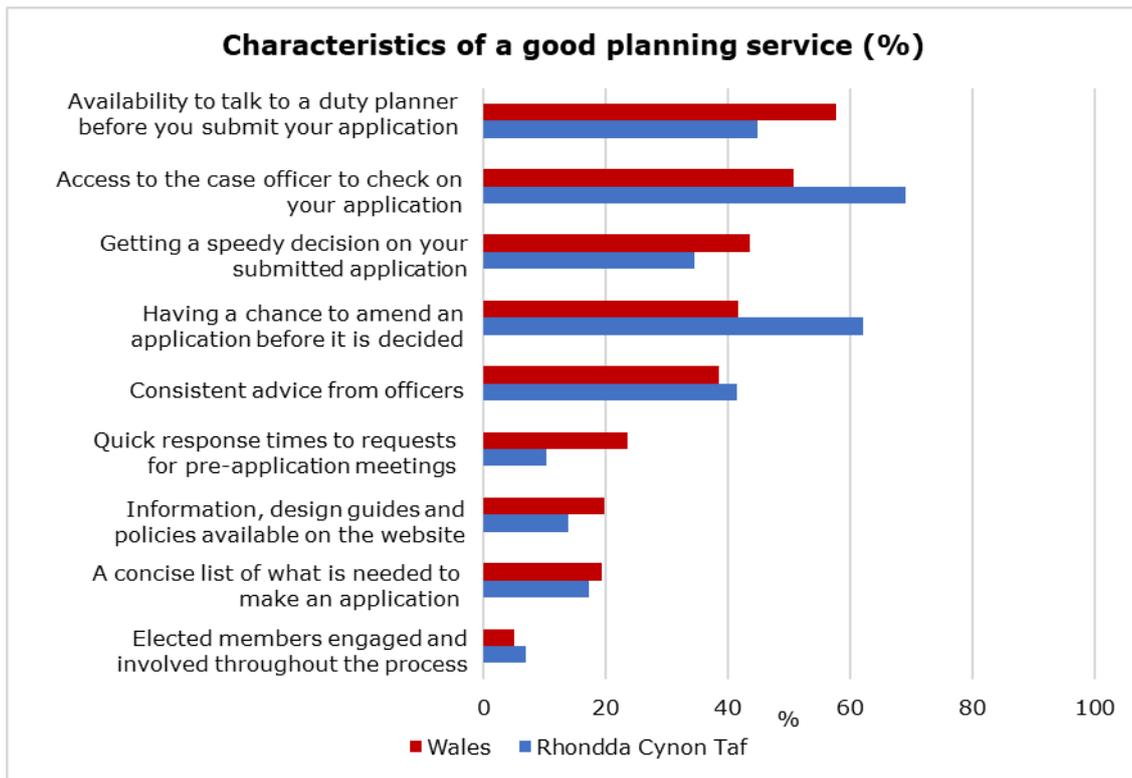
Table 1 shows the percentage of respondents that selected either 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree' for each statement for both our planning authority and Wales.

Table 1: Percentage of respondents who agreed with each statement, 2016-17

	%	
Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA	Wales
The LPA enforces its planning rules fairly and consistently	59	52
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	81	62
The LPA gives help throughout, including with conditions	59	52
The LPA responded promptly when they had questions	66	61
They were listened to about their application	66	59
They were kept informed about their application	52	51
They were satisfied overall with how the LPA handled their application	69	61

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 the percentage of respondents that chose each characteristic as one of their three selections. For us, 'having access to the case officer to check on applications' was the most popular choice.

Figure 1: Characteristics of a good planning service, Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA, 2016-17



Comments received include:

- “RCT always a pleasure to deal with. Officers are available, respond to requests, give timely advice, answer straight questions with straight answers, give you the impression that they want to work to make development happen.”
- “I feel that the department are helpful and eager to provide a good and effective service.”
- “On the whole the Planning system is fair and just but I feel there are too many people and bodies involved in the Planning process. I was told only this week that the Case Officers are not to override their colleagues’ decisions from the Highways Ecology Environmental and Conservation Departments. Surely the Planning Officer should be having the final say on the Application and not just heading a team of individuals who very often act on their own individual opinions. It seems to be with all the Authorities I deal with that the Case Officer also has a once a week Team meeting to discuss their Applications with colleagues thereby prolonging decision making. Let's have the Case Officer making the decision and not a Committee of Planning Officers, in other words lets cut out the unnecessary red tape.”

OUR PERFORMANCE 2016-17

This section details our performance in 2016-17. 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

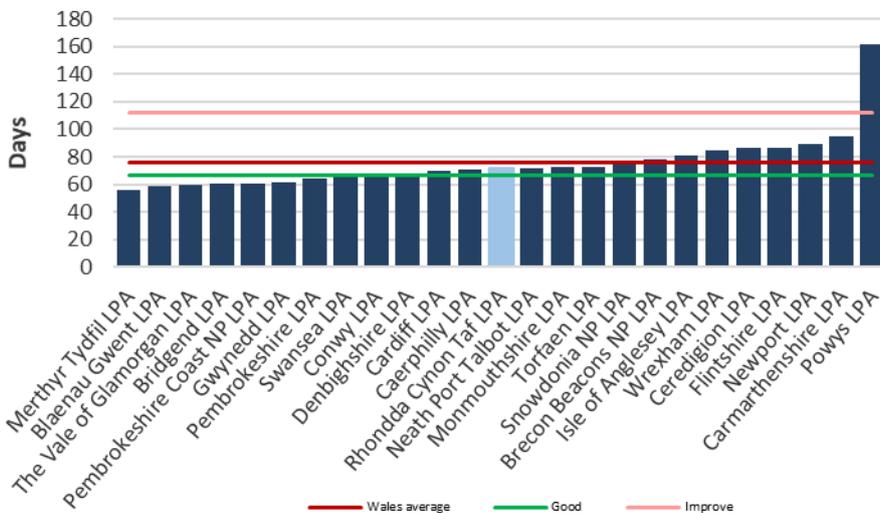
As at 31 March 2017, we were one of 22 LPAs that had a current development plan in place. We are required to submit an Annual Monitoring Report in October 2017. This document has been prepared.

During the APR period we had 1.5 years of housing land supply identified, making us one of 19 Welsh LPAs without the required 5 years supply.

Efficiency

In 2016-17 we determined 1171 planning applications, each taking, on average, 71 days (10 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.

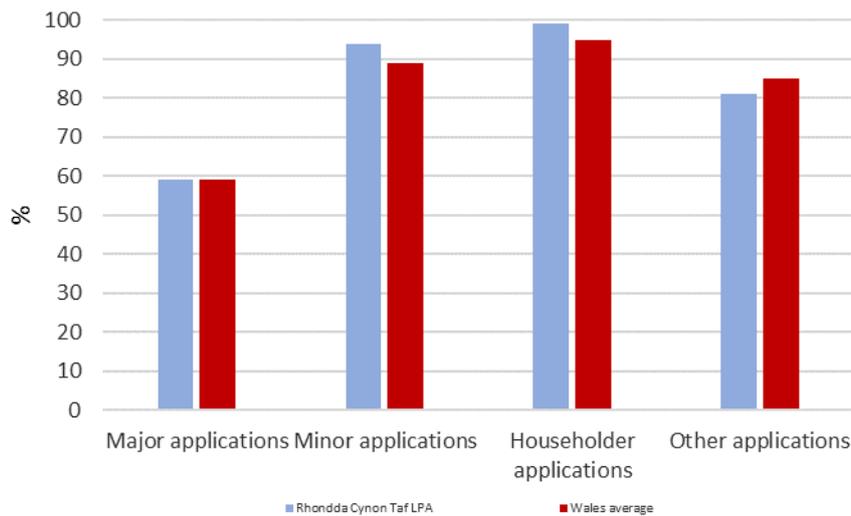
Figure 2: Average time taken (days) to determine applications, 2016-17



90% of all planning applications were determined within the required timescales. This compared to 87% across Wales and we were one of 20 LPAs that had reached the 80% target.

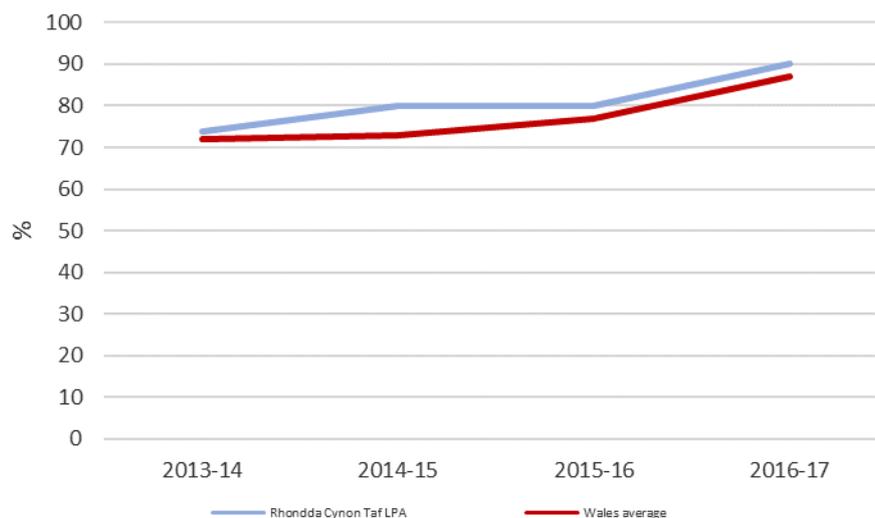
Figure 3 shows the percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales across the four main types of application for our LPA and Wales. It shows that we determined 99% of householder applications within the required timescales.

Figure 3: Percentage of planning applications determined within the required timescales, by type, 2016-17



Between 2015-16 and 2016-17, as Figure 4 shows, the percentage of planning applications we determined within the required timescales increased from 80%. Wales also saw an increase this year.

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



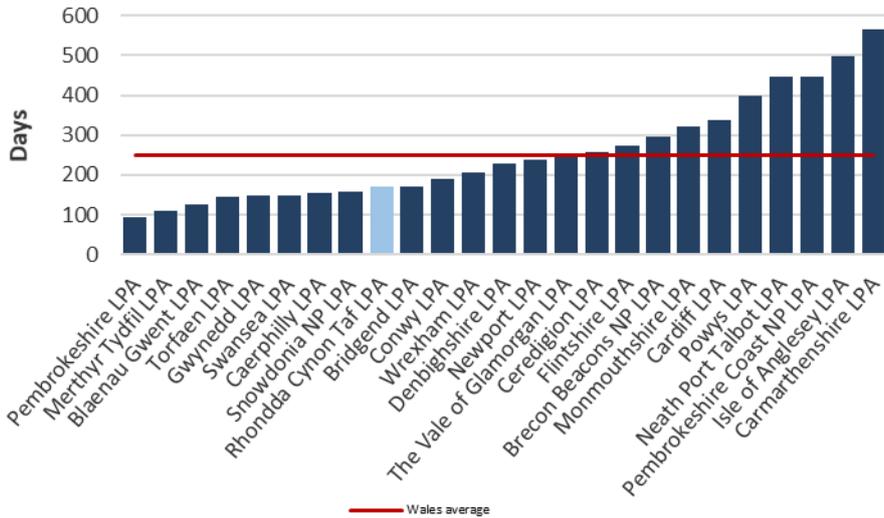
Over the same period:

- The number of applications we received decreased; and
- The number of applications we determined decreased.

Major applications

We determined 27 major planning applications in 2016-17, none of which were subject to an EIA. Each application took, on average, 170 days (24 weeks) to determine. As Figure 5 shows, this was shorter than the Wales average of 250 days (36 weeks).

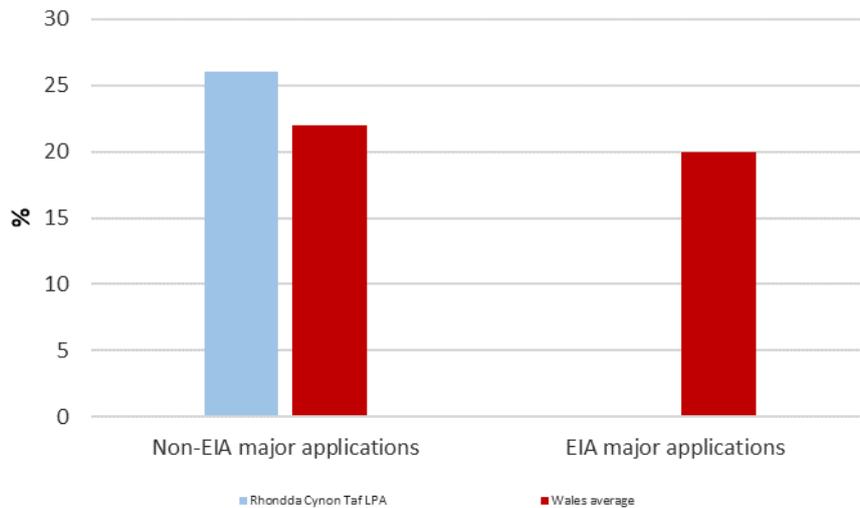
Figure 5: Average time (days) taken to determine a major application, 2016-17



59% of these major applications were determined within the agreed timescales, compared to 59% across Wales.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales by the type of major application. 26% of our 'standard' major applications i.e. those not requiring an EIA, were determined within the statutory 8 week deadline.

Figure 6: Percentage of Major applications determined within the statutory timescales during the year, by type, 2016-17

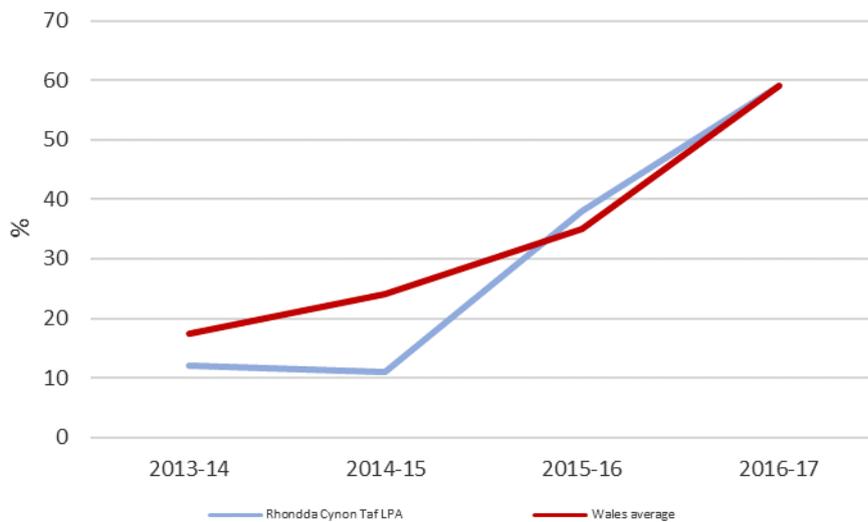


In addition we determined 82% of major applications that were subject to a PPA in the agreed timescales during the year.

Since 2015-16 the percentage of major applications determined within the required timescales had increased from 38%. In contrast, the number of major applications determined decreased 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 93% to 94%;
- The percentage of householder applications determined within the required timescales increased from 98% to 99%; and
- The percentage of other applications determined within required timescales increased from 56% to 81%.

Quality

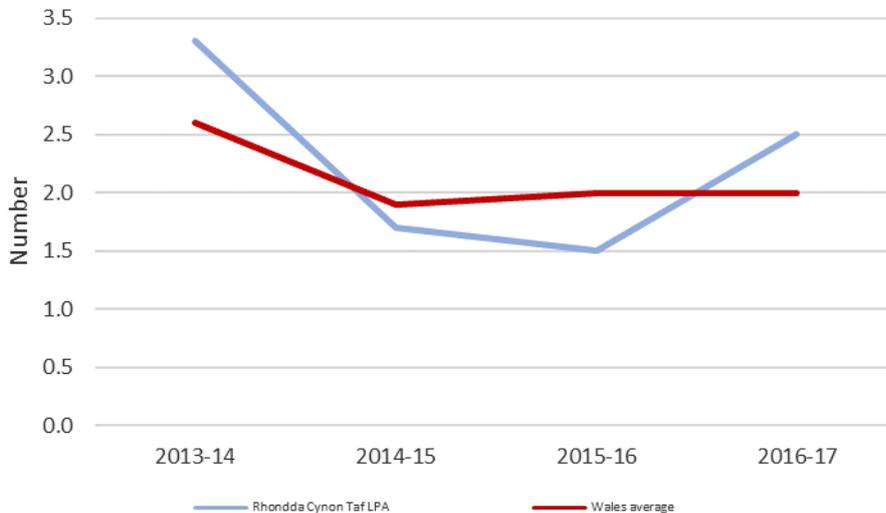
In 2016-17, our Planning Committee made 89 planning application decisions during the year, which equated to 8% of all planning applications determined. Across Wales 6% of all planning application decisions were made by planning committee.

11% of these member-made decisions went against officer advice. This compared to 11% of member-made decisions across Wales. This equated to 0.9% of all planning application decisions going against officer advice; 0.7% across Wales.

In 2016-17 we received 32 appeals against our planning decisions, which equated to 2.5 appeals for every 100 applications received. Across Wales 2 appeals were received for every 100 applications.

Figure 8 shows how the volume of appeals received has changed since 2015-16 and how this compares to Wales.

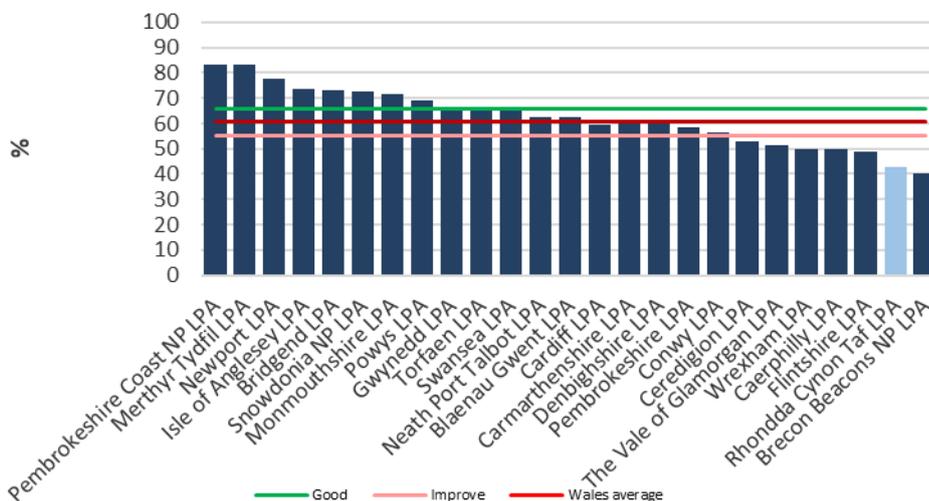
Figure 8: Number of appeals received per 100 planning applications



In 2016-17 we approved 92% of planning applications. This compares to 91% across Wales.

Of the 28 appeals that were decided during the year, 43% were dismissed. As Figure 9 shows, this was the second lowest percentage of appeals dismissed in Wales and was below the 55% threshold.

Figure 9: Percentage of appeals dismissed, 2016-17



During 2016-17 we had 3 applications for costs at a section 78 appeal upheld, making us one of the 11 LPA's to have at least one such application upheld in the year.

Engagement

We are:

- one of 24 LPAs that allowed members of the public to address the Planning Committee; and
- one of 20 LPAs that had an online register of planning applications.

As Table 2 shows, 81% of respondents to our 2016-17 customer satisfaction survey agreed that the LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application.

Table 2: Feedback from our 2016-17 customer satisfaction survey

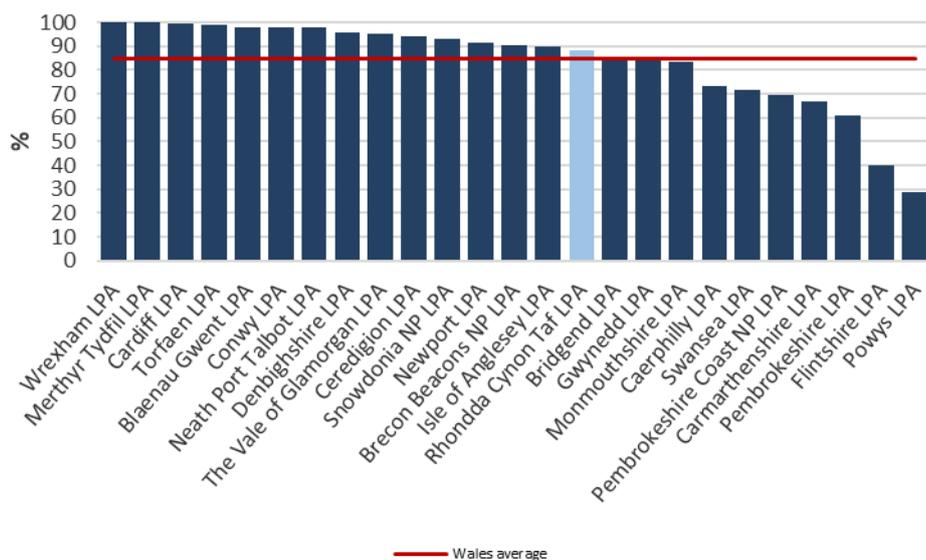
	%	
Percentage of respondents who agreed that:	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA	Wales
The LPA gave good advice to help them make a successful application	81	62
They were listened to about their application	66	59

Enforcement

In 2016-17 we investigated 390 enforcement cases, which equated to 1.6 per 1,000 population. This compared to 1.9 enforcement cases investigated per 1,000 population across Wales. We took, on average, 21 days to investigate each enforcement case.

We investigated 88% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. Across Wales 85% were investigated within 84 days. Figure 10 shows the percentage of enforcement cases that were investigated within 84 days across all Welsh LPAs.

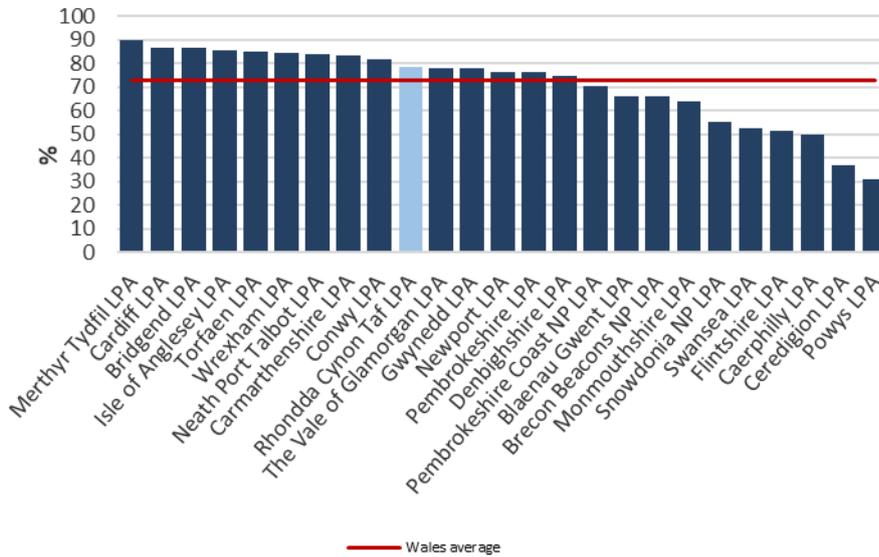
Figure 10: Percentage of enforcement cases investigated within 84 days, 2016-17



Over the same period, we resolved 282 enforcement cases, taking, on average, 121 days to resolve each case.

79% of this enforcement action was taken within 180 days from the start of the case. As Figure 11 shows this compared to 73% of enforcement cases resolved within 180 days across Wales.

Figure 11: Percentage of enforcement cases resolved in 180 days, 2016-17



ANNEX A - PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

OVERVIEW

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Plan making			
Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	Yes		No
LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	<12	13-17	18+
Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	Yes		No
The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	>5		<5
Efficiency			
Percentage of "major" applications determined within time periods required	Not set	Not set	Not set
Average time taken to determine "major" applications in days	Not set	Not set	Not set

WALES AVERAGE	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA LAST YEAR	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
58	N/A	N/A
Yes	Yes	Yes
2.9	2.4	1.5
59	38	59
250	346	170

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	>80	60.1-79.9	<60
Average time taken to determine all applications in days	<67	67-111	112+
Quality			
Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	<5	5.1-8.9	9+
Percentage of appeals dismissed	>66	55.1-65.9	<55
Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	0	1	2+
Engagement			
Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	Yes		No

WALES AVERAGE	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA LAST YEAR	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA THIS YEAR
87	80	90
76	74	71
11	14	11
61	67	43
0	0	3
Yes	Yes	Yes

MEASURE	GOOD	FAIR	IMPROVE
Does the local planning authority have an officer on duty to provide advice to members of the public?	Yes		No
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
Enforcement			
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
Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	Not set	Not set	Not set
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
Average time taken to take enforcement action	Not set	Not set	Not set

WALES AVERAGE	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA LAST YEAR	Rhondda Cynon Taf LPA THIS YEAR
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes
Enforcement		
85	93	88
74	No Data	21
73	70	79
201	113	121

SECTION 1 – PLAN MAKING

Indicator	01. Is there a current Development Plan in place that is within the plan period?	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
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)

Authority’s performance	Yes
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>There is an adopted plan in place which is actively monitored against its performance and delivery and kept under constant review. The form of any review or replacement development plan is contingent on the future of Strategic Planning at a regional level.</p>	

Indicator	02. LDP preparation deviation from the dates specified in the original Delivery Agreement, in months	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
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

Authority’s performance	N/A
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above. No further comment</p>	

Indicator	03. Annual Monitoring Reports produced following LDP adoption	
“Good”		“Improvement needed”
An AMR is due, and has been prepared		An AMR is due, and has not been prepared

Authority’s performance	Yes
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above. The Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP was adopted on 2 March 2011. The Council is about to submit to Welsh Government the sixth AMR since the LDP was adopted.</p>	

Indicator	04. The local planning authority's current housing land supply in years	
"Good"		"Improvement needed"
The authority has a housing land supply of more than 5 years		The authority has a housing land supply of less than 5 years

Authority's performance	1.5
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>During 2016-2017, a total of 716 new dwellings were constructed in Rhondda Cynon Taf including 236 new affordable homes. This takes the total number of new dwellings constructed in the County Borough since 2006, (the technical start of the plan period), to 5,361. Applications for a further 569 dwellings were permitted through this past year, contributing to a total of 7,589 dwellings permitted since the adoption of the LDP in 2011.</p> <p>Although these substantial figures indicate a continued positive growth in the house building industry in Rhondda Cynon Taf since the adoption of the LDP, the build rates do not meet those identified in the LDP. As indicated in our Joint Housing Land Availability Study (2016) we have a reduced housing land supply of 1.3 years based on the residual method of calculation.</p> <p>Considering recent and longer standing permissions, the housing targets are not an issue of immediate concern. It is however acknowledged in the LDP AMR that housing allocations, particularly in the Northern Strategy Area are not quite coming forward at the rate they were anticipated when the LDP was originally prepared. The Council has been proactive in seeking methods of intervention to boost the delivery of housing in RCT. This includes the unique Developer Forum, Strategy for Enabling Housing Development and further work to identify the viability of our allocated sites and then identify methods of financial leveraging to enable their development.</p>	

SECTION 2 - EFFICIENCY

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

Authority's performance	59
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>This indicator was targeted last year for improvement and performance improved significantly from 38% to 59%. However, given the significance of major applications, improving performance on these large proposals will still remain a priority.</p>	

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

Authority's performance	170
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>Last year the APR document statistics provided by WG indicated the Service performance against this indicator as being 346 days (the LPA noted, however, that it considered performance, taking into account the way of measuring the time taken to determine applications introduced in the Dear CPO letter issued by Welsh Government on 3 November 2014, was in fact 204 days.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the fact that 204 days was above the then Welsh average this indicator continued to be targeted for improvement and performance again improved last year with the result that performance of 170 days is now significantly better than the Welsh average of 250 days.</p>	

Indicator	07. Percentage of all applications determined within time periods required	
“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

Authority’s performance	90
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>Performance in the last year has improved from 80% to 90%, with the consequence that the LPA now performs above the Welsh average of 87% against this indicator</p>	

Indicator	08. Average time taken to determine all applications in days	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Less than 67 days	Between 67 and 111 days	112 days or more

Authority’s performance	71
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>Whilst performance has improved slightly in respect of this indicator, from 74 to 71 days it is hoped that continued improvement will enable the Service to fall into the less than 67 days ‘Good’ range next year.</p>	

SECTION 3 - QUALITY

Indicator	09. Percentage of Member made decisions against officer advice	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Less than 5% of decisions	Between 5% and 9% of decisions	9% or more of decisions

Authority’s performance	11%
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>Changes to the structure and size of the Council’s Planning committee are expected to enhance its effectiveness and there is a structured programme of Member Training in place.</p>	

Indicator	10. Percentage of appeals dismissed	
“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

Authority’s performance	43
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>Of the 28 appeal decisions issued in the 2016/17 year 13 were dismissed, which equates to 46% (not 43%). However, it is recognised that this figure is still indicative that significant improvement is needed.</p> <p>The performance can be largely explained by the fact that of the 15 allowed appeals 9 were as a consequence of either Member decisions against officer advice and/or decisions involving the specific issue of planning applications involving the change of use from Class C3 dwellings to Class C4 HMOs in the Treforest Ward of RCT.</p> <p>In recognition of the need to secure improvement against this indicator the Service is working towards the adoption of specific SPG regarding student development and the proliferation of HMOs in Treforest. In addition, it is anticipated that changes to the structure and make-up of the Development Control Committee, together with an on-going programme of Member training will reduce the number of cases in which Members take a</p>	

decision contrary to officer advice.

Indicator	11. Applications for costs at Section 78 appeal upheld in the reporting period	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
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

Authority’s performance	3
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>It is recognised that in 3 cases an award of costs was made against the LPA. However, one case arose out of an appeal case that was a Member decision against officer advice and the award of costs was partial (on the issue of the highway/parking related reason for refusal); and one of the other two cases was as a result of an administrative error on the LPAs part, which resulted in an adjournment of a Hearing.</p> <p>Procedures have been introduced to prevent the administrative issues re-occurring.</p>	

SECTION 4 – ENGAGEMENT

Indicator	12. Does the local planning authority allow members of the public to address the Planning Committee?	
“Good”		“Improvement needed”
Members of the public are able to address the Planning Committee		Members of the public are not able to address the Planning Committee

Authority’s performance	Yes
Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.	
<p>The Council allows each speaker 5 minutes to address the Committee and there is no limit on the number of speakers.</p>	

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

Authority’s performance	Yes
Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.	
<p>There is an officer on hand to provide face to face and telephone advice to customers between the hours of 9 and 4:30</p>	

Indicator	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)?	
"Good"	"Fair"	"Improvement needed"
All documents are available online	Only the planning application details are available online, and access to other documents must be sought directly	No planning application information is published online

Authority's performance	Yes
<p style="color: red;">Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>The website has full public access enabling members of the public to view the planning application details, plans, supporting documents and consultation responses online during the course of the application.</p> <p>Applications are updated during the course of the application ensuring the application is accurate and on issuing the decision notice the Conditions of Approval/Reasons for Refusal are uploaded to the website to further inform the public of the decision details.</p> <p>In addition, the public can register an interest in an application via the website to track an application and can submit comments online.</p>	

SECTION 5 – ENFORCEMENT

Indicator	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	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority’s performance	88
<p style="color: red;">Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>Last year we investigated 73% of these enforcement cases within 84 days. This year the figure has improved significantly to 93%</p>	

Indicator	16. Average time taken to investigate enforcement cases	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority’s performance	21
<p style="color: red;">Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>Despite assurances from our back office system provider, the necessary changes to allow us to collect this data were not made until half way through the year. This data is now being collected and will be reported next year.</p>	

Indicator	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)	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority’s performance	79
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>Percentage of cases resolved via a planning application and/or enforcement action has improved by 9% compared with last year.</p>	

Indicator	18. Average time taken to take enforcement action	
“Good”	“Fair”	“Improvement needed”
Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked	Target to be benchmarked

Authority’s performance	121
<p>Detailed response to performance against the indicator above.</p> <p>There is a slight dip on last year’s figure but this can be accounted for by the serious nature of some of the enforcement cases that were dealt with in the year and the outcomes of the action taken.</p>	

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.

Authority's returns	[How complete were your responses?] Fully completed Data.
<i>[What are the reasons for missing data?]</i> <i>[What actions are being taken to provide full returns?]</i> <i>[When will complete data returns be provided?]</i>	

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

Refused (square metres)	
Authority's data	0

The Council approved a planning application on allocation NSA 14.1 (Former Chubb Factory) on the 16th May 2016 for a mixed-use development that includes B1 uses. The application is however subject to a section 106 agreement. Works also continued on NSA 14.2 (5th Avenue, Hirwaun) with the implementation of its consent for a sustainable waste resource recovery and energy production plant. The Council also granted a number of permissions throughout 2016-2017 for industrial development totalling 39,905m². These were mainly comprised of extensions to existing operations within the Borough, as well as changes of use and a small number of new builds. Some of these included a new B2 unit at Llantrisant Business Park totalling 2,200m² gross industrial space and a B1 office-led development totalling 12,675m² at the former Taff Vale Precinct site in Pontypridd. The former Sogefi site in Llantrisant has also received planning permission for a bus depot which forms the first phase of a complete redevelopment of the site as Edwards Coaches Headquarters. The relocation of the company to a larger site ensures the continued growth of a highly successful, local business and major employer in RCT. Whilst not granted on allocations, these permissions are testament to the recovering economy and the willingness of companies to invest in RCT.

Indicator	SD2. Planning permission granted for renewable and low carbon energy development during the year.
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Granted permission (number of applications)	
Authority's data	€ 1

Granted permission (MW energy generation)	
Authority's data	5

During 2016-2017 the Council granted permission for a solar energy farm at Penrhiw Cradoc Farm, Mountain Ash. The scheme which has a 5MW generation capacity has already been installed.

90 MW of wind energy capacity was also installed in 2016-17 within the TAN 8 Strategic Search Area F (SSA F) for wind energy, in the Rhondda Cynon Taf section of Pen y Cymoedd wind farm. The total renewable energy capacity installed in SSA F in 2016-2017 is therefore 95 MW. It should also be noted however that a further 12.5 MW of wind energy capacity was delivered outside SSA F, at Mynachdy Farm, Ynysybwl and at Mynydd Portref extension. Additionally, a 5MW solar farm was constructed at Berthllwyd farm, Penycoedcae.

The Coed Morgannwg SSA F is now up to 409.5 MW capacity (total of planned and operational turbine capacities). This is well in excess of the original TAN 8 indicative capacity target for SSA F (290 MW), and not far short of the revised capacity (430 MW).

Indicator	SD3. The number of dwellings granted planning permission during the year.
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Market housing (number of units)	
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Authority's data	328 384
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Affordable housing (number of units)	
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Authority's data	176 185
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The figure above for 'dwellings granted planning permission is incorrect.

Final analysis of data for the Annual Monitoring Report of the Local Development Plan highlighted further housing permissions over the year, as shown above. 384 market houses were granted planning permission during 2016-2017, with 185 affordable dwellings granted permission within the same period. Therefore, the total number of dwellings approved for the 2016-2017 monitoring period is 569.

Indicator	SD4. Planning permission granted and refused for development in C1 and C2 floodplain areas during the year.
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Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that DID NOT meet all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission	
Authority's data	0

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	
Authority's data	0

Number of residential units (and also hectares of non-residential units) that MET all TAN 15 tests which were GRANTED permission	
Authority's data	47 37

No planning permission was granted for development in a C1 or C2 flood risk zone that did not meet all TAN 15 tests. Additionally, 18 permissions that were granted within a C1 flood risk zone met all TAN 15 tests and totalled an area of 3.29 hectares. Likewise 19 permissions that were granted within a C2 flood risk zone met all TAN 15 tests totalled 6.78 hectares.

Indicator	SD5. The area of land (ha) granted planning permission for new development on previously developed land and greenfield land during the year.
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Previously developed land (hectares)	
Authority's data	30

Greenfield land (hectares)	
Authority's data	18

During 2016-2017, planning permission was granted for the development of 17.2 hectares of greenfield land and open space which is not allocated in the LDP. It should however be noted that 11 hectares of this permitted greenfield development was for a renewable energy, solar farm scheme. Additionally during the same period, 67.4%, or 36.2 hectares of a total of 53.75 hectares of development permitted, was on previously developed land or within existing buildings. Final analysis of the LDP AMR monitoring results highlighted a small discrepancy with the figures above.

Indicator	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.
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Open space lost (hectares)	
Authority's data	80 0.93

Open space gained (hectares)	
Authority's data	0 0.11

The figure above for 'open space lost' is incorrect.

The Council lost a total of 0.93 hectares during the 2016-2017 monitoring year, with 0.11 hectares gained within the same timeframe.

Indicator	SD7. The total financial contributions (£) agreed from new development granted planning permission during the quarter for the provision of community infrastructure.
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Gained via Section 106 agreements (£)	
Authority's data	£313,603

Gained via Community Infrastructure Levy (£)	
Authority's data	£84,731

The figures above detail the amount that the Council has received via the Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements throughout 2016-2017.