

The Planning Service

Corporate and Business Plans

2006/07 -
2007/08

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Planning Service's Corporate and Business Plans for the period from 2006/07 to 2008/09.

The Agency is facing a challenging programme of work in the year ahead. Our main areas of focus will be to continue to improve the service we provide; to progress reform and modernisation of the planning process; and to prepare for the implementation of the Review of Public Administration. In addition to these initiatives, we are aiming to take forward an ambitious Area Plans and policies work programme.

A key aim of the *Planning to Deliver* programme is to deliver a simpler, speedier and more accessible planning system. While we have made significant progress, work remains to be done to further streamline the development control process. In particular, the new IT system being delivered through the ePIC project will form a key strand of our modernisation process in 2006/07.

The outcome of the Review of Public Administration has added a new dimension to our reform agenda. It will have a fundamental impact on the Planning Service as an organisation, not only in transferring the bulk of our functions to the new local authorities but also in creating an entirely new planning system for Northern Ireland. There will be new roles and responsibilities for all those involved in the planning process and this will create a huge volume of work over the period up to April 2009, when the changes are due to take place.

The Planning Service remains committed to achieving the highest standard of public service. These Plans set out how we will work towards fulfilment of that commitment over the coming years.



DAVID FERGUSON
Chief Executive

The Planning Context

Priorities and Budget 2006-2008

The Government's priorities and associated budget allocations are set out in *Priorities and Budget 2006-2008*, which was published in December 2005. At the heart of these priorities lies a commitment to reform and modernise public services. In the Planning Service, our commitment to modernising our service and the overall system is being taken forward through the *Planning to Deliver* programme, which includes the process changes detailed in the *Modernising Planning Processes* Implementation Plan.

Priorities and Budget 2006-08 also contains Public Service Agreements (PSAs) drawn up by Departments. The Department of the Environment's PSA sets out the Department's targets and objectives for the 2006/07 business year and includes those of the Planning Service.

Department of the Environment Corporate & Business Plan

To support the Government's *Priorities and Budget*, each Department prepares its own Corporate and Business Plan. The DoE Corporate and Business Plan sets out the actions to be taken to ensure delivery of the Department's targets and objectives for the 2006/07 business year as well as the reforms that will be undertaken during that time.

Planning to Deliver

Planning to Deliver has been a major programme for change to improve processes, systems and culture. The Planning Service faces many challenges, but through reform and modernisation we can improve how we address these issues across all our business areas and improve our service for now and in preparation for the future, in particular with reference to the Review of Public Administration. The changes that have already taken place and the further projects to be completed and implemented, in particular our new leading edge e-planning system, will continue to have a significant impact this year and beyond.

Review of Public Administration

The Planning Service has established an RPA implementation team. Over the next twelve months the team will be focusing on developing the necessary legislative framework that will underpin the planning system post-RPA and see the bulk of the work currently undertaken by the Agency transferred to the new local authorities. The implementation of the RPA represents a major challenge to the Agency and will result in the most significant restructuring of the planning system in over thirty years. The Agency is committed to ensuring that over the next three years of implementation work we will continue to deliver against our service delivery targets and objectives and we will work with staff representatives and local authorities to ensure as smooth a transfer as possible.

The Planning Service

Corporate Plan

**2006/07 -
2008/09**

1. Introduction

1.1 Our Aim, Vision and Values

Our aim is to improve the quality of life of the people of Northern Ireland by planning and managing development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment.

Our vision is of an organisation which:

- earns respect and trust;
- delivers high quality and timely decisions and services;
- is open and in touch;
- works together;
- values its people;
- works with and learns from others;
- makes the best use of resources.

Our values are:

- integrity and honesty;
- objectivity;
- political impartiality;
- fairness;
- professionalism;
- courtesy.

1.2 The Planning Service

The Planning Service is an agency of the Department of the Environment. The three key business areas are:

- the development control process (the system for dealing with individual planning applications), including enforcement;
- formulation of planning policy for Northern Ireland;
- preparation of development plans.

The purpose of the planning system is to regulate development and land use in the public interest. The planning functions are set out in the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 (as amended).

2. Our Targets and Objectives

In support of its aim, the Agency has set a number of key medium term strategic objectives which are reflected in the corporate plan. The business plan provides additional detail on the actions that will be taken to deliver on these commitments.

2.1 Public Service Agreement Targets

The key Ministerial target for the Planning Service, as reflected in the Department of the Environment's Public Service Agreement (PSA), is:

By 31 March 2008, to support sustainable development and the provision of major infrastructure through:

- increasing the proportion of Northern Ireland covered by adopted or draft area plans to 78% of the land area by 31 March 2008 from 47% at 31 March 2005.
- bringing forward by 31 March 2008 a further 9 Planning Policy Statements (PPSs), including a number of revisions to existing PPSs, in draft or final form from the position at 31 March 2005.
- by 31 March 2008 improving the time taken to process planning applications to decision or withdrawal against 2004/05 performance, as follows:
 - 60% of Major Applications processed in 23 weeks (25 weeks 2004/05) - an 8% improvement
 - 70% of Intermediate Applications processed in 31 Weeks (33 weeks 2004/05) - a 6% improvement
 - 80 % of Minor Applications processed in 18 Weeks (21 Weeks 2004/05) - a 14% improvement.
- By 31 March 2008 completing implementation of the Planning Service Reform and Modernisation programme, including the actions flowing from the Modernising Planning Processes Implementation Plan and delivery of ePIC, the Service's e-Planning system.

In the PSA Technical Notes we have reflected the fact that the PSA target is similar to that set by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister but tailored to reflect the Northern Ireland circumstances. The actions to be taken forward to ensure achievement of the target link closely to two of the four Ministerial priorities for the 2006-2008 period, namely infrastructure development and efficiency reform.

2.2 Other Key Targets

In addition to the PSA target, we have also reflected a number of commitments included in the DOE Corporate and Business Plan as follows:

- full delivery of the e-PIC project by April 2007;

- by March 2007 progress the structured reform of the Planning Service in line with the Review of Public Administration.

2.3 The Agency's Strategic Objectives

The Planning Service follows the balanced scorecard approach to corporate and business planning and its strategic objectives are set out in the quadrants below:

<p>RESULTS</p> <p>To make good, timely planning decisions within an up-to-date set of Area Plans, policy and legislative framework and in line with the Department's sustainable development principles.</p>	<p>CLIENTS/STAKEHOLDERS</p> <p>To promote a mutual understanding of expectations and the capacity to meet them between Planning Service and its clients/stakeholders.</p>
<p>PROCESSES</p> <p>To review, streamline, improve and monitor the Planning Service's key systems and processes and to prepare for the implementation of the Review of Public Administration.</p>	<p>PEOPLE</p> <p>To have well-motivated people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.</p>

A number of business year objectives have been agreed. They set out how the Agency intends to implement its strategic objectives. Information on these objectives and the associated target timescales is contained in the business plan.

2.4 Current and Future Issues

In addition, we are committed to focusing not only on the objectives outlined in our business plan but also on wider issues that have significant implications for our work. These include:

- taking forward relevant recommendations in the Review of Public Administration.
- our contribution to delivering the Government's Waste Management Strategy in Northern Ireland;
- Sustainable Development Strategy
- facilitating the delivery of sewage treatment infrastructure;

- expediting major or strategically significant planning applications;
- handling workload pressures.

We will continue to work in conjunction with relevant partners both within and outside Government to progress work or respond to issues arising in these areas.

3. Organisational Issues

3.1 Staffing Issues

The Planning Service Management Board comprises:

David Ferguson - Chief Executive
Marianne Fleming - Director of Corporate Services
Pat McBride - Director of Operations
Tom Clarke - (Acting) Director of Strategic Planning

The Agency currently has a staff complement of 833.

Our services are provided through a network of 6 Divisional Planning Offices and 2 sub Divisional Planning Offices located throughout Northern Ireland, as well as Planning Service headquarters, which is based in Belfast.

3.2 Financial Resources

We strive to make effective and efficient use of resources provided through our public expenditure budget and receipts from planning application fees. The latter was the subject of the consultation paper on the Review of Planning Fees, issued under the auspices of the *Modernising Planning Processes* Implementation Plan in June 2003. The review examined the scope of the costs being recovered by the Planning Service and our key consultees. The outcome of the review was reflected in the Planning (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, which came into operation in May 2005, consolidating the existing fees regulations and providing for a simplified fees structure.

Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 14, Sustainable Development in the Countryside, prepared by the Department of Regional Development, was issued in draft form in March 2006. The draft PPS, which applies to all applications received after 16 March 2006, proposes stricter planning policies for rural areas. At this stage the financial effect on the Agency's income is uncertain but is being kept under review.

Our budget allocations for this year and next year are set out below. Last year's figures (provisional outturn) are also shown for comparative purposes.

2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
13.6 M	12.5 M	11.5 M

3.3 Risk Management

In line with corporate governance requirements, the Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer for the Agency, has to be in a position to sign a Statement of Internal Control in relation to the Planning Service Annual Report and Accounts 2006/07. We are committed to improving the way in which we work and manage our business, and part of this improvement is in ensuring that we have effective risk management arrangements in place.

We fulfil this role by implementing effective risk management arrangements, which are detailed in our Risk Management Policy Statement. These include developing, monitoring and reviewing an Agency Risk Register which identifies the key risks, those responsible for ensuring that the risks are managed, and the action that will be taken to manage them. This process is also cascaded down through the three Directorates and the relevant business areas. Risk management is taken forward as an integral part of the business planning process and, like the Agency Business Plan, is monitored on a quarterly basis.

4. Cross Cutting Issues

4.1 Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development refers to development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. There is growing realisation by all that the present nature and pace of development, with the associated consumption of finite natural resources and negative impacts, cannot be continued indefinitely. If we do not take decisive steps to reduce our impact on the natural world, we shall be faced with ever-growing problems in relation to pollution, scarcity of resources and a deterioration of the quality of life. This means that both short and long term environmental and social considerations need to be much more closely integrated with economic issues to bring about development that is sustainable for the future.

The Planning Service is a key mechanism for delivering sustainable development on the ground. All development plans prepared by the Planning Service are required by law to be in general conformity with the Regional Development Strategy (RDS), which has embedded the need to accommodate development in a sustainable manner within its guiding principles. In order to help implement the policy directions set out in the RDS, we have an ambitious programme for the preparation of updated development plans.

The Planning Reform (NI) Order 2006, which was enacted on 9 May 2006, introduces a new provision that will require the Planning Service to exercise its policy making and development plan functions with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. As a result the Planning Service intends during 2006/07 to revise Planning Policy Statement 1 to reflect the more formal emphasis on sustainability flowing from the statutory position.

4.2 Equality of Opportunity, Human Rights and Anti-Poverty Strategy

The Planning Service is committed to ensuring that equality of opportunity and good relations is at the forefront of all its policies and programmes. It also strives to ensure that human rights implications of proposed policies and legislation are reviewed to ensure that proposals are compatible with the requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

We will again contribute to the Department's progress report on commitments contained within the Department's Equality Scheme and to actions to be taken forward under the Departmental Anti-Poverty Strategy. We remain committed to the values and aims contained in the Executive's Victims Strategy and will, where appropriate, consult victims' groups about major policy proposals. In line with the rest of the Department, we will also continue to comply with the requirements set out in the European Charter for Minority Languages.

4.3 Waste Management

In response to the Department's continued emphasis on waste management and reduction, the Planning Service has prepared a draft Waste Management Strategy aimed at encouraging its staff to do all that they can to reduce, re-use and recycle as much waste as possible. It is intended that this will be finalised and implemented in 2006/07.

The Planning Service

Business Plan

2006/07

5. Planning Service Business Plan 2006/07

The Agency's business year objectives and associated target timescales to enable us to deliver on our strategic objectives are reflected in the following sections. The business plan is a working document and may change during the course of the year in response to changing political, social or economic circumstances.

The Strategic Objectives

The Planning Service strategic objectives are:

<p>RESULTS</p> <p>To make good, timely planning decisions within an up-to-date set of Area Plans, policy and legislative framework and in line with the Department's sustainable development principles.</p>	<p>CLIENTS/STAKEHOLDERS</p> <p>To promote a mutual understanding of expectations and the capacity to meet them between Planning Service and its clients/stakeholders.</p>
<p>PROCESSES</p> <p>To review, streamline, improve and monitor the Planning Service's key systems and processes and to prepare for the implementation of the Review of Public Administration.</p>	<p>PEOPLE</p> <p>To have well-motivated people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.</p>

5.1 Results

Strategic Objective: To make good, timely planning decisions within an up-to-date set of Area Plans, policy and legislative framework and in line with the Department's sustainable development principles.

Business Year Objective	Target date
<p>To reduce time taken to process planning applications.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to our PSA target, other targets include ensuring 75% of all applications are validated within 6 days & 95% validated within 10 days; 75% of decisions should issue 	<p>March 2007</p>

<p>within 2 weeks of last Council consultation and 95% within 4 weeks of last Council consultation; 15% reduction in the number of applications in the system for longer than 12 months.</p> <p>To continue to improve coverage of up to date area plans and planning policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our targets include publication of 1 PPS in final form; 4 PPSs in draft form; and 2 area plans in draft form. 	<p>March 2007</p>
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5.2 Clients/Stakeholders

Strategic Objective: To promote a mutual understanding of expectations and the capacity to meet them between Planning Service and its clients/ stakeholders.

Business Year Objective	Target date
<p>To develop a revised Communications Strategy incorporating the Planning Service's key messages.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In particular, we will agree key messages for inclusion in our revised Communications Strategy and continue to implement a structured programme of engagement with key client and stakeholder groups. 	<p>March 2007</p>
<p>To improve agency performance against the NICS customer service principles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In particular we will implement an action plan to address the issue of agency performance in this area. 	<p>March 2007</p>

5.3 Processes

Strategic Objective: To review, streamline, and monitor the Planning Service's key systems and processes and to prepare for the implementation of the Review of Public Administration.

Business Year Objective	Target date
<p>To progress the structured reform of the Planning Service in line with the Review of Public Administration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will implement year 1 of the Review of Public Administration programme. 	March 2007
<p>To continue to put improved systems and processes in place, in particular progress towards full implementation of the e-PIC project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will continue to implement the Modernising Planning Processes programme, including the ePIC project and legislation to reform key aspects of the planning process. 	March 2007
<p>To continue to refine measures of performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In particular, we will agree recommendations and proposed performance criteria flowing from a review undertaken in relation to performance on Area Plans. 	March 2007

5.4 People

Strategic Objective: To have well-motivated people with the right skills in the right place at the right time.

Business Year Objective	Target date
<p>To have in place an HR Strategy to address the implications for Planning Service staff of the Review of Public Administration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will develop and implement a strategy specifically to address how we will manage the uncertainties for staff arising from the Review of Public Administration 	March 2007
<p>To maintain recognised standards for people management and development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In particular, we will implement the 2006/07 element of the Agency's HR strategy. 	March 2007

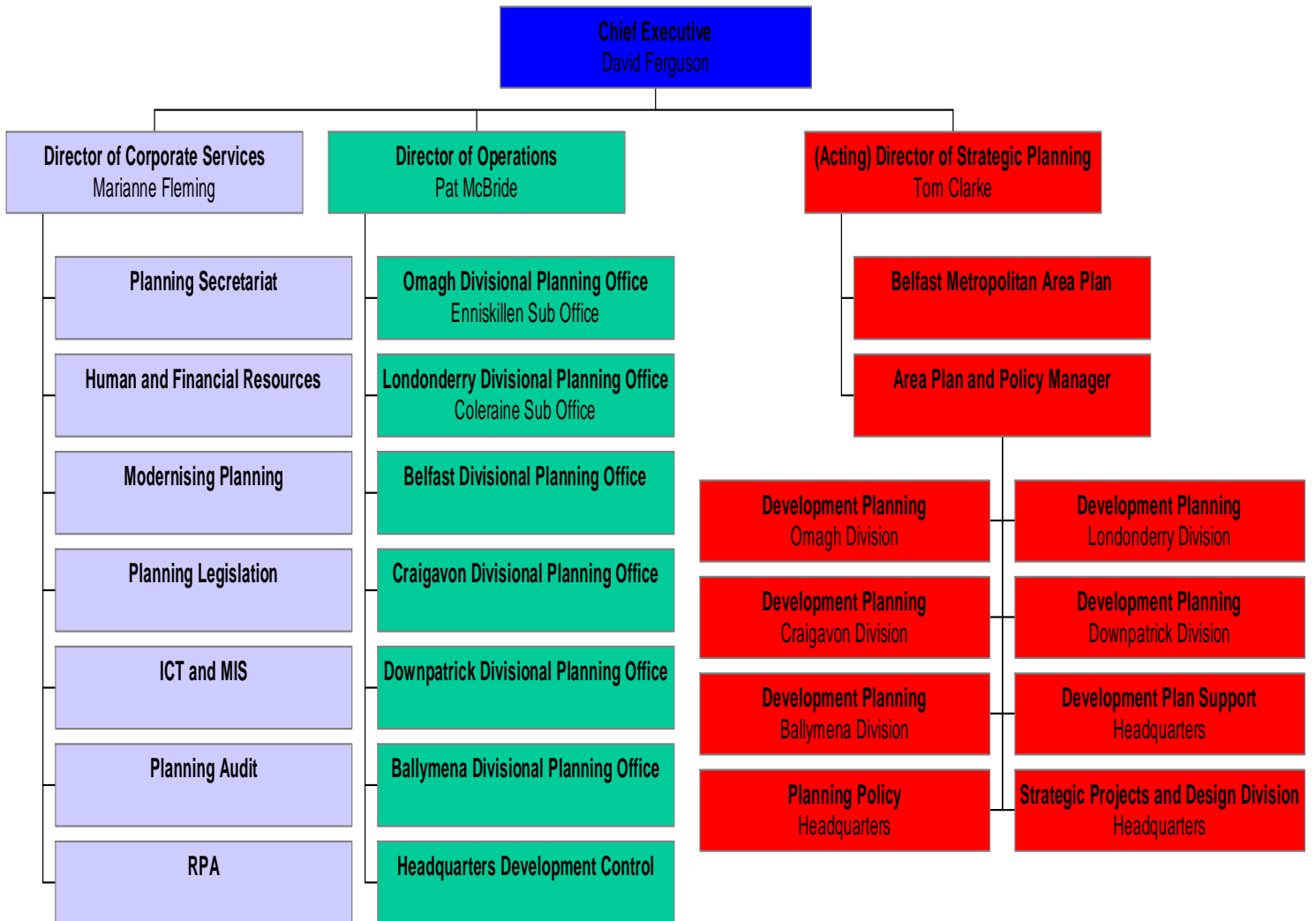
5.5 Implementation, Monitoring and Review

The Planning Service Management Board will monitor performance and review progress against key objectives and targets on a regular basis.

Following the end of the financial year, the Chief Executive will publish an Annual Report and Accounts. The Report will review the Agency's activities during the year and will comment specifically on progress in relation to our strategic objectives and achievements against our performance targets.

Appendix 1

Organisational Chart



Appendix Two

Map of Divisional Planning Offices



Appendix 3

PLANNING SERVICE RESOURCES 2006/07 - 2007/08

	2006/07	2007/08
	£m	£m
Admin/DRC	19.2	18.9
Other Resource/Programme	5.6	5.7
Capital	0.6	0.6
Receipts	-12.9	-13.7
TOTAL	12.5	11.5