



Is planning a
special case?

Susan Wilkin
Planning Policy
Division (DOE)

Planning.....



- Sets out a long term vision for places
- Provides a decision-making framework to manage competing uses for space
- Balances economic, social and environmental needs
- Provides legitimacy through consultation and testing of evidence
- Delivers change on the ground



Reform of Local Government

**Transfer of Planning
Powers**

**Reformed
Planning
System**

Benefits of the transfer of a reformed planning system

- New approach to development management with a front loaded system & enhanced community involvement
- Proportionate, fairer, predictable, more responsive & efficient
 - New development hierarchy helping to focus prioritisation of resources
 - New local development plan system - councils can work with local people to create a clear vision of how the council area will look in the future
 - Councils will use their development plan to show how that vision will be realised and what types of development will go where

Benefits of the transfer of a reformed planning system – cont'd

- Planning, together with other key functions transferring, and councils' existing functions, can be integrated within the framework of community planning
- Brings planning back to where it belongs – the local community
- Greater local accountability
- Brings the North into line with other jurisdictions in these islands

Departmental role



Restructured Department with retained planning functions will address the following:

- Planning legislation & planning policy
- Guidance and providing support for councils
- Case work: regionally significant planning applications, plan scrutiny, and call-ins
- Scrutiny, performance management and continuous improvement
- Statutory listing of buildings of special architecture or historic interest
- Fee setting, funding, grant making powers
- Selective reserve powers e.g. to take enforcement action

Performance Management



- 3 statutory planning standards proposed for processing major and local applications, and enforcement cases
- Included in the draft Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order (NI) 2015 which is currently out for consultation
- Standards proposed:
 - Major applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 30 weeks
 - Local applications processed from date valid to decision or withdrawal within an average of 15 weeks
 - 70% of all enforcement cases progressed to target conclusion with 39 weeks of receipt of complaint
- Department will continue to produce quarterly and annual planning official statistics

Non-statutory indictors



- Proposing to agree number of non-statutory indictors and standards with local government
- Targeted consultation with local government
- Likely to address such areas as local development plan, enforcement, appeals etc.
- Limited number of indicators and standards – not onerous
- Department would collate returns from local government on a quarterly basis and publish results annually
- Intention is to work with councils to support and help them

Rationale



- Will continue to be high public and media interest in planning matters
- Minister (who will retain responsibility for local government) will need to be in a position where he can comment formally, and with authority, on planning performance across the region
- Official statistics also provide the Department with a sound evidence base and reliable information for decision-making, policy formulation, changes to legislation etc.
- Department can be in a position to identify underperforming councils and work with them to help improve performance

Conclusion

- 3 statutory indicators /standards out for consultation
- Department would continue to publish quarterly and annual official statistics on planning
- A range of non-statutory indicators and standards to be agreed with local government
- Department's role to support councils through the transition and beyond
- Not an onerous performance management system but a system that encourages continuous improvement with the Department working in partnership with councils

