



# The Planning Service

## Business Plan

2010 - 2011

## Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Foreword by the Chief Executive	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Planning Reform, including implementation of the review of Public Administration	4
3. ePIC (e-Planning Information for the Citizen)	5
4. Agency Management	5
5. Financial Resources and Risk Management	6
5.1 Financial Resources	6
5.2 Risk Management	6
6. Human Resource Management	7
7. Our Targets and Objectives	8
7.1 PSA Targets	8
7.2 Agency Strategic Objectives	9
8. The Business Plan	10
8.1 Results	10
8.2 Customers/Stakeholders	12
8.3 Processes	12
8.4 Finance/Resources	13
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>14-16</b>
Appendix 1 - Organisational Chart	
Appendix 2 - Map of Divisional Planning Offices	
Appendix 3 - Allocation of Resources	

## Foreword

I am pleased to present the Planning Service's Business Plan for 2010/11.

This will be a period of very significant change for the Agency as we move towards the transfer of most planning functions to councils under the Review of Public Administration. Our programme of Planning Reform is now well advanced, following the Executive's agreement to the policy proposals at the end of February 2010. The next stage will be to take forward the programme of primary and subordinate legislation needed to give effect both to the transfer of functions and the associated reforms to the planning system. The reforms will impact on every aspect of the planning system: how policy is produced; how development plans are drawn up; how development proposals and applications are managed; and the way in which these functions are delivered.

At the same time we will be continuing to take forward a number of process improvement measures intended to make a more immediate impact on operational performance. This will contribute positively to achieving the Executive's priority of promoting the economy in a number of ways. In particular, we plan to extend the streamlined council consultation scheme to ensure more non-contentious applications are fast tracked through the system. Also, our Strategic Projects teams, which processed over 60 major schemes in the past year, will continue to work with the development industry to ensure that all significant proposals are dealt with expeditiously.

In addition, the forthcoming business year will see the implementation of our new electronic planning system - ePIC. The system, which will be operational by the end of the calendar year, will replace the Agency's existing Planner 20/20 IT system with one that will offer a range of modern, user-friendly services for both customers and staff.

We continue to operate in a challenging financial climate and we anticipate that the volume of planning applications and subsequent income to the Agency will remain at the reduced levels we have experienced over the last couple of years. With pressure on resources Planning Service will continue to manage its costs, including workforce costs, through staff reductions, restructuring, and reorganisation in order to live within budget and maintain the delivery of key services to the public. Furthermore, we will undertake a programme of work to fundamentally review and develop a new sustainable funding programme to support planning in the future.

As always, my sincere thanks go to all the staff of the Agency for their hard work and achievements, and for their continued commitment to serving our customers in the year ahead.

**CYNTHIA SMITH**  
Chief Executive

## **1. Introduction**

The Northern Ireland Executive's priorities and associated spending plans are set out in the Programme for Government (PfG) 2008-2011. The PfG also contains a framework of Public Service Agreements (PSAs) drawn up by Departments.

This Business Plan sets out the key targets for the Planning Service for 2010-11. Many of them contribute directly into the Department's PSA and its business plans. The Plan also reflects a number of targets which are not driven directly by the overarching Executive priorities, but which will contribute to the achievement of the Agency's strategic objectives.

The Planning Service Business Plan is set against a context of a challenging financial position, for the Agency, the Department, and wider public sector. This represents a significant challenge. The Planning Service expects that the reduced volume of planning applications will continue, and result in a reduced level of income. As a consequence Planning Service will be managing its costs, including its workforce costs, in order to live within its budget. This will involve a reduction to levels of staffing and reorganising, restructuring and reprioritising resources to help ensure that the Agency will live within its budget, maintain key services, and minimise any impact on our customers and the general public. The position will be kept under careful review as the year progresses.

In addition to the delivery of key performance targets set out in the Department's PSA, the Agency has two major commitments in the 2010/11 business year. Firstly, taking forward the Planning Reform programme, which will include introducing into the Assembly the necessary primary legislation to reform the planning system. Secondly, implementing the e-Planning Information for the Citizen (e-PIC) initiative, which will improve access to information and planning services, for everyone in the community. The Business Plan also places particular importance on Planning Service's role in promoting economic growth. In this respect, work will continue with regard to extending the Streamlined Council Consultation process and determining large scale investment planning applications within six months.

## **2. Planning Reform, including Implementation of the Review of Public Administration**

The consultation paper 'Reform of the Planning System in Northern Ireland: Your chance to influence change' was subject to public consultation between July and October 2009. The paper outlined the wide ranging planning reform proposals, including the measures needed to transfer the majority of planning functions to the new District Councils in May 2011 under the Review of Public Administration (RPA). A series of Planning Reform stakeholder events were also held at venues across Northern Ireland during September 2009 as part of the formal consultation process.

There was a very encouraging response to the consultation paper, demonstrating the level of interest. The responses indicated broad support for the majority of the proposed changes, including the new streamlined development plan process and the development management approach to handling planning applications, both of which will be central to the reformed planning system.

The Environment Minister subsequently formulated his final planning policy proposals taking full account of the consultation responses received. The Executive agreed to these final policy proposals in February 2010 and in doing so gave their formal agreement to the drafting of the legislation required to give effect to the reforms and to the transfer of the majority of planning functions to local government.

Against this background, the Agency's key focus for 2010-11 will be on the substantial work needed to take forward these reforms and to ensure the smooth transfer of planning functions within specified timeframes. This work will include the drafting of legislation and guidance, organisational design, capacity building, funding issues, transitional arrangements and many more actions.

Planning Service representatives will also continue to work closely with local and central government colleagues through the overarching RPA implementation structures to develop the detailed models necessary to transfer functions and staff to councils.

### **3. e-PIC**

The e-PIC initiative is a critical project within the NICS wide e-government agenda. It will be implemented across the Agency and made available to the public by the end of the calendar year. The new system will provide much improved access to planning information and services, for both the public at large and staff. The ePIC system is an integral part of the planning reform programme, and will prepare the planning system for future demands as technology advances.

Work will be undertaken on the ePIC system to facilitate the future transfer of the new system to local councils, as part of the implementation of Planning Reform and the Review of Public Administration.

### **4. Agency Management**

The Planning Service Management Board comprises:

Cynthia Smith - Chief Executive  
Marianne Fleming - Director of Corporate Services  
Anne Garvey - Director of Operations  
Tom Clarke - Director of Strategic Planning  
Nicholas Mack - Independent Board Member

The Management Board is responsible for ensuring the effective stewardship and corporate governance of the Agency within the strategic policy and resources framework set by Ministers.

Planning Service produced an Agency Corporate Governance Framework document in August 2009. The Framework document provides information on the arrangements that have been put in place to ensure proper and effective

management of the Planning Service’s affairs, and promotes compliance with the guidelines set out in HM Treasury’s Code of Good Practice on Corporate Governance.

**5. Financial Resources and Risk Management**

**5.1 Financial Resources**

The Planning Service’s budget comprises in the main two elements, funds allocated by the Northern Ireland Assembly, and income from receipts by way of fees and charges for planning applications and property certificates.

In line with other business areas across the Northern Ireland Civil Service, Planning Service’s administration and programme baselines have been reduced in certain areas over the budget period as our contribution to the 3% cumulative cash efficiency savings, which we are required to contribute.

Actual income in 2009/10 was approximately £7m lower than income budgeted. Planning Service worked closely with the Department of the Environment to address this pressure, through a combination of actions to reduce costs and generate efficiencies across the Agency. In addition savings were secured to contribute to the budgetary shortfall within other business areas in the Department of the Environment, and we secured additional funding through an increase in planning application fees.

The Agency continues to be affected by the economic downturn, with volumes of both planning applications and property certificates projected to remain low. Given the Executive’s funding allocation and likely income raised through fees and charges, the Agency anticipates continued significant pressure on the 2010/11 budget. Planning Service will work with the Department of the Environment to manage costs, and more closely align its operational costs with likely receipts income. Management of these costs will have manpower implications. Planning Service will also undertake a programme of work to fundamentally review and develop a new sustainable funding programme to support planning in the future.

The Agency’s initial budget for 2010/11 as allocated by the Executive is set out below, along side the 2009/10 business year figure for comparative purposes. A fuller breakdown of this year’s budget is provided in appendix 3.

2009/10	2010/11
10.85M	9.86 M

**5.2. Risk Management**

In order to comply with the Agency’s corporate governance requirements the Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer, signs a Statement of Internal Control at the end

of each financial year in relation to the Planning Service Annual Report and Accounts. 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 a Corporate Risk Register which identifies the key risks facing the Agency, those responsible for ensuring that the risks are managed, and the actions that will be taken to manage them. It is underpinned by Directorate, Divisional and business unit risk registers. Risk management is taken forward as an integral part of the business planning process and is subject to quarterly review by the Management Board and the Agency's Audit Committee.

## **6. Human Resource Management**

In the 2009/10 business year the Agency had 797 staff in post. In light of the continuing severe financial pressures a number of steps were taken to reduce running costs. This included a review of the Department of the Environment's corporate and support services, and reviews of the Planning Service's Operating Costs. As a result of the corporate services review the Agency's staffing level was reduced to 751 staff at 1 April 2010.

The implementation of the review of Planning Service's Operating Costs will involve the Agency continuing to take action to reduce costs and make efficiencies as far as possible. However, to manage within the funding and income which is available, the Agency must significantly reduce staffing costs. This will result in staff redeployment in 2010/11.

Planning Service will be working closely with the Department of the Environment, and the Department of Finance and Personnel, in addressing these difficult challenges. All options will be explored to identify the most suitable way forward, to manage the reduction in staffing levels and the restructuring of the Agency.

The Agency will continue to support staff, keep them informed, and provide them with the skills they need to deliver their responsibilities. This includes promoting professional membership and providing the necessary training to enable both professional and administrative staff to work together to deliver the Planning Service's objectives.

Planning Service continues to promote and advance key initiatives such as managing attendance and Workbridge, which are designed to reduce levels of absenteeism and support staff returning to work following a period of absence due to illness.

## 7. Our Targets and Objectives

### 7.1 Public Service Agreement Targets

The PSA objective and associated actions and targets for the Planning Service as reflected in the Department of the Environment's Public Service Agreement (PSA) are as follows:

PSA Objective	Actions	Targets
<p>Deliver a modern effective planning system in partnership with key stakeholders including consultees which meets the needs of the whole community and the economy while protecting the environment.</p>	<p>Ensure draft or adopted development plans are in place for the whole of Northern Ireland by March 2011</p> <p>Bring forward legislation to further reform the planning system by March 2011 and further streamline administrative processes and improve customer service by March 2011</p>	<p>Ensure a fit for purpose suite of draft or adopted development plans is in place by March 2011</p> <p>A fit for purpose legislative framework to be in place by March 2011</p> <p>By March 2011 ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 60% of major applications processed in 23 weeks</li> <li>- 70% of intermediate applications processed in 31 weeks</li> <li>- 80% of minor applications processed in 18 weeks.</li> </ul>

The Agency is also committed through the Programme for Government to determining all large scale investment planning proposals within 6 months provided there has been pre-application consultation.



## 7.2 The Agency's Strategic Objectives

The Planning Service follows the Balanced Scorecard approach to corporate and business planning. Its strategic objectives are set out in the quadrants below:

<b>RESULTS:</b> To make good, timely planning decisions within a fit for purpose Area Plans, policy and legislative framework which supports the key priorities in the Executive's Programme for Government.  To support the Agency's change programme by taking forward the measure necessary to progress planning reform and the transfer of the majority of planning functions to local government in accordance with the agreed timetable.		<b>CUSTOMERS/STAKEHOLDERS:</b> Enable effective engagement of customers and stakeholders with the planning process in order to deliver a good quality service.	
R1	Deliver Planning Reform (including Review of Public Administration) in line with Ministerial direction.	CS1	Engage with customers/stakeholders on improving the service.
R2	Produce sustainable Development Plans for Northern Ireland.		
R3	Deliver prompt planning decisions to help support the economy.		
R4	Regulation of unauthorised development.		
R5	Support major economic development in Northern Ireland.		
<b>PROCESSES:</b> To review, streamline, improve and monitor the Planning Service's key systems and processes.		<b>FINANCE/RESOURCES</b> To manage the Agency's financial, human and other resources to deliver as far as possible the Agency's aim and objectives	
P1	Secure process and organisational improvements.	FR1	Ensuring that the Agency's resources are managed efficiently and effectively and with propriety in delivering the Agency's objectives.
P2	Improve planning through use of technology.		
		FR2	Ensure that staff are appropriately skilled for and are supported through ePIC and Planning Reform as part of internal capacity building.

The balanced scorecard is used to structure the Planning Service Business plan. A number of business year objectives and targets have been agreed. They comprise: Critical Business Objectives: targets to advance and deliver PSA targets; Key Performance Targets; and targets to progress achievement of the Agency's strategic objectives.

## 8. Planning Service Business Plan 2010/11

The Business Plan sets out the key priorities the Agency intends to progress in 2010/11, subject to the availability of resources. Changes to the Business Plan may arise during the course of the year in response to changing financial circumstances, availability of resources and Ministerial priorities.

The Agency's business year objectives, associated targets and timescales are set out by Balanced Scorecard quadrant in the following sections. Planning Service will measure its performance against all of the targets detailed in the Scorecard. Within these targets the Minister has set 12 Key Performance Targets for the Agency in 2010-11. These are highlighted in shaded text. The Key Performance Targets relate to development plans, processing applications, and customer services, as set out in the Agency's framework document, along with strategic Agency priorities.

### 8.1 Results

#### Strategic Objectives:

To make good, timely planning decisions within a fit for purpose Area Plans, policy and legislative framework which supports the key priorities in the Executive's Programme for Government.

To support the Agency's change programme by taking forward the measures necessary to progress Planning Reform and the transfer of the majority of planning functions to local government in accordance with the agreed timetable.

Business Critical Objective	Target	Date for completion
R1. Deliver Planning Reform (including Review of Public Administration in line with Ministerial direction)	1. Introduce Planning Reform Bill to the Assembly.	Within 6 weeks of Executive approval to introduce draft Bill (excluding Assembly recess)
	2. Complete final drafting of subordinate legislation regulations and submit to Minister for approval to issue for consultation.	Within 8 weeks of introduction of Planning Reform Bill to the Assembly
	3. Develop and agree the overarching plan for Planning Reform and devolution of planning functions, including legislative guidance, culture and capacity building and transfer plans for finance, HR and IT, and implement actions targeted for 2010/11.	31 March 2011

R2. Produce Sustainable Development Plans for Northern Ireland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To seek MB agreement to a timeline in respect of the draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP), and the draft Magherafelt Area Plan.</li> <li>2. To progress the draft BMAP and the draft Magherafelt Area Plan towards adoption</li> <li>3. To progress the draft Northern Area Plan towards independent examination.</li> </ol>	<p>Within 2 months of receipt of public inquiry/ independent examination reports from the PAC.</p> <p>In line with agreed timeline.</p> <p>31 March 2011</p>
R3. Deliver prompt planning decisions to help support the economy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To process to decision or withdrawal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 60% of major applications within 23 weeks;</li> <li>- 70% of intermediate applications within 31 weeks; and</li> <li>- 80% of minor applications within 18 weeks<sup>1</sup>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Monitor consultee response times in line with service level agreements, taking action where appropriate to contribute to achievement of agreed performance targets.</li> </ol>	<p>31 March 2011</p> <p>31 March 2011</p>
R4. Regulation of unauthorised development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Monitor and manage performance against enforcement targets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 95% of all high priority cases discussed and certified within 2 working weeks.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<p>31 March 2011</p>
R5. Support major economic development in Northern Ireland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decide all large scale investment planning proposals within 6 months, provided there has been pre-application consultation.</li> <li>2. Implement agreed Cross Sector Advisory Forum and Independent Review of Economic Policy recommendations/actions.</li> </ol>	<p>31 March 2011</p> <p>31 March 2011</p>

<sup>1</sup> Target excludes applications deferred as a consequence of draft Planning Policy Statement 14/21.

## 8.2 Customers/Stakeholders

### Strategic Objective:

Enable effective engagement of customers and stakeholders with the planning process in order to deliver a good quality service.

Business Critical Objective	Target	Date for completion
CS1. Engage with customers/ stakeholders on improving the service	1. To communicate and build capacity with customers and stakeholders on planning reform and RPA.	31 March 2011
	2. To communicate and promote the benefits of ePIC to applicants, agents, consultees and the public and to survey initial levels of usage and satisfaction.	31 March 2011
	3. Draw up and deliver a programme of action on Sustainable Communities in partnership with the CEF, RSUA, BIC, PNRD, Roads Service and other stakeholders.	31 March 2011
	4. To conduct the 2010 Customer Survey and to analyse findings and report results.	30 September 2010 31 December 2010
	5. To respond to 95% AQs and 100% FOI requests within given timescale	31 March 2011

## 8.3 Processes

### Strategic Objective:

To review, streamline, improve and monitor the Planning Service's key systems and processes.

Business Critical Objective	Target	Date for completion
P1. Secure process and organisational improvements	1. Implement, monitor and report progress on Public Accounts Committee agreed recommendations for 2010/11 arising from the Value for Money Study.	31 March 2011
	2. To roll out an extended Streamlined Council Consultation scheme to all 26 Councils with their agreement.	31 March 2011

P2. Improve planning system through use of technology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete implementation of the ePIC system</li> <li>2. To prepare the ePIC system for transfer to councils, by undertaking the actions detailed in the 2010/11 Planning Reform/RPA implementation plan.</li> </ol>	<p>Within 32 weeks of completion of User Acceptance Testing.</p> <p>31 March 2011</p>
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#### 8.4 Finance/Resources

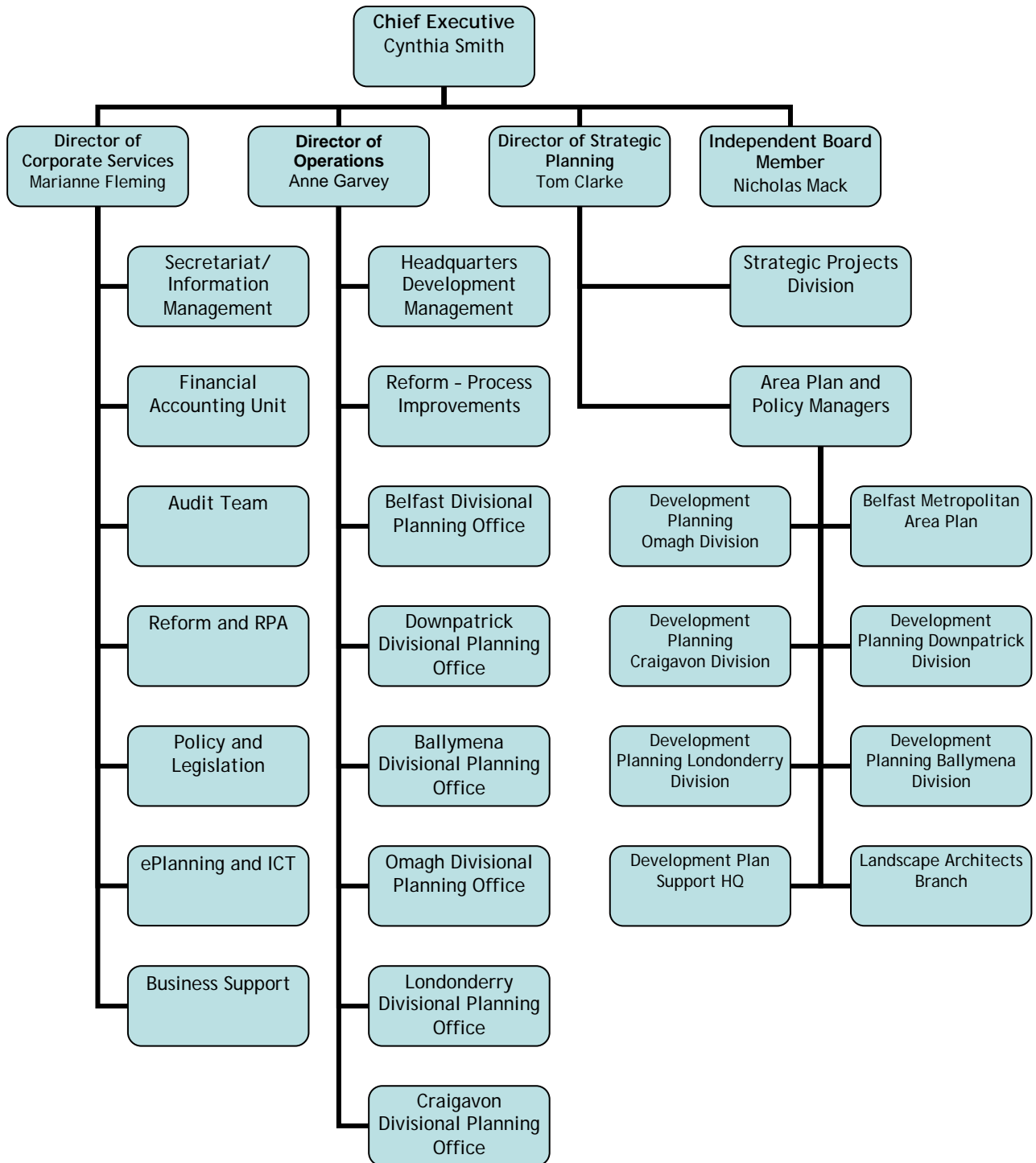
##### Strategic Objective:

To manage the Agency's financial, human and other resources to deliver as far as possible the Agency's aim and objectives.

Business Critical Objective	Target	Date for completion
FR1. Ensure that the Agency's resources are managed efficiently and effectively and with propriety in delivering the Agency's objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To ensure that provisional outturn for resource and capital come within the final plan position approved by DFP after the outcome of February Monitoring.</li> <li>2. To contribute to the reviews of Corporate Services and Planning Service, by implementing all actions agreed for Planning Service in 2010/11 to identify savings that are sufficient to cover the shortfall in planning application income and other internal pressures.</li> <li>3. To complete a review of Planning Fees and Charges, in preparation for consultation and subsequent fees regulations.</li> </ol>	<p>31 March 2011</p> <p>31 March 2011</p> <p>31 March 2011</p>
FR2. Ensure that staff are appropriately skilled for and are supported through ePIC and Planning Reform as part of internal capacity building.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To prepare and train staff for ePIC and Planning Reform.</li> </ol>	<p>31 March 2011</p>

# Appendix 1

## Organisation Chart



## Appendix Two

### Map of Divisional Planning Offices



### Appendix 3

#### PLANNING SERVICE RESOURCES 2010/11

	2010/11
	£m
Admin/DRC	26.8
Other Resource/Programme	5.5
Capital	0.1
Receipts	-22.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9.8</b>