

National Planning Forum

DRAFT Notes of Meeting

20 September 2004

The Prince's Foundation, Charlotte Road, London

Welcome from the Chair, Mark Southgate (Vice Chair)

Formal business

1 Elections

It was agreed that the NPF Chair be held annually in rotation by one of the Vice Chairs.

It was agreed that Liz Peace (VC representing the private sector) be elected Chair for 2004/5

The nomination of Cllr David Sparks (Chair LGA Environment Board) as a Vice Chair to represent local government was welcomed.

2 Apologies

See attached list (to include Graham Jones POS)

3 Draft Notes of Last Meeting

Signed as a correct record

4 Matters arising

Implementation of the new Planning Act-John Hack (ODPM) responded to questions.

*** PPS12 sets out the framework for community involvement in the new LDF process. The 'blue book' Community Involvement in Planning-fleshes this out and further Guidance will emerge shortly including the Arup report at the end of October. Advice will remain under review in the light of experience in implementation of the Act.**

*** Although the timetable for submitting SCI's is tight, ODPM is confident that LPA's will meet the deadlines.**

*** Although the transitional arrangements for development plans are complicated, they are not impossible to follow. Much depends on where the LPA is on 28 september 2004. If they have reached 1st Deposit Stage then they will proceed on 'the philosophy of the old system' leading to an Inquiry and a binding Report. No SPG can be made after 28/9 but existing SPG will remain and be gradually replaced with LDD's. ODPM are monitoring the implementation of the reforms**

NB1 Kelvin McDonald reported that RTPI will shortly be comparing and contrasting planning systems in each of the 5 UK 'regions'

NB2 Stephen Conner reported that the LGA was collaborating on a Masterclass with ODPM/PINS on 28 October at Bristol. Any takers to contact Kate Marshall at the LGA on kate.marshall@lga.gov.uk

5 Long Term Financing and Support for the NPF

It was agreed to submit an Application for Special Grant funding to ODPM for 2005 onwards.

6 Business Plan 2004/6

Discussion focussed on themes for the current year where there was a need for a ‘grown up’ debate and where the Forum could seek to make a difference. It was stressed that the Forum needed to add value with a cross sectoral perspective and in view of constraints the Forum would need to be ‘parsimonious’ on targets which it set itself.

Topics suggested were:-

- 1 Accessibility and the better management of access.**
- 2 Water resources (both of the above crucial to delivery of the Sustainable Communities plan).**
- 3 Implementing the SC Plan-could NPF have a monitoring role?**
- 4 The continuation of the Planning Delivery Grant-can NPF make the case?**
- 5 Planning Gain supplements-are they a good thing? NPF think piece.**
- 6 Mixed use-are we talking the same language? Ditto**
- 7 Improving skills and training for local authority planners.**
- 8 Issues which have relevance to the public at large. The NPF could grasp an issue which could form a focus for national debate.**
- 9 Planning for Climate Change**

It was suggested that A6 could be raised and A7 and A8 could be dropped down the batting order.

The Chair asked colleagues to let the Secretary know their preferences for work in 2004/5 by email on Secretary@natplanforum.org.uk before the end of September.

7 Dates and conduct of Meetings

Confirmed as 14 December, 19 April and 14 June.

The Executive agreed to look into holding the meetings in the afternoon.

There were mixed views about the usefulness of Task group meetings, some feeling it was premature to cancel them, others saying they were not working. Where work has started the Chair said they should continue as a network and the input of colleagues across the Forum was welcome. Vice chairs will continue to be a focus for this activity.

8 Annual Conference

Stephen Conner reported that the LGA/NPF conference would be in early March probably at the Birmingham Holiday Inn.

9 AOB

Planning appeals: In response to a question from Ron Tate (Assoc of Planning Consultants) the Secretary read out a letter from Katrine Sporle who was unable to be present because of a prior commitment. This set out the background and the ways in which ODPM/PINS were tackling the issue of lengthening appeal times. Several colleagues indicated their concerns about why the situation had arisen and could have been foreseen by the ODPM. The invitation to meet

ODPM/PINS to explore creative ways of resolving the problem should be accepted and the Secretary was requested to set up a meeting and circulate details.

Soundness in plans: the secretary reported that ARUP has been commissioned to work up Guidelines on how the new plans process can be proofed against defects. Colleagues suggested that the Planning Advisory Service was well placed to help train the plan makers. It was also suggested that Leonora Rozee could be invited to the next meeting to share views on making the system more robust and resilient.

PRESENTATION: Community Involvement in Planning

Presentations were received from the Prince's Foundation, National Trust, Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, Planning Officers Society, House Builders Federation and the Civic Trust.

Principal points to emerge were:-

- **The need for more effective participation in planning by the public using techniques such as Enquiry by Design and Planning for Real.**
- **The importance of training all professionals in the built environment sector to recognise the need and ways of achieving greater public participation-it must become second nature.**
- **The value of local distinctiveness in both engaging the interest of the public and conserving cherished heritage for the future**
- **The general apathy of the public and difficulty in engaging people with busy lives unless the proposals directly affect them-in which event they instinctively fear change is for the worst.**
- **The need for continuous engagement rather than parachute in/parachute out.**
- **The value of front loading to build consensus**
- **The need for clear guidelines regarding public engagement to developers-otherwise why would they do it?**
- **The desirability of ODPM setting minimum standards for a SCI (although some thought that this would default to the 'gold standard' and it would lower thresholds and innovative practice.**
- **POS is developing a LDF learning programme to share best practice among LPA's**
- **Nobody is hard to reach, it's just that you need to go a little out of your way to find them.**
- **In reaching out to citizens, LPA's and developers should first make use of the intelligence gleaned from DC consultations to see what intelligence this sheds on plans.**
- **LPA's and developers should then make use of established networks such as Civic societies Tree Wardens etc that have roots in an area.**
- **Models, photo montages and perspectives all have a role to play in simplifying plans and making them easier to understand by lay people.**
- **The hands-on of schoolchildren in Planning for Real can lead to the positive engagement of parents.**
- **Publicity and information is vital to success and best practice should be shared.**
- **Surrey Heath BC has a Consultation Code for Major Developments (see web site)**

The Secretary undertook to review the discussion and seek to draw together a NOTE which the Forum could ENDORSE on the issue.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: DECEMBER 14th, Time and venue to be Notified