

## **NATIONAL PLANNING FORUM: 17 MARCH 2008**

### **CULTURE CHANGE SUMMARY REPORT**

#### **1: Introduction**

1.1 **The National Planning Forum (NPF)** includes all the major stakeholders involved in planning in England in Government and its Agencies, local government, businesses, professionals and the voluntary sector. In Spring 2007 the NPF decided to consider the role and status of planning, and to find ways of achieving the full potential of the new planning system. This note is a **Summary** of our findings.

1.2 The first step was to establish the basis for our work by commissioning a **Research Report** to identify the issues and possible solutions. The report concluded that much has changed already, but that all sectors need to make further adjustments to the way things are done if we are to change the culture of planning and produce better outcomes. We used the research and further input from members to draw up a **Culture Change Manifesto**, and are now focussing on agreeing the small number of key actions that will help us to deliver our Manifesto.

1.3 The next step will be to agree the **Action Plan**, to **disseminate** this via our membership, to **Monitor** progress to ensure we are making a difference, to **Report on Results** to our membership and **Review** the Action Plan as necessary.

#### **2: The Research Report**

2.1 In writing the specification<sup>1</sup> for research to underpin our work we took as our starting point the Government's commitment to planning in Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup> as an activity that *"shapes where people live and work and the country we live in (and) plays a key role in supporting the Government's wider social, environmental and economic objectives and for sustainable communities"*. We also took into account the Government's signal on the central role for planning in local government delivery and the importance of a local economic focus. IDOX plc won the commission to undertake the research and the report by Professor Janice Morphet, Tony Burton and Laura Hughes, "Delivering Inspiring Places - The Role and Status of Planning"<sup>3</sup> was received by the Forum in October 2007.

2.2 The report says that the value of our places, both in terms of the built and natural environment, underpins the nation's economy. It highlights examples of successful outcomes in all parts of the country that are the result of good planning. Everyone involved

in planning needs to understand the key drivers - changes in population structure, declining numbers in the workforce, climate change, energy security and diversity, globalisation, localisation, the role of cities and sub-regions – and to be aware of, and participate in, the new planning agenda while continuing to strive to deliver sustainable development.

2.3 The report highlights that this new agenda requires **planners** to develop greater confidence in using the available tools and resources, to work more effectively with partners, learn new skills and ways of working, and develop consensus around sustainable spatial strategies and solutions. Planners need to continue to adjust to major changes in context as well as in the range of issues such as climate change.

2.4 The report suggests that everyone needs to do things differently, not just planners. **Local politicians and chief executives** need to recognise and value the role of planning because it will help them to enhance places, deliver new public facilities and quality environments, and create secure investment conditions - in urban and rural environments.

2.5 Planning is part of the public sector, which is itself being transformed. Planning needs to respond to this wider reform agenda so that it can influence the way that services and investment are delivered locally. This will require action by **Leaders, Executive Members and Backbenchers, Chief Executives, Chief Officers, Planners and other Officers** in local authorities and national parks, but it will also require changes in the working practices of **developers, investors, planning consultants and others working in and for the built and natural environment.**

2.6 They suggest that the **professional and technical press** has an important role to play in helping to encourage a more positive view of planning. The media in general need to be engaged to support the changes, and to emphasise the benefits of earlier public engagement and constructive participation in planning.

2.7 The report says that we don't need more planning, but we do need better planning. We need to move away from the adversarial approach that has prevailed in the past to one that seeks "win-win" solutions, and to deal with the blame culture, giving people the confidence to do things differently. It concludes that planning has delivered some inspiring places – and it can do this and more, now and in future. The conditions, and the demands, are in place for a renaissance in planning across the whole country.

### **3: Our Response - the NPF Culture Change Manifesto**

3.1 The NPF is committed to ensuring that planning plays a full part in the new place shaping agenda. Having considered the issues, including those set out in the report “Delivering Inspiring Places – The Role and Status of Planning”, we believe that we can play a significant part in changing the culture of planning by mobilising all our members. We intend to do this by signing up to our **Culture Change Manifesto** - prepared by NPF members - to set the framework for action.

3.2 The Manifesto commits the NPF and its membership to:

- ❖ **Understand and promote the role planning plays in place-shaping** - taking action to improve awareness by all stakeholders of the new approach to planning and their role in it;
- ❖ **Appreciate the complexity of planning, but simplify its procedures** - taking action to demystify planning and link it to corporate policy and programmes to ensure joined-up policy and delivery;
- ❖ **Remove the barriers to partnership working** - taking action to improve relationships between Chief Executives and Chief Planning Officers so improving wider partnership working;
- ❖ **Provide the support to enable planning to be effective** - taking action to improve planners’ skills for example in delivering sustainable development; in development finance; in managing people, resources and programmes; and
- ❖ **Devise ways of showing what planning can achieve** - taking action to collect and publicise examples of good practice.

3.3 We are using the expertise of our members to develop a short, sharp, focussed **Action Plan** to apply the principles set out in our Manifesto to change the way we work.

3.4 By activating members and their networks via a Dissemination Programme, by individual action as well as cross-sectoral cooperation and by Monitoring, Reviewing and Reporting back on the effects, the NPF aims to make a substantial contribution to tackling the barriers to, and realising the full potential of, spatial planning in the new context.

#### **References and Note**

1. Research Specification: The Role and Status of Planning: NPF: March 2007
  2. Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development; CLG: January 2005
  3. Delivering Inspiring Places – The Role and Status of Planning: IDOX plc: October 2007
- 1, 3: *available to download from the NPF website: [www.natplanforum.org.uk/documents](http://www.natplanforum.org.uk/documents)*
- 2: *available on the Communities and Local Government web-site*