

ENGLAND POLICY COMMITTEE

CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES of the England Policy committee meeting held on 27 February 2023 – In-person, 42 Botolph Lane, London, EC3M and via Microsoft Teams.

PRESENT: Benjamin Vickers (Chair); Jan Bessell (Vice Chair); Joseph Maphosa; Peter Ellis; Tania Skelli, Andrew Taylor, Catriona Riddell, Nicki Linihan, Maria Dunn, Lachlan Anderson-Frank, Colin Haigh, Catriona Swanson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Daniel Slade, Policy Manager, Richard Blyth, Head of Policy, Simon Creer – Head of Communications; Joel Cohen – Public Affairs Lead; Simone May- Governance Manager (Minute taker); Holly McLaren (Item 10)

APOLOGIES: John Coleman and Dinny Shaw

Item		Action
01.	<p>Welcome and Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Introduction and Welcome - The Chair welcomed members to the first England Policy committee for the year.</p> <p>Apologies for Absence – Apologies were received from John Coleman and Dinny Shaw.</p>	
02.	<p>Declaration of Interests</p> <p>The following declarations of interests were raised: -</p> <p>Nicki Linihan declared that she was a Planning Officers Society Communications Manager and acted as their housing specialist on climate change and transport.</p> <p>Peter Ellis declared that he worked for Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) Policy Council and was a trustee of the Centre for Sustainable Energy in Bristol.</p> <p>Jan Bessell declared that she was Chair of the Board of the National Infrastructure Planning Association and on the Building with Nature Standards Board.</p>	
03.	<p>Minutes from the Policy, Practice and Research Committee in December 2022.</p> <p>The Committee agreed the minutes of the December Policy, Practice and Research committee. Peter, Jan and Catriona attended this meeting.</p> <p>Item 1 – to demonstrate on how the action has been delivered.</p>	
04.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes of England Policy Panel on 12 December 2022</p>	

	<p>The following was raised regarding the minutes of the meeting:</p> <p>The Committee had a discussion on the legacy of the England Policy Panel. It was felt that it had little influence, and it was raised that the real collective value of the England Policy Committee going forward is that its members views/input should be used proactively to inform the Institute's wider work. This is more in-line with its purpose.</p> <p>It was discussed as to how the committee could communicate effectively outside of the meeting as communication via email was quite difficult to follow, perhaps via a Microsoft Teams Group.</p> <p>It was stated that the terms of reference said, 'that the committee may conduct its business through extraordinary meetings and through exchanges of messages through secure forums' and in terms of its role 'to advise the chief executive of responses to consultations from the UK Government and there was delegated authority from the Board'.</p>	
<p>06.</p>	<p>Action Log</p> <p>It was noted that as this was a new committee a new action log of any actions coming out of this meeting would be noted and circulated to members.</p>	
<p>07.</p>	<p>NPPF Policy Roundtable Discussion</p> <p>The Committee were asked to agree the draft response to the consultation 'Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Reforms to the National Planning Policy.</p> <p>The Chief Executive introduced this item. She firstly thanked members for putting themselves forward to this new committee and explained that after an undertaking of a five-year governance review that had led to several changes including the formulation of this new committee which was an important part of the institute's governance structure. This brought us on parity with the devolved nations as there was no Policy Committee for England previously. Secondly, the committee had a very important role today regarding the NPPF Policy roundtable discussion. She reported that round tables had been run around the nations, called for members evidence, have held senior meetings with Ministers and an enormous amount of work in a short period of time had been pulled together to consolidate into a paper. She highlighted a few observations to the</p>	

committee: -

- She had been lobbied and met with all of membership right across the board, private sector, public sector environment, developer landowners.
- The RTPI wants to be known as the trusted voice of the profession. The RTPI is the professional body and are giving the view of the profession not a union body.
- Discussions were very polarised across the built environment sector, local politicians, and members.
- There was a very broad spectrum of views which the RTPI needed to be mindful of and think about the context of how the RTPI occupy the voice of reason and be the advocate for strong local plans.
- What will make our plans strong to create sustainable places and most importantly homes.

The Policy Manager gave some background in terms of information which was collated from members. 15 round tables in total also across all the English regions and this was amalgamated to form the report.

The Committee discussed Appendix 2 – overarching comments with the following key points: -

- First paragraph under immediate changes – a lot of what was being proposed was incompatible with the overall objectives delivering the right infrastructure and should be broader and not just around the numbers. Very siloed approach and need a wider strategic approach seeking to meet all the objectives.
- Phrasing of the ‘stick based’ approach - did not think it was a ‘stick based’ approach it was more about the checks and balances within the system. The wording was written from a local authority perspective and should say that the system was designed to meet housing and infrastructure needs, there were checks and balances within the system which were both positive and negative checks and balances but were designed to deliver the original need.
- Response needs to be more empathetic of what the government is facing and dealing with regarding the back lash in the general community as a technical overly technical autocratic approach.

- Final thoughts – how this is articulated and overarching message, climate change, green jobs, the economy, transition to net zero – briefing note frames climate change but also needs to include jobs, transition, and the environment.
- The importance of a plan led system which is a fundamental point and an evidence-based approach.
- RTPI’s position on a better community engagement process to underpin local plans and as a profession should have a view.
- 10 Best Practice Points for community engagement could be revisited and could become part of the work programme in the next 12 months.
- Community engagement needs greater resourcing and broader community engagement and reactivating the interest and relevance of planning, this should be emphasised in the consultation and perhaps should be an additional bullet point at the bottom of page 1.
- Engagement reminding people about the value of planning and the role it plays and innovation in communication rather than specific media types should be done for this engagement.
- Monitoring of a 5-year supply test mode, local authority still needs to monitor its housing but test to be removed.
- Multifunctional purpose of Greenbelt and tied directly into Greenbelt policies.
- Greenbelt is a planning tool and should be looking at regional issues.
- Density in the consultation document is meaningless and should be more reflective of the building topology should be brought out.
- Make better use of sites which are out of the green belt.
- Greenbelt should be more explicitly linked in terms of poor-quality Greenbelt and should have more links with the nature recovery framework and strategies.
- Need to look at does green belt policy have the same purpose at its legislative provision, is it still fit for purpose and if it is how do we move that forward to ensure that it delivers that purpose effectively.
- Climate change assessment tool for local planning should be made clearer, the government should use the planning system better to tackle carbon emission. Government should lead on this and produce an easy-to-use assessment tool which would stop local authorities reinventing the wheel.
- Policy tests could be put in place emphasising the importance of considering carbon within the planning system.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a test is put in place, it should be well set up and well defined otherwise it will not be met and there will be endless debate and challenges. • There needs to be a grip around climate change both in terms of building regulation and standards in the aspirations of planning delivery in helping and supporting. 	
08.	<p>Planning Gateway One</p> <p>Mark Wilson from the Building Safety Regulator joined the meeting and gave the committee a presentation regarding Planning Gateway One.</p> <p>Key points: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following Grenfell tragedy in 2017 the government commissioned Dame Judith Hackett to produce a report to look at the know failings that happened in the Grenfell Tower tragedy. • In May 2018, Dame Judith Hackett produced a report 'Building a Safety Future'. • One of the key recommendations from the report was to consider fire safety matters earlier in the development process at the planning stage. • The Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure Order 2015 was amended to establish HSE as a statutory consultee for relevant buildings. • A new section was added to the Planning Practice Guidance which set out fire safety as a planning consideration. • In August 2021 Planning Gateway 1 in HSE was started. Planning Gateway 1 is a wider piece of planning and was able to amend existing planning legislation sooner. • The Building Safety Act was given royal assent at the end of April 2022, and it established that HSE or the Building Safety Regulator is part of HSE will become the building safety regulator for higher risk buildings. • From October 2023 developers of tall residential developments will send their building regulation applications to the building safety regulator rather than to their local authority. • This will create much more scrutiny over how buildings are managed during the life cycle of a building. <p>The Committee were asked to try and raise the profile of fire safety at the planning stage.</p>	

	<p>There were intentions from DLUC about revising the NPPF to maybe make reference to safety matters.</p> <p>The Committee noted the report.</p>	
<p>09.</p>	<p>Election Communications and Engagement</p> <p>The Director of Communications had been invited along to the meeting to talk about Comms and the relationship between the committee. He reported that over the last two years since he had come into post, he had built up a team of six which work across channels. What the Comms team required was quality input to resonate across social media and policy was one element. He was eager to work with the committee to produce that content and mould into useful engaging outputs for others.</p> <p>He reported that he would be present for the whole committee meeting to take on board the inputs and discussions of the committee and communicate them within the deadlines of the consultation.</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>The work of Planning Aid England and how this links to the EPC</p> <p>The Planning Aid England Manager gave the committee an update of Planning Aid's services and how they work with volunteers. The following points were highlighted: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Aid England helps people take an active role in the planning system by providing free, independent and professional general planning advice to the public via a planning guidance website and volunteer-led email advice service. • Bespoke advice for individuals and groups who meet the casework criteria. • Also organise support and training for local communities so they can influence and contribute to planning strategy and decision-making locally. • Volunteers are key to Planning Aid England service delivery with currently 350 volunteers across the English regions and half of those are chartered planners. • There are several volunteer panels which deliver key services such as email advice and providing website content. • Planning Aid England staff put out requests for casework or supporting workshops to the volunteer pool. 	

- There is a volunteer steering group which is made up of a selection of volunteers who are heavily involved in the service delivery and this meets every three months.
- There is a planning guidance organised under several themes and offers clear, simple explanations of how the planning system works. Information is regularly reviewed by staff and volunteers.
- An average of 10,000 unique page views per month and our most visited pages.
- Email advice service is a unique service offering 15 minutes of free professional general planning advice to the public by email. It is volunteer led – 11 volunteers on the panel working on a rota basis across the week. Approximate 1800 requests per year.
- Bespoke advice: casework which are enquiries from clients who wouldn't be able to afford planning advice perhaps live in areas of high deprivation or have needs.
- Core part of activity is help underrepresented groups and individuals in more deprived parts of the country and engage with local planning issues that affect them.
- Currently working with Middlesborough Council to assist an inner urban Neighbourhood Forum (Gresham) produce a Neighbourhood Priorities Statement.
- Work undertook last year with Stockport Council of how Planning Aid England could support the consultation on the key principles in the emerging local plan. Devised series of 3 online workshops each focusing on different district within the inner urban area of the borough.
- Greater dialogue between PAE staff team and Policy team.
- Work undertaken as part of PAE Direct, PAE Support may provide insights/data that may be useful regarding informing policy positions.
- Upcoming roundtable in September: The future of public participation in planning: meaningful engagement in a digital age.

Decision: It was agreed that it would be useful for the committee to regularly receive information from Planning Aid and also the decision-making scope of what is expected from EPC.

The slides would be circulated to the Committee after the meeting.

The Committee noted the presentation.

11.	<p>Receive minutes of the General Assembly meeting of 18.01.2023</p> <p>It was reported that the GA minutes would be circulated to the committee at each meeting unfortunately, the minutes had not been signed off by the President and therefore were unable for this meeting.</p>	
12.	<p>Any notified business not otherwise on the agenda</p> <p>The Chair raised with the committee whether they were happy for meetings to be held in London.</p> <p>It was agreed that one meeting out of the four committee meetings that one meeting be held outside of London.</p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.</p>	