



RTPI

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PLANNING POLICY AND PRACTICE @ RTPI: 2009

A meeting of the:

Planning Policy and Practice Committee

was held at 41 Botolph Lane
on Wednesday 1 July 2009 starting at 11:00 am

DRAFT MINUTES

Members

Richard Summers (Chair), Faraz Baber, David Barraclough, Jan Bessell, Sue Bridge, Peter Geraghty, John Hack, Mike Hayes, Antonia James, Hazel McKay, Glyn Roberts, Chris Shepley, Alan Wenban-Smith and Richard Williamson.

In Attendance

Rynd Smith (Director Policy and Communications), Matt Thomson (Head of Policy), Rebecca Coates (Policy Officer), Millie Lewis (administration), Nick Summerfield (minutes).

1. A: Apologies

Apologies were sent by Janet Askew, Angus Kennedy, Cath Ranson, Keith Thomas and David Worthington.

B: Declarations of Interest

No declarations of a prejudicial nature were made.

C: Policy Team Introductions

Rynd Smith introduced the committee to Matt Thomson, the new Head of Policy; Millie Lewis, his new PA; and to Rebecca Coates and Nick Summerfield, who had attended previous meetings. He explained that Rebecca was now producing weekly updates on consultation responses. He added that the policy team was working more closely with the Regions and Nations, and in particular with the Networks.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting

A: Last Meeting – 15 April 2009

A revised version of the minutes of the 15 April meeting was tabled. Peter Geraghty and Sue Bridge asked to be added to the apologies. David Twiggs was to be listed in the apologies and deleted from those attending.

ACTION : It was agreed that members would send in any further amendments and that Rynd Smith would then revise and finalise the minutes of the 15 April meeting.

B: Matters Arising

Richard Williamson introduced himself and asked what progress had been made over the conflict between regional ministers and the different regional bodies. Rynd Smith said that relationships were being formed to remedy this conflict certainly in regions where there had been a presidential visit.

CLIMATE CHANGE

3. Planning to Live with Climate Change

Richard Summers reported that the RTPI's Seven Commitments to tackle the challenge of climate change had been launched at the Planning Convention (see Annex B of the committee report). He noted that John Healey, the new Planning and Housing minister with responsibility for climate change, had welcomed the Seven Commitments at the Planning Convention. Rynd Smith added that the document had been launched at the RTPI Cymru Conference and had also been presented to the Environment Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Commitment 1 : promote behavioural change

Commitment 2 : adapt existing places

Commitment 3 : work towards responsive legislation and policies

Commitment 4 : improve current practice

Commitment 5 : celebrate best practice

Commitment 6 : compile a compendium of best practice

Commitment 7 : develop climate change education and skills

The Committee noted that this launch was a significant outcome from its work on climate change during 2008 and 2009. Richard Summers said the RTPI is now developing an action plan and he would be asking committee members to volunteer to form groups to develop the RTPI's advice and resources on each of the Seven Commitments. Rynd Smith explained that Annex C of the report set out the proposed stages of action for each commitment. All this information had been posted on the RTPI website to help draw in outside partners and to enable RTPI members to help update and extend the original information.

Richard Summers asked for general comments and the following points were made:

- A distinction should be made between mitigation and adaptation. For instance, how could energy networks contribute to place-shaping?
- Much funding is available. It should be focused on practical measures such as job creation.
- We should act sooner rather than later, preferably by the end of the year so that we can take the Copenhagen process into account.
- Planning to Live with Climate Change shows the low base from which local authorities are starting.
- A short section should be added at the beginning for the Climate Change Action Plan to highlight what planners can do to promote implementation and delivery and focus on the spatial dimensions of planning.
- Timescales will vary from one commitment to another. The first four should be promoted straight away in the hope of influencing the general election, Copenhagen, etc. Commitment 5 should start a process of change beginning with the 2010 Planning Awards. Commitment 6 is ongoing but Commitment 7 should be started as soon as possible. Jenny Crawford is working with Earth Scan on Commitments 4 and 6 and results will be circulated soon.
- More time should have been given to Planning to Live with Climate Change at the Planning Convention. The Seven Commitments are pitched in just the right way but they raise questions of what sort of planning what sort of Institute and what sort of planner will be needed to implement

them. A contact name at the RTPI has been given on the website but we should consider appointing a champion to promote each commitments.

- Climate change is a little understood dimension of planning as transport was thirty years ago : people do not understand how different policy streams can come together.
- The RTPI should give planners the tools they need to deal with climate change (similar to the Planning Inspectorate's guidelines on planning conditions).
- Planners could help to get money allocated to schemes such as promoting the use of electric vehicles but they need to be realistic about the constraints - the RTPI could collaborate with other bodies such as the BRE, which is disseminating knowledge on climate change.
- We should be seeking to influence government policy and seek the force of law to implement the changes needed to tackle climate change where this is needed.

Richard Summers proposed that further discussion should focus on each of the Seven Commitments and then go on to identify volunteers for each of the working groups.

Commitment 1 : promote behavioural change

The following points were made:

- There should be a more strategic approach to development - transport and land use should be fully integrated to achieve sustainable development.
- There are conflicts between keeping the family unit together and having a breadwinner commuting to work and therefore using more fuel.
- Lifestyle and ethics are important and strong central action, such as food rationing, might be required- - the question is "how should we live?" The Sustainable Development Commission has recently studied possible future reductions in economic growth and how it would affect labour markets (eg requiring a four-day week).
- All the really vexed issues (powering electric vehicles, landfill versus incineration, etc) come down to influencing behaviour.

Commitment 2 : adapt existing places

The following points were made:

- Local Development Frameworks are comparing the climate change the implications of proposing sustainable urban extensions and eco-towns.
- New buildings only constitute 2% to 3% of total urban development but new roads, new flood defences, new schools, etc are very important.
- We should make it more attractive for people to customise their existing homes by way of 'retro-fit' and non-profit loan schemes are now being developed for this purpose based on schemes in Germany and Denmark.
- Local Area Agreements might also be used to help change behaviour. One health authority in the East of England wants to connect work on reducing obesity with work on sustainable development (although funding is not available).
- The Regeneration Network and Angus Kennedy might be able to help with questions on energy conservation.

Commitment 3 : work towards responsive legislation and policies

Some members were more optimistic than others about this commitment. The following points were made:

- Planners have a primary influence on sustainable development through statutory controls on land use but they would not have direct influence on other effects of climate change such as reduced food production (the Bar Association and the Law Society are currently examining this).
- Policy and legislation are two different things. But now is an auspicious time to promote new environmental measures as Sweden has taken over the presidency of the European Union presidency.

Commitment 4 : improve current practice**Commitment 5 : celebrate best practice****Commitment 6 : compile a compendium of best practice**

These commitments were all taken together and the following points were made:

- Climate change has become more relevant to the Planning Awards generally and so there have been fewer entries for the specific Climate Change Award.
- We should learn from past examples of 'best practice' which proved to be of little actual use, and be prepared to welcome bearers of bad tidings.
- We could set up a planning and climate change wiki. Although we could not give it our formal endorsement it could serve as a forum for ideas.
- We must show the Government and others how our proposals would help to tackle climate change and we must ensure that the methodologies are acceptable to CLG.
- We must distinguish between good practice and best practice in the examples we include in the compendium of best practice
- The Green Building Council is producing some good practice material
- A recent study has shown that schools with 'state-of-the-art' design end up using more energy rather than less (eg if staff turn on all the lights unnecessarily) so we should favour passive systems.
- Post-occupancy monitoring of new buildings which does not invade individual privacy might be made subject to a legal requirement - it might be possible to recommend monitoring processes rather than building specifications.
- elected representatives (some have recently complained of being 'bullied' by a climate change 'mafia').

Commitment 7 : develop climate change education and skills

The following points were made :

- Newcastle University has started a specialist master's degree in climate change – it encourages students to become auditors rather than specialist ecologists or climatologists.
- Other universities might be persuaded to do some 'subject-spotting' (Jenny Crawford has been doing some relevant work with PERN).
- Climate change issues should be integrated into planners' CPD but it might be more difficult to involve councillors and other There is a skills gap and it is good that a climate change requirement is being brought into CPD particularly for older planners who have not trained specifically in climate change.

Richard Summers asked for volunteers for each of the working groups. In response to a question, he suggested that only deliverable actions should be included for each of the Seven Commitments on the RTPI website but some actions might be to develop and then test a range of new ideas.

Committee members volunteered for the working groups as follows:

Commitment 1 : promote behavioural change		Commitment 4 : improve current practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Hack 		Commitment 5 : celebrate best practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jed Griffiths (lead) 		Commitment 6 : compile a compendium of best practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alan Wenban-Smith 		<i>These three commitments will be combined into one working group</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richard Williamson 		
Commitment 2 : adapt existing places		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Geraghty (lead)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angus Kennedy 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mike Hayes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazel McKay 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antonia James
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glyn Roberts 		<i>(Matt Thomson to coordinate compilation of the compendium of best practice)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Shepley (lead) 		
Commitment 3 : work towards responsive legislation and policies		Commitment 7 : develop climate change education and skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Barraclough 		<i>Membership, Education and Lifelong Learning</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan Bessell 		<i>Committee to pursue this commitment through teaching and research and CPD</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jed Griffiths 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Hack (lead) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peter Geraghty (link member)
Note : it was agreed that Sue Bridge would work with Matt Thomson on the Compendium of Best Practice to provide a user liaison input.		

ACTION : Other Committee members agreed to notify Rynd Smith which working group they would prefer. He would then finalise the working groups, provide them with draft terms of reference, invite them to start work and ask them to report briefly to the next meeting.

4. National Focus Group: PPS1 Climate Change Supplement

Antonia explained that her report on PPS1 Climate Change Supplement circulated with the papers was fairly comprehensive. The headline conclusion was that only 47% of local authorities questioned had an evidence based understanding of renewable energy and low carbon development. Antonia argued that planners need at least some knowledge of energy planning in order to understand climate change issues. Businesses should not gain credit by, for example, installing solar panels but then not turning them on. Nor should they get away with meeting one criterion but ignoring the others. All planning applications could soon require an energy performance certificate.

HOUSING

5. RTPI Report on the Killian Pretty Review

Rynd Smith noted that the RTPI had proposed further reform of the development management system. The Development Management Network had said the system should support decision-making not favoured by permitted development. Rynd asked whether the boundary between development plan and development management was currently where it should be.

Richard Summers commented that Planning Policy & Practice Committee had necessarily given most of its attention to policy issues (such as planning for climate change) in recent years and it was now time to focus more on delivery. He suggested that Peter Geraghty and others including Antonia James, Janet Askew, Hazel McKay and Sue Bridge might like to consider how to take this forward into 2010.

The following points were made:

- Government targets can have negative effects and judgements are sometimes made on the strength of statistics rather than on outcomes. Permitted Development, for example, can make for more work for planners and prevent them from focusing on the bigger picture.
- Targets are not necessarily a bad thing and could perhaps be supplemented by compulsory pre-application discussions.
- The Planning Officers Society is providing leadership on some issues.

ACTION: Peter Geraghty and Rynd Smith to produce a scoping paper on progressing development management for the next meeting in collaboration with Antonia James, Janet Askew, Hazel McKay and Sue Bridge.

6. July GA Housing Paper

Glyn Roberts introduced a paper that he had produced as a composite of previous papers that he and Alan Wenban-Smith had prepared on Housing and the Economic Recession. The Committee had agreed that a composite paper would provide a stimulating basis for debate at the General Assembly on 15th July in Liverpool.

Glyn said that first aim of the new composite paper was to seek government support for the housing market. The RTPI should urge government to prioritise the market in the existing housing stock and to support the development and improvement of reporting on housing market change.

Alan commented that the new paper seems to treat housing as if it is simply another sector of the wider economy. In recent times, abnormal conditions have come to be regarded as normal and many people will never be able to buy their own home.

It was suggested that key elements of the discussion paper for the General Assembly should include short-term versus long-term factors; the need for housing; the balance between the public and private sectors; an overall priority for decent housing; and managing uncertainty. Glyn commented that he had been asked to combine the two papers in the context of the recession.

The following points were made:

- Equality and access to housing are causes for concern. We should be discussing what kind of houses should be built and who they should be for. Under-provision is a key issue.
- There is a growing consensus that there could now be a shift from a model of owner-occupation to one of need-based housing (recent BSHF Consultation Workshop). The right to buy could be abolished but everyone should have a stake according to their ability to pay for housing.
- Adapting the existing stock is more important as new build and they both form part of the same public and private sector housing market.
- The paper has been written for debate at the General Assembly but it should be developed for practical use. The current crisis is in the financial markets and not so much in the property market. The example of HMRAs is well-documented.

- The real question is why did the market fail? House builders should be building communities, not just houses. It all goes back to the 1970s when planners were blamed for not providing enough land and not enough dwelling units for development.
- Government policy aims to get as much housing land as possible into development plans in a way that goes against all the principles of spatial planning.
- Matthew Taylor had argued in the news that there needs to be more rented accommodation.
- The paper for the General Assembly should focus more concisely on identifying three to four action points - housing delivery is the really important point.
- We should explain clearly to the General Assembly who we are trying to influence and then draw the key issues to the attention of our political contacts.

ACTIONS: Rynd Smith to finalise the new paper as a background for the debate at the General Assembly and to make arrangements for Working Groups to tackle particular aspects before, during and after the debate (as was done successfully at the climate change debate in April). Glyn and Alan to prepare introductory ten-minute presentations as a stimulus for the debate.

Other papers on the agenda were taken as read in view of the major discussion points that had needed to be tackled at the meeting.

The next meeting was scheduled for 11 am on **Thursday 1st October 2009** at Botolph Lane.