

Reference	ICN22/Feb/0
Date	28 February 2022

ROYAL TOWN PLANNING INSTITUTE

## **INDEPENDENT CONSULTANTS NETWORK**

ICN Steering Group Meeting

**28 February 2022, 15.00 to 17.00**

5th Floor, St Albans House

57-59 Haymarket

London

SW1Y4QX

*This meeting was hybrid – AL, PL, DW and BW attended in person, JV and AN attended online*

1. Welcome and PL to say a few words
  - PL said a few words about the purpose of the SG in representing the ICN
  
2. Update on membership
  - MB advised that there are now 861 active members of the network compared with 820 in October 2021 and 257 members of the ICN Discussion Forum compared with 240 in October 2021
  - There was a discussion over what qualifies as an independent consultant and whether we should have an additional network for SME firms, as well as how we describe or define the network
  - We would like to find out what kind of work and volume of work our current network members do

### **Actions**

*MB to find old ICN member survey from 2017/2018 on how much and what kind of work we do*

3. Updates on minutes of the last meeting held on 07/10/2021 and matters arising
  - a. Welcoming new members
    - MB asked for approval on new welcome email template
    - SG members decided that it would be best to have a different SG member's email address on the welcome email each month, to the NAPE Ask Month
    - There were also discussions around getting feedback on how network members use the ICN Discussion Forum
      - Do they receive emails or use the online version?
      - Do they receive daily or weekly updates?
      - We would like to circulate a feedback questionnaire but SG would like to action this until the next meeting
    - SG would like to have 3 meetings a year rather than two

### **Actions**

*MB to ask an SG member each month if they are willing to have their email address on the welcome template and to alternate between them*

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*MB to set up next SG meeting for July*

b. Planning Resource

- MB advised that we cannot help ICN members renegotiate subscription deals as Planning Resource is operated by our competitor Haymarket – but we would like to know what Planning Resource offers that the Planner doesn't
- SG advised that Planning Resource gives you quick and bite sized information, especially in relation to Development Control Practice
- Some argued that The Planner is visually chaotic and not well laid out
- Ultimately the two are different resources and offer different things

c. Online List of Chartered Members

- MB advised that this sits in the Member Value Review project as part of the GROWPLAN strategy which is in it's investigative stages; we will get timescales on it in Q2
- SG expressed their frustration that RTPI have not yet released this

**Actions**

*MB to continue pressing for this with the membership team and provide SG with updates*

4. The Planning Inspectorate

a. Survey results

- AN expressed his disappointment in the survey results because the figures were inconsistent and didn't hold up to quantitative analysis
- SG felt that the survey was not worded in a specific enough way which is what caused the numbers not to tally
- SG felt that the feedback given in the comments and observations had already been circulated through the forum
- SG would like to revisit this and try and collect the data again in a years' time

**Actions**

*SG to revisit this in a years' time*

b. Meetings with them going forward

- Graham Stallwood has been in contact with PL and they are going to have an initial chat and decide how they wish to set up future meetings between PINS and network
- DW and AL to be PINS liaison team; when DW steps down at end of the year AL will choose someone new
- SG would like to emphasise volume of appeals placed by ICN members and centrality of the timely and predictable functioning of appeals to the whole planning system

**Actions**

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*PL to have one to one with Graham Stallwood and then move things forward from there – PINS are suggesting stakeholder consultation including ICN as part of Rethinking process*

#### 5. Promoting the Network

- MB suggested that ICN might like to have either an Independent Views feature in the Planner or an RTPI blogpost to promote the network
- PL suggested that he would like the ICN to have a more prominent feature
- There was some discussion around capitalising on The Planner coming to the ICN Conference in September and coming out with a subsequent feature

#### **Actions**

*MB to give PL Martin Reed or Simon Wicks contact details for The Planner  
 PL to get in touch with The Planner to start discussions on this*

#### 6. Starting a Private Practice – needs an update

- AL noticed that the bit about VAT needs an update
- DW advised that we could wait until after the ICN Conference so that we can use the feedback from the Running Your Own Business workshop to update the resource
- BW suggested Management for Design – sponsors of ACA who write good articles, could be really useful in helping write an update

#### **Actions**

*No immediate action – wait until after the conference to have further discussions*

#### 7. 2022 ICN Conference

- MB and DP advised that we have agreed sponsorship with Kings Chambers and are still waiting to hear from Planning Portal and Howdens
  - JMW and Myersons are back up options
  - DW advised that she has contact at Planning Portal (Sarah Chilcott) who she can put DP in touch with
- The Botanist – DP advised that we will sign contract with them once we have next sponsor, but it is currently on hold for networking drinks
- Walking tour – MB advised that we have had positive initial discussions with Head of Planning at Cheshire West and Chester council and are waiting for their regeneration team
  - They have suggested a tour around using heritage as focus for regeneration – SG happy with this
  - Discussion around looking at library as key spot on tour
  - DW advised that local authorities suggest the tour and then SG edit but it needs to be specifically focused on outcomes of planning decisions
- JV advised that she has successfully got agreement from Neill Homer to run neighbourhood planning workshop
- Dialogue with PINs

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- MB advised that senior management at RTPI have taken the decision that we would like SG to generate list of prepared questions and to have RTPI's President Tim Crawshaw conduct the session
- SG advised that they would like an ICN member to run the session and expressed concern over representation, they advised that it should be a natural continuation of the meetings between themselves and PINs
- DW advised that as the format is conversational rather than a formal interview they would like to ensure that the person conducting the session can ask follow up questions and that there should be flexibility
- Workshop on the future of closed pubs
  - DW to provide name and speaker for the session
- Key talk on Post-Pandemic High Street
  - BW has agreement with URBED for this
- Discussions were held over the size of workshops – it was decided that we should ask people to give their preferences in the joining instructions so that we can allocate workshops fairly
- Feedback form for the event – SG would like input into this

**Actions**

*DP and DW to liaise regarding Planning Portal sponsorship*

*MB to continue to chase council on Walking Tour*

*SG to think of titles for conference which express the theme of post-Covid recovery and resilience*

*Views of the SG on the Dialogue with PINs will be reported back to RTPI senior management*

*MB to contact David Rudlin from URBED to confirm his speech*

*DP to add workshop sizes into joining instructions*

*DW to liaise with DP on feedback form*

8. Professional Indemnity Insurance

- MB advised that it is against FSA rules for RTPI to advise on or sell insurance products but that we have an Introducer Representative Agreement with Howdens and we review brokers periodically
- BW has had some conversations with Marsh and they have put together a package for planning coverage

**Actions**

*MB to put BW in touch with Richard Patrick to have further discussions about including Marsh in RTPI's next supplier review*